

Aligning Myth and Experience:
The Sanctification of Time in Early Christian Latin Hymns

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A.B., University of Georgia, 2003
M.Litt., University of St. Andrews, 2005

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Classics at Brown University

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

MAY 2012

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This dissertation by Robin E. McGill is accepted in its present form by the Department of Classics as satisfying the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation represents a snapshot of ideas that have developed over the past three years during my graduate study at Brown and, it is hoped, will continue to develop hereafter. All along, I have been captivated by the question of how texts work to influence their audience(s), and in particular, how early Christian Latin hymns were designed to shape the beliefs and actions of those who came into contact with them. Nonetheless, my approaches and answers have changed quite a bit since the project began. What started as a study of hymns as prophetic texts has become a study of hymns as ritual texts that could influence believers through liturgical and temporal mechanisms.

Throughout this process, I have had the pleasure of working with my adviser, Joe Pucci, who introduced me to Ambrose's hymns in a Late Latin Poetry seminar in 2006, as well as the other members of my dissertation committee, Susan Harvey, David Konstan, and Stratis Papaioannou. I am grateful to them for sharing their expertise and encouragement, which helped to drive this project forward. I remain indebted to my undergraduate adviser, Sallie Spence, who first sparked my interest in Christian hymns at the University of Georgia.

Likewise, I appreciate those who have helped to shape my ideas in more informal ways. Thanks are due in particular to Susan Harvey and the students in her Hymnography seminar in 2009 for opening my eyes to the wider world of Greek and Syriac hymns, and to Brian Stock and Jonas Grethlein, who were willing to share their time at a critical point in the development of my thinking. I am also grateful to those who provided valuable feedback on my work at the Culture and Religion of the Ancient Mediterranean Colloquium in fall of 2010 and at the 2011 conference, "The Classics Renewed: The Latin Poetry of Late Antiquity," organized by Joe Pucci and Scott McGill.

Ultimately, though, I could not have completed this project without my husband, Andrew, and his time, energy, love, and experience; as well as my parents, Walt and Gail, who have always supported my intellectual curiosity.

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INTRODUCTION

Hymns as Instruction

Hymnorum quoque meorum carminibus deceptum populum ferunt, plane nec hoc abnuo. Grande carmen istud est quo nihil potentius; quid enim potentius quam confessio trinitatis, quae cottidie totius populi ore celebratur? Certatim omnes student fidem fateri, patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum norunt versibus praedicare. Facti sunt igitur omnes magistri, qui vix poterant esse discipuli.¹

They say the people have been caught under the spell of my hymns, clearly so and I do not deny it. Song is magnificent and nothing is more powerful than it; for what is more powerful than the acknowledgement of the Trinity, which is celebrated everyday by the mouth of the entire population? Eagerly they vie with each other to acknowledge their faith; they have learned how to proclaim the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with verses. Thus they have become teachers, those who at one time were hardly able to be students.

In this sermon delivered in 386 CE,² Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, champions the success of his hymns. In this sermon, Ambrose recognizes hymns as vehicles for people to declare their faith openly (“acknowledgment, *confessio*; “to acknowledge their faith,” *fidem fateri*; “to declare openly,” *praedicare*). It comes as no surprise that Ambrose defines this faith in Trinitarian terms (“Trinity,” *trinitatis*; “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,”

¹ Ambrose, *Epist.* 75A (*Contra Auxentium*), 34. The text is that of M. Zelzer, *Sancti Ambrosii Opera: Pars Decima*, CSEL 82.3 (Vienna, 1982). The translation is my own.

² This sermon was delivered in the height of the Basilica Conflict, wherein Ambrose and his pro-Nicene supporters refused to give in to imperial demands that a basilica be made available for Homoian worship. On the chronology of the dispute, including this sermon, see A. Lenox-Conyngham, “The Topography of the Basilica Conflict of A.D. 385/6 in Milan,” *Historia* 31 (1982), pp. 353-363, esp. pp. 355 n. 9. For a thorough examination of this sermon as one of the sources of the dispute, see G. Nauroy, “Le fouet et le miel. Le combat d’Ambroise en 386 contre l’arianisme milanais,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 23 (1988), pp. 3-86, esp. pp. 21-35.

patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum), since this sermon was delivered as a pro-Nicene attack against neo-Arian supporters, who called into question the relationship between the Father and the Son within the tripartite structure of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But Ambrose's statement suggests that his hymns were more than just markers of orthodoxy; they were also instructive tools that had the power to shape world view and ethos in line with that orthodoxy,³ as is evident in the transformation of the populace from incapable students ("those who were scarcely able to be students," *vix poterant esse discipuli*) to teachers ("instructors," *magistri*). For Ambrose, one of the main reasons that hymns were such effective tools of instruction was the captivating nature of song ("caught under the spell of my hymns," *carminibus deceptum*; "song is magnificent and nothing is more powerful than it," *grande carmen...quo nihil potentius*). Following Thomas Habinek, I take *carmen* ("song, poem") to signify ritualized speech that claims authority through context, diction, and musicality.⁴ In championing the instructive potential of song, Ambrose is following a long tradition that goes back to Plato, if not earlier.⁵

The question I explore here is how Ambrose's hymns and those written in a similar tradition harnessed the power of song for educational purposes—What strategies

³ I follow the distinction between world view and ethos made by C. Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 2000 [1973]), pp. 89-90, 126-127. "World view" denotes the system of beliefs held by a culture about ontological reality and place of self and society within the cosmic order of things. "Ethos," on the other hand, denotes evaluative attitudes about how things should be and how self and society should act.

⁴ T. Habinek, *The World of Roman Song: From Ritualized Speech to Social Order* (Baltimore and London, 2005), pp. 58-74. Cf. J. den Boeft, "Ambrosius Lyricus," in *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays*, edited by J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1993), p. 77 n. 3.

⁵ Cf. Plato, *Republic* III (401d): "Aren't these the reasons, Glaucon, that education in music and poetry is most important? First, because rhythm and harmony permeate the inner part of the soul more than anything else, affecting it most strongly and bringing it to grace..." (transl. by G.M.A. Grube [Indianapolis, 1992], p. 78).

did they use? What messages did they intend to communicate? One might understand this question in terms of the relationship between the rhetoric of the text and the culture it promotes.⁶ Ambrose's exuberance about the Trinity might lead us to expect that his *carmina* were mini-doctrinal treatises organized around a particular theological viewpoint, such as a hymn about the Trinity itself, but they were not. Nor were they arranged like commentaries or biblical epics, which took their cue from the narrative structure of the Bible and encode doctrinal elements along the way. Instead, early Christian Latin hymns were organized around specific liturgical occasions: for daily offices, yearly feasts, and saints' days. I argue that these liturgical underpinnings provided the primary framework for instruction.

Hymns in the West

Approximately 130 Christian Latin hymns survive from the fourth to sixth centuries.⁷ Of those, about ninety are "ritual" hymns, while about forty are what I term "ritualizing" hymns. By "ritual," I mean hymns that were intended for performance within a documented ritual setting, as attested by contemporaneous testimonia or by their presence in early liturgical MSS.⁸ By "ritualizing," on the other hand, I mean those

⁶ Cf. S. Spence, *Rhetorics of Reason and Desire: Vergil, Augustine, and the Troubadours* (Ithaca, 1988), esp. pp. xiii-xiv.

⁷ The total number of hymns is compiled from M. Simonetti, "Studi sull' innologia popolare Christiana dei primi secoli," *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Serie 8, vol. 4 (1952), pp. 431-477; W. Bulst, *Hymni Latini Antiquissimi LXXV, Psalmi III* (Heidelberg, 1956); and J. Szövérfy, *Die Annalen der lateinischen Hymnendichtung: Ein Handbuch*, Vol. 1. (Berlin, 1964).

⁸ Two studies have attempted to identify all the ritual hymns written in Latin between the fourth and sixth centuries, though with somewhat different criteria. Simonetti, *op. cit.*, relies on testimonia and the appearance of hymns in liturgical MSS associated with pre-seventh-century ritual contexts. He also includes hymns from MSS associated with later liturgical contexts when those hymns demonstrate stylistic features that are in line with earlier hymns, *i.e.*, relative lack of rhyme and assonance. Bulst, *op. cit.*, also

hymns that are similar in form and/ or content to ritual hymns, but do not have an attested ritual context. Ritualizing hymns were generally transmitted within the MSS of specific authors' poetic works, and therefore, they were likely to have been performed outside explicitly liturgical contexts,⁹ though some of them were adapted subsequently for liturgical use.¹⁰

The earliest Western hymns were written by Hilary of Poitiers in the mid-fourth century.¹¹ Jerome names Hilary as the author of a book of hymns,¹² but only three survive in fragmentary condition. These hymns, along with those of his contemporary Marius Victorinus, concentrated on doctrinal themes, and were not formally adopted into a liturgical context.¹³ Ambrose introduced a new style of hymns in the 380s,¹⁴ consisting of

relies on testimonia and appearance in early liturgical MSS, but in addition he takes into account the dates of the author of the hymn, if known. This leads him to include three hymns by Hilary, twelve centoies of Prudentius' hymns, and one hymn by Sedulius; though written before the seventh century, these hymns were probably not originally intended for a liturgical context and were only adopted into liturgy in the eighth century or later, if at all in the case of Hilary's hymns. The best account for determining which liturgical MSS were the earliest emerged after Simonetti's and Bulst's studies: H. Gneuss, *Hymnar und Hymnen im englischen Mittelalter* (Tübingen, 1968), pp. 1-40. My calculation of ninety ritual hymns takes into account the findings of Gneuss's study, and also includes those hymns that Simonetti judges to be earlier based on style, but excludes the hymns of Hilary, Prudentius, and Sedulius that do not appear in early liturgical MSS.

⁹ The performance context of "ritualizing" hymns has not been adequately studied.

¹⁰ Prudentius' hymns, for instance, were centoized for the Mozarabic liturgy. See C. Blume, *Die mozarabischen Hymnen, Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi XXVII* (New York and London, 1961 [1897]), pp. 37-39.

¹¹ The standard account of the development of hymns in the West is Szövérfy, *op. cit.*, where the first volume covers the fourth to eleventh centuries.

¹² *De Viris Illustribus* C.3.

¹³ For more on Hilary's hymns, see J. Fontaine, *Naissance de la Poésie dans l'Occident Chrétien* (Paris, 1981), pp. 81-94. Also, J. den Boeft, *op. cit.*, p. 78 points to the complexity of Hilary's meters for the lack of success of his hymns, but equally plausible is their organization around doctrine rather than liturgy, which may have rendered them less accessible. The versification of Marius Victorinus' hymns, dubbed "prosa di tipo psalmodico" by U. Sesini, *Poesia e Musica nella Latinità Cristiana dal III al X Secolo* (Torino, 1949), p. 61, was also more suited to doctrine than liturgy.

¹⁴ Augustine, *Confessions* IX.6.14 allows us to date the appearance of the hymns more specifically to within a year or so of 386, when the Basilica Conflict consumed Milan. On the conflict, see above n. 2.

thirty-two lines of iambic dimeter arranged in eight stanzas.¹⁵ As we can tell from Ambrose's own testimony cited above,¹⁶ the hymns were written for liturgical use in Milan.

The lasting success of Ambrose's hymns is obvious from the proliferation of the form in later liturgical MSS. More than forty "Ambrosian" hymns survive, while only fourteen can be attributed to Ambrose with certainty or high likelihood.¹⁷ The rest are anonymous compositions that survive from monastic contexts, where hymn singing was a standard part of the liturgy from the fifth or early sixth century onward. The rule written by Caesarius of Arles in the first half of the sixth century for a community of nuns prescribes four of Ambrose's hymns as well as eight others of the same form.¹⁸ The rule of Caesarius' successor, Aurelian, compiled a few decades later for a community of monks, adds one more of Ambrose's hymns and another Ambrosian hymn.¹⁹ The lack of distinction between the genuine hymns of Ambrose and those written later is evident in Benedict's rule, which merely indicates that on several occasions an "Ambrosian hymn"

¹⁵ For a comprehensive treatment of Ambrose's contribution to the development of hymns, their form and style, see Fontaine *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-92.

¹⁶ *Contra Auxentium* 34, discussed above on p. 1-2.

¹⁷ G. Dreves, *Aurelius Ambrosius, "der Vater des Kirchengesanges": Eine hymnologische Studie* (Amsterdam, 1968 [1897]), pp. 25-26 gives a list of forty-one hymns with possible Ambrosian authorship. Unlike his other works, Ambrose's hymns do not have their own MS tradition, but instead, were transmitted with other liturgical texts. This peculiarity makes it particularly difficult to determine with certainty which of the surviving hymns in Ambrosian meter were actually written by Ambrose. On the authenticity of Ambrose's hymns, I follow Fontaine *et al.*, *op. cit.* For descriptions of the MSS containing authentic or likely authentic hymns of Ambrose, see M. Jullien, "Les sources de la tradition ancienne des quatorze Hymnes attribuées à Ambroise de Milan," *Revue d'Histoire des Textes* 19 (1989), pp. 57-189.

¹⁸ Caesarius, *Regula virginum*, 66.

¹⁹ The testimonia are given by Bulst, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-164.

(*Ambrosianum*) was to be sung.²⁰ By the seventh century, if not before, the practice of singing Ambrosian hymns had spread all the way to communities in Ireland.²¹

Ambrose's hymns also influenced Prudentius, a Spanish poet writing in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries. His two collections of literary hymns, the *Cathemerinon* and the *Peristephanon*, borrowed the themes of daily devotion and commemoration of saints, respectively, from the hymn tradition begun by Ambrose,²² but they were not intended for liturgical use.²³ The form of Prudentius' hymns is more indebted to classical models, Horace in particular,²⁴ and their meter is highly complex and varied, including examples of Sapphics and Asclepiadaeans, along with iambic dimeters in the Ambrosian style.²⁵ Aside from *Peristephanon* X for St. Romanus, which tops 1100 lines, Prudentius' hymns tend to be between 100 and 500 lines.

Other poets writing in the fifth century explored hymns as a kind of biblical lyric. Better known for his NT epic, Sedulius experimented with the genre of hymns in two compositions, most likely not intended for liturgical use.²⁶ The first was in epanaleptic distichs, and the second was in four-line Ambrosian stanzas, but with one stanza for each

²⁰ *Benedicti Regula*, IX.4, XII.4, XIII.11, XVII.8. The rule does not specify the titles of the hymns, perhaps because they were well known by the members of the Benedictine monastic community.

²¹ Cf. M. Curran, *The Antiphonary of Bangor and the Early Irish Monastic Liturgy* (Dublin, 1984), pp. 59-63 on the sixth- or early-seventh-century hymn, "*Ignis creator omnium*."

²² For an overview of the relationship between Prudentius' hymns and Ambrose's hymns, see J. Charlet, *La Création Poétique dans le Cathemerinon de Prudence* (Paris, 1982), pp. 73-78, 91-102.

²³ On the ritualizing context of Prudentius' hymns, see below, pp. 48-49.

²⁴ Charlet, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-80 also includes Pindar among the classical influences on Prudentius' poetry. See also J. Pucci, "Prudentius' Readings of Horace in the *Cathemerinon*," *Latomus* 50 (1991), pp. 677-90.

²⁵ Charlet, *op. cit.*, p. 59 gives a metrical overview of the *Cathemerinon* hymns.

²⁶ Both hymns survive in MSS of Sedulius' poetry, but the second hymn begins to appear in liturgical MSS as early as the ninth century. Regarding the second hymn, see below, pp. 86-87.

letter of the alphabet. In addition to poems commemorating the martyrdom of St. Felix, Paulinus of Nola adapted versions of three Psalms into hexameter (*Carm.* vii-ix), though it is unlikely that they came into liturgical use.

The sixth century saw a number of hymns of varying form and quality written by prominent religious and political figures, including Ennodius, Bishop of Pavia (d. 521); Chilperic, King of Neustria (d. 584); Flavius, Bishop of Châlon-sur-Saône (d. 591); Venantius Fortunatus (d. after 600); and Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604). Ennodius emulated the form of Ambrose's hymns in twelve compositions, perhaps aspiring to fill liturgical gaps left by Ambrose in the Milanese liturgy, but only three were adopted into liturgical MSS.²⁷ The three hymns written by the poet Fortunatus, later Bishop of Poitiers, were composed for the ritual celebration of the True Cross relics at Poitiers in 569, and they appear in liturgical MSS dating from as early as the tenth century.²⁸ Their meters vary: "*Vexilla regis prodeunt*" (II.6) follows the Ambrosian model, while "*Crux benedicta nitet*" (II.1) and "*Pange, lingua, gloriosi*" (II.2) observe classical metrical conventions of elegiac couplets and trochaic septenarii, respectively. These are credited as being the original examples of the Holy Cross hymn type that became increasingly popular in medieval liturgies.²⁹ Hymns written after the sixth century tend to show

²⁷ G. Dreves, *Hymnographi Latini: Lateinische Hymnendichter des Mittelalters, Analecta Hymnica L* (New York and London 1961 [1907]), p. 61. The three hymns adopted into later liturgical use are *Carm.* 4, 7, 9 (nos. 57, 60, 61 in Dreves' edition, pp. 63-69).

²⁸ For MSS, see entries in J. Mearns, *Early Latin Hymnaries* (Cambridge, 1913), s.v., *Crux benedicta nitet*; *Pange, lingua, gloriosi*; and *Vexilla regis prodeunt*.

²⁹ See J. Szövérfy, "'*Crux Fidelis*...' Prolegomena to a History of the Holy Cross Hymns," *Traditio* 22 (1966), pp. 1-41.

medieval leanings, including less metrical precision and an increased reliance on rhyme and assonance.³⁰

Latin Hymns in Scholarship

Early Christian Latin hymns have been well served in critical editions and literary histories.³¹ In particular, scholars have been interested in the origins of hymnody, especially with regard to its classical Latin heritage.³² Some have also considered the influence of the Bible and Christian doctrine on hymns within the Christian poetic sphere,³³ but in this regard, hymns have not received the same amount of attention as biblical epic.³⁴ Much of the scholarship remains focused exclusively on the hymns of

³⁰ On the features of rhyme and assonance as tools for dating, see Simonetti, *op. cit.*, pp. 431-477.

³¹ Critical editions: G.M. Dreves, G. Dreves, *Hymnographi Latini: Lateinische Hymnendichter des Mittelalters, Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi L* (New York and London 1961 [1907]); C. Blume, *Thesauri Hymnologici Hymnarium, Vol. 1, Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi LI* (New York and London, 1961 [Leipzig, 1908]); A. Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns* (Cambridge, 1922); Bulst, *op. cit.*

Literary histories: Szövérfy, *Die Annalen, op. cit.*, surveys both liturgical and non-liturgical Latin hymns from their beginnings to the sixteenth century. F. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages*, Second Edition (Oxford, 1953) includes hymns in his treatment of the larger development of Christian Latin poetry through the middle ages, while J. Fontaine, *Naissance, op. cit.*, focuses on the third through sixth centuries. Simonetti, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-484 considers the development of Latin hymns in light of the Greek tradition of Christian hymns.

³² See J. Fontaine, "L'apport de la tradition poétique romaine à la formation de l'hymnodie latine chrétienne," in *Études sur la Poésie Latine Tardive d'Ausone à Prudence* (Paris, 1980 [1974]), pp. 146-183; J. Perret, "Aux origines de l'hymnodie latine: L'apport de la civilisation romaine," *La Maison-Dieu* 173 (1988), pp. 41-60. Simonetti, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 429-430, investigates the possibility of influence from the Greek hymnic tradition, but ultimately concludes that classical Latin poetic forms had greater influence.

³³ See J. Charlet, "L'inspiration et la forme bibliques dans la poésie latine chrétienne du III^e au VI^e siècle," in *Le Monde Antique de la Bible*, edited by J. Fontaine and C. Pietri (Paris, 1985), pp. 613-643, esp. pp. 622-631; and F. Stella, *Poesia e Teologia*, vol. 1 (Milan, 2001), pp. 25-33. V. Buchheit has investigated theology within specific poetic works: "Göttlicher Heilsplan bei Prudentius (Cath. 11, 25-48)," *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990), pp. 222-241; and "Göttlicher Heilsplan bei Paulinus von Nola (c. 22)," *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (2002), pp. 434-438.

³⁴ See, e.g., R. Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike. Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung* (Munich, 1975); M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity* (Liverpool, 1985); D. Niles, *Doctrine and Exegesis in Biblical Latin Poetry*, (Leeds, 1993); and R. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvenius, Sedulius, Arator* (Oxford, 2006).

Ambrose³⁵ or of Prudentius.³⁶ Regarding Ambrose's hymns, the prevailing question about their authenticity has largely been settled,³⁷ leading to investigations of their lyrical aspects.³⁸ Scholars have also looked more closely at the exegetical aspects of Ambrose's hymns.³⁹ Few treatments, though, have dealt with the relationship between hymns and the liturgy.⁴⁰ This study aims to broaden the conversation on early Christian Latin hymns by considering examples across the genre with a view to understanding how they are designed to influence believers within their ritual or ritualizing context.

Hymns and Liturgy

Christian liturgy provides the ritual framework within which hymns have the potential to instruct. The hymns surveyed for this study tend to fall into three types, corresponding to three different liturgical cycles: (a) hymns for hours/ daily offices, (b) hymns for seasons of the liturgical year, (c) hymns for saints' days.⁴¹ Each cycle has its

³⁵ Bibliographies for Ambrose's hymns can be found in P. Beatrice *et al.*, *Cento Anni di Bibliografia Ambrosiana (1874-1974)*, (Milan, 1981) and G. Visonà, *Cronologia Ambrosiana, Bibliografia Ambrosiana (1900-2000)*, (Milan and Rome, 2004), s.v. "Innodia" and "Innografia" in the *Indice Analitico*, pp. 653.

³⁶ On the *Cathemerinon*, see, e.g., Charlet, *La Création*, *op. cit.*; and M. van Assendelft, *Sol Ecce Surgit Igneus: A Commentary on the Morning and Evening Hymns of Prudentius* (Cath. 1, 2, 5, and 6), (Groningen, 1976). On the *Peristephanon*, see A. Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford, 1989); and M. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor, 1993).

³⁷ For a useful overview of the question and the scholarly positions, see A. Franz, *Tageslauf und Heilsgeschichte: Untersuchungen zum literarischen Text und liturgischen Kontext der Tagzeitenhymnen des Ambrosius von Mailand* (St. Ottilien, 1994), pp. 20-26.

³⁸ See, e.g., J. Fontaine, "Prose et poésie: l'interférence des genres et des styles dans la création littéraire d'Ambroise de Milan," in *Études*, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-130; Fontaine *et al.*, *Hymnes*, *op. cit.*; J. den Boeft, *op. cit.*

³⁹ See M. Mans, "The Function of Biblical Material in the Hymns of St. Ambrose," in *Early Christian Poetry*, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-100.

⁴⁰ Notable exceptions are Fontaine *et al.*, *Hymnes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-55, and Franz, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

⁴¹ Cf. Simonetti, *op. cit.*, pp. 435-436.

own history, but, as Paul Bradshaw has emphasized, the diverse practices surrounding the daily and yearly liturgical cycles began to converge over the course of the fourth century into a more uniform pattern that can be seen throughout Christendom, East and West.⁴² He attributes this “homogenization” of Christian liturgy largely to doctrinal issues and the need to eradicate any practices deemed heretical, as well as to responses to pagan practices following the Peace of Constantine.⁴³

The observance of the daily offices evolved differently depending on the different institutional structures that had emerged in cathedral versus monastic contexts. Cathedral offices retained their morning and evening celebrations, potentially supplemented by offices for the third, sixth, and ninth hours.⁴⁴ Monastic offices prescribed more frequent worship that centered on the hours, with morning and evening offices as well, and often with extra offices for midnight and the cockcrow.⁴⁵ By the end of the fourth century, it was common to see hybrid offices in the West.

The liturgical year became unified around two groups of events: those pertaining to Christ’s birth and those pertaining to his death. By the fifth century, if not before, the celebration of Christ’s birth had become two feasts in the West, one for Christmas on December 25 and another for Epiphany on January 6.⁴⁶ In addition to the visitation of

⁴² P. Bradshaw, “The Homogenization of Christian Liturgy—Ancient and Modern: Presidential Address,” *Studia Liturgica* 26 (1996), pp. 3-6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

⁴⁴ On cathedral hours in the West, see R. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, MN, 1986), pp. 141-163.

⁴⁵ For details of the daily *cursus* according to various Western monastic rules, see *ibid.*, pp. 93-140.

⁴⁶ M. Connell, “Did Ambrose’s Sister Become a Virgin on December 25 or January 6? The Earliest Western Evidence for Christmas and Epiphany outside Rome,” *Studia Liturgica* 29 (1999), pp. 145-158 concludes that the two feasts, which were previously one celebration held in Milan on January 6, became distinct during the late-fourth century under Ambrose himself. He suggests a similar pattern applies

Christ by the Magi related in Matthew's Gospel (2.1-2.12), Epiphany was often associated with Christ's baptism in the Jordan and his first miracle at Cana, and also with the miracle of the loaves and fishes and the transfiguration.⁴⁷ Evidence for Advent as a preparatory season leading up to Christmas remains sketchy until the mid- to late-sixth century,⁴⁸ when the season was prescribed for monastics at the council of Tours in 567 and then for laity at the Council of Macon in 581.⁴⁹

From early on, the celebration of Christ's death was central to liturgical calendars throughout Christendom, though the date of Easter caused much controversy. By the fourth century, the feast in the West fell in March or April based on a lunar calendar, generally according to the eighty-four-year cycle of the Roman calculation.⁵⁰ Fourth-century Western sources were divided in their theologies behind the feast, as to whether it was a celebration of the suffering and sacrifice of Christ (*pascha-passio*) or of his resurrection (*pascha-transitus*), one view emphasizing Christ's humanity, the other

elsewhere in the West, except for Rome, where evidence exists for the celebration of Christmas on December 25 from as early as 336 based on the Codex-Calendar of 354. On the possible reasons for celebrating Christmas on December 25, see T. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (New York, 1986), pp. 87-99.

⁴⁷ Given the multiple events celebrated, Filastrius of Brescia (d. c. 397) refers to this feast as *dies Epifaniorum* ("day of the Epiphanies," *Diversarum hereseon liber*, 140.1, CCSL 9, p. 304). M. Connell, "The Liturgical Year in Northern Italy (365-450)," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1995), pp. 234-284 discusses sources for the dating and content of Epiphany celebrations in Northern Italy and throughout the West.

⁴⁸ G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Second Ed. (Westminster, 1947), p. 359 n. 2 posits that the season of Advent was of Spanish or Gallican origin, perhaps dating from the fifth century.

⁴⁹ See Talley, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-155.

⁵⁰ On the fourth-century controversy over the date of Easter, see H. Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society from Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 25-26, 204-205, 249-250. The Roman system of calculation is preserved in the Codex-Calendar of 354; for text, see T. Mommsen, *Chronica Minora*, Saec. IV. V. VI. VII. MGH AA IX, vol 1. (Berlin, 1892), pp. 62-64.

emphasizing his divinity.⁵¹ In order to maintain a pro-Nicene position against heresy, neo-Arianism in particular, Western church fathers resolved the issue by the fifth-century, observing a three-day festival of the Triduum, with the passion celebrated on Good Friday, the descent to the underworld celebrated on Holy Saturday, and the resurrection celebrated on Easter Sunday.⁵² In the weeks leading up to Easter, Lent was kept as a period of fasting. By the fourth century, Easter was the chief occasion for performing the initiatory rites of baptism throughout the Church, and Lent served as the final period of preparation for catechumens.⁵³

A season of celebration after Easter was common, culminating in the festival of Pentecost fifty days later in May or June, when the Holy Spirit descended among the Apostles according to Acts 2.1-2.42. As Martin Connell points out, Western sources, at least those from Northern Italy, do not demonstrate a consistent liturgical pattern for the period between Easter and Pentecost. Some areas celebrated Christ's ascension into heaven on the fortieth day after Easter, ten days before Pentecost; others celebrated a mid-Pentecost feast; still others had one uninterrupted period of celebration between the two feasts.⁵⁴

These festivals of the liturgical year were concentrated within a six-month period from December to June, and the proliferation of saints' days from the fourth century onward helped to fill out the remaining six months along with any gaps between major

⁵¹ Connell, "The Liturgical Year," *op. cit.*, pp. 54-127.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 119.

⁵³ Talley, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁴ Connell, "The Liturgical Year," *op. cit.*, pp. 128-168, esp. pp. 163-168.

festivals.⁵⁵ The celebration of these days was generally associated with the cults of local martyrs and therefore was not standardized. The Codex-Calendar of 354 provides a convenient snapshot of the sanctoral cycle at Rome in the mid-fourth century, which begins with Christmas and includes the anniversaries of the depositions of more than thirty martyrs.⁵⁶

In conjunction with the daily, annual, and sanctoral cycles, Christian liturgy in the West included a regular eucharistic service on Sundays, and perhaps at other times as well.⁵⁷ Although no hymn survives that was explicitly designed to accompany the celebration of the eucharist, a number of hymns make reference to the sacrament of the eucharist alongside other liturgical elements. The celebration of the eucharist centered upon the body and blood of Christ, which were made accessible to the congregation through bread and wine.⁵⁸ By consuming the elements of the eucharist, Christian believers renewed their membership in the body of Christ, which was seen as integral to salvation.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ R. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 97-106.

⁵⁶ The section of the calendar entitled, "Depositions of Martyrs" (Section XII) lists the days on which certain saints were honored; for text, see T. Mommsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72. The section is arranged by month, with the date of each saint's deposition marked for commemoration, and it also contains the earliest testimony for the celebration of Christmas on December 25, which is the first date listed in this section. On the Depositions of the Martyrs, see also M. Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 42-47. For an overview of the reasoning behind dating this section to 336, see Talley, *op. cit.*, p. 85. For similar sanctoral lists based on Gallic sources from the fifth to eighth centuries, see Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751* (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1995), pp. 82-120.

⁵⁷ D. Sheerin, "Eucharistic Liturgy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. by S. Harvey and D. Hunter (Oxford, 2008), pp. 719-720 reports evidence from N. Africa of additional eucharistic services on fast-days (Wednesdays and Fridays), as well as on feast days for saints.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 712, 726.

⁵⁹ On eucharistic doctrine, see *ibid.*, pp. 722-724.

Myth, Ritual, and Time

Scholars working in the classical tradition offer fruitful avenues for exploring the ritual dimensions of song in conjunction with myth and performance.⁶⁰ In her study of archaic and classical Greek choral performance, Barbara Kowalzig investigates song as a medium of social integration, following Claude Calame.⁶¹ She argues that myth, specifically aetiological myth, has the potential to forge shared belief and community identity through choral song performed in a ritual context.⁶²

A similar interdependence between myth and performance enables early Christian Latin hymns to shape the world view of believers. Whereas for Kowalzig the myths of choral song were generally aetiological in nature, the Christian mythical narrative of salvation history spans from the beginning to the end of time:⁶³ following the creation of the universe comes the fall of mankind, when salvation becomes necessary; Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection fulfill the promise of salvation for believers; and the second coming brings the end of time and judgment for everyone.

This narrative, which I have sketched only in the most basic terms, is derived from the text of the Bible, but inevitably it became modified and extended through acts of

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Habinek, *op. cit.*; and B. Gentili, *Poetry and its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the Fifth Century*, translated by A. Cole (Baltimore, London, 1988 [1984]).

⁶¹ B. Kowalzig, *Singing for the Gods: Performances of Myth and Ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 5-6 acknowledges the debt to C. Calame, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Function*, translated by D. Collins and J. Orion (Lanham, MA, 1997 [1977]).

⁶² Kowalzig, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶³ I prefer the term "mythical" for describing the narrative of salvation history because it provides an objective stance for describing the mechanisms behind Christian ritual. The term "sacred" implies a perspective relative to the culture being examined, while the term "divine" implies a culturally constructed power dynamic between humans and deities.

interpretation. Whether through explicit ways of interpreting, such as exegesis,⁶⁴ or implicit ways, such as paraphrase,⁶⁵ interpretation shaped the narrative of salvation history to conform to prevailing doctrine. Frances Young has explored the contribution of biblical interpretation to the creation of a Christian world view.⁶⁶ She sees liturgy and private devotion as being at the heart of this identity-work, but she does not go into detail about the mechanisms through which liturgy works toward that end. This study of ritual and ritualizing hymns represents a step toward filling that gap.⁶⁷

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In order to understand the instructive potential of early Christian Latin hymns, we must consider how these myth and ritual elements relate to each other. Theorists of myth and ritual have established a temporal framework for considering the question. They distinguish between the “ordinary time” of everyday life and “mythical time” or “sacred time,” in which gods and heroes are believed to act.⁶⁸ Mircea Eliade refers to mythical time as *illud tempus* (“that time”) in order to emphasize its otherness and distance from

⁶⁴ On the history of biblical exegesis in the Patristic period, see M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, transl. by J. Hughes (Edinburgh, 1994); and J. Kugel and R. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia, 1986).

⁶⁵ Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-160 discusses techniques of biblical paraphrase, particularly abbreviation, transposition, and amplification, many of which are evident in hymns as well as in biblical epic.

⁶⁶ F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge, 1997). G. Woolfenden, “How Ritual forms Holiness: A Case Study from the Byzantine Tradition,” *Studia Liturgica* 30 (2000), pp. 170-188 addresses a similar question.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 228-235.

⁶⁸ G. Dumézil, “Temps et Mythes,” *Recherches Philosophiques* 5 (1935-1936), pp. 239-250, esp. pp. 242-245.

ordinary time.⁶⁹ Georges Dumézil uses this temporal framework to define a ritual occasion (*fête*):⁷⁰

le moment et le procédé par lesquels le «Grand Temps» et le temps ordinaire communiquent, le premier se vidant alors dans le second d'une partie de son contenu, et les hommes, à la faveur de cette osmose, pouvant agir sur les êtres, forces, événements qui emplissent le premier.

By describing the ritual event as a moment of communication between ordinary time and the Grand Time of myth, Dumézil sets ritual as a bridge between the two temporal spheres. He suggests that those participating in the ritual perceive a sense of agency that reaches into mythical time. By extension, this interface between mythical time and ordinary time can be understood as a two-way process. Not only does ritual enable participants to feel as though they can act in mythical time, but it also encourages them to integrate elements of the myth into their everyday experience. This perceived interpenetration of mythical and ordinary time, which Dumézil likens to osmosis, is the vehicle through which ritual has the capacity to influence the world view of believers.

Dumézil goes on to classify rites by how often myth and lived experience come together, which we might refer to as “periodicity.”⁷¹ On the one hand, “occasional rites” (*rites occasionelles*) are performed as needed for events whose occurrence cannot be predicted, as in the case of epidemic or earthquake. On the other hand, the observance of

⁶⁹ M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, (Orlando, 1987 [1957]), pp. 68-115. See also his *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or Cosmos and History*, transl. by W. Trask (Princeton, 1991 [1949]), *passim*.

⁷⁰ Dumézil, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 237-239. In addition to occasional and periodic rites, he also names a third kind of rite, the “continual rite,” which he explains only briefly with the example of religious interdictions. This concept is both less convincing and less relevant to the question examined here, and so I do not treat rites of this type.

“periodic rites” (*rites périodiques*) happens at regular intervals based on a concrete or abstract calendar. Those based on the former correspond to observed natural phenomena, and the timing of them does not vary by much from society to society. Solstice festivals are a good example. Those based on the latter have intervals imposed by a given society without a direct tie to observed phenomena, though usually there is some indirect tie through the division of weeks, months, and years. Practices determined by the Christian liturgical calendar, for instance, would be of this type.⁷²

The relationship between ordinary time and the calendar can be sharpened by considering Paul Ricoeur’s notions of time. In his three-volume work *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur investigates strategies humans have developed for overcoming what he terms the “aporia of time.”⁷³ This feeling-at-a-loss, he observes, arises from the incommensurability between the human experience of time (“phenomenological time”) and the objective passage of time as measured by observed astrological phenomena (“cosmological time”).⁷⁴ He posits the calendar as one of the primary methods for bridging the divide between the two.⁷⁵ “Calendar time” organizes time within a society

⁷² I. Damais *et al.* *The Church at Prayer, Vol. IV: Liturgy and Time*, transl. by M. O’Connell (Collegeville, 1983) gives an overview of the relationship between liturgy and time as it developed in the Christian tradition, with helpful bibliography.

⁷³ P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 Vols., transl. by K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer (Chicago, 1984-1988 [1983-1985]). I use the abbreviations *TN* 1, *TN* 2, and *TN* 3 to distinguish among the three volumes.

⁷⁴ Throughout the work, Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, uses various terms to refer to phenomenological time, including “lived time” (*TN* 3, p. 105); “human time” (*TN* 3, p. 105); “psychic time” (*TN* 3, p. 106); “psychological time” (*TN* 3, p. 108). He also refers to cosmological time variously as “physical time” (*TN* 3, p. 18); “objective time” (*TN* 3, p. 104); “universal time” (*TN* 3, p. 105); “cosmic time” (*TN* 3, p. 105); “world time,” (*TN* 3, p. 105). Ricoeur lays out the concept of “aporia” in response to Augustine’s treatment of time in *Confessions* XI. See esp. *TN* 1, ch. 1, pp. 5-30; *TN* 3, pp. 12-22.

⁷⁵ In addition to calendars, Ricoeur names two other ways for mediating between phenomenological time and cosmological time: the idea of succession of generations and historical evidence in the form of archives, documents, and “traces,” by which he means material evidence (*Ibid.*, *TN* 3, pp.104-126).

based on a founding event, such as the birth of Christ or the founding of Rome.⁷⁶ It derives its measurements of days, months, and years from astronomical intervals, but it differs from cosmological time because it is not strictly objective or absolute; the names for the intervals and their relationship to the founding event vary from society to society. Nevertheless, calendar time enables those within a given society to relate their experiences to cosmological time and also to the experiences of others living within that society, with the result that astronomical events can be predicted, historical events can be dated, appointments can be made, *etc.*⁷⁷

Mapping these distinctions back onto Dumézil's model allows us to give a more sophisticated definition of ritual as an "alignment" between mythical time and phenomenological time that is correlated with calendar time. In this conception, the mythical and the phenomenological exist as separate temporal strands, and the ritual moment aligns the "now" of lived experience with a particular point of mythical time or, as some might suggest, with the entirety of mythical time.⁷⁸ Ritual is designed to create a bridge between the two so as to give an impression of contemporaneity, or to borrow a term from Ansgar Franz "Zeitgleichheit."⁷⁹ Within this perceived alignment, mythical time is not before or after the "now," but *alongside* the "now." In this scheme, calendar

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, TN 3, pp. 105-109.

⁷⁷ Cf. A. Wallace-Hadrill, "Mutatio Maiorum: The Idea of a Cultural Revolution," in *Roman Cultural Revolution*, edited by T. Habinek and A. Schiesaro (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 3-22, on the significance of Caesar's calendar reforms for shifting conceptions of time from the local to the universal level.

⁷⁸ On the eternal or atemporal quality of mythical time, see Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-72.

⁷⁹ Franz, *op. cit.*, p. 476 in reference to Ambrose's Hymn III, vv. 1-2. I discuss Franz's conception below, p. 28.

time constitutes a third temporal strand that is cyclical and therefore determines a regular schedule of ritual alignment between the mythical and the phenomenological.

The purpose of this ritual alignment is to enable believers to feel that mythical time becomes enacted within lived experience. We can understand this function better through comparison with the Christian liturgical concept of *anamnesis*, or “remembrance.”⁸⁰ In his treatment of liturgy as performance, Richard McCall defines *anamnesis* as distinct from the Aristotelian (and Platonic) concept of *mimesis*.⁸¹ Whereas *mimesis* entails representing or imitating in the present something that exists in the past (or in the imagination), *anamnesis* works in the reverse direction: it entails that the real or actual event exists in the present as an enactment or actualization of the past.⁸² As McCall puts it, “the past event is a symbol used to recall the meaning of the present event. Thus the symbol, or rather the enactment, is dynamic and constitutes reality.”⁸³

The significance of enactment lies in its potential to convey both simple and complex theological ideas to a broader non-elite audience. By creating a sense that the myth is actualized in lived experience, ritual has the potential to affect participants in two

⁸⁰ For an overview of ancient Hebrew and Greek sources for *anamnesis* and modern theological debate about them, see P. Bradshaw, “Anamnesis in Modern Eucharistic Debate,” in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism*, edited by M. Singer (Notre Dame, 2001), pp. 73-84. See also Dix, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162, and R. Taft, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (Rome, 1997), pp. 181-184.

⁸¹ R. McCall, *Do This: Liturgy as Performance* (Notre Dame, 2007), pp. 60-62, 79-105.

⁸² Cf. R. Schechner on “actualization” in “Actuals,” in his *Performance Theory* (New York and London, 1988 [1970]), pp. 35-67, esp. pp. 40-44; and M. Eliade on “reactualization” or “regeneration of time” in *Sacred and Profane*, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 80-85; and *Myth of the Eternal Return*, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-92; and *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, translated by W. Trask (New York, 1965 [1958]), pp. 6, 40.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

ways, which correspond to Clifford Geertz's distinction between world view and ethos.⁸⁴

First, ritual enables believers to perceive that the enacted myth permeates their ordinary experience, thus encouraging them to accept the mythical framework as ontological reality. Second, ritual enables believers to feel a sense of agency within the enacted myth and thereby encourages them to act in ways authorized by that mythical construction of reality.

Hymns and the Sanctification of Time

Hymns emerged in the West just as the development of the Christian calendar of daily and yearly worship began to transform the rhythm of society from civic to sacred.⁸⁵ By virtue of their place within ritual, early Christian Latin hymns worked alongside other ritual elements, such as sacraments and prayers, to create a sense that mythical events became actualized in the liturgical present. In this way, hymns took part in what Gregory Dix terms "the sanctification of time".⁸⁶

The (daily) office, when it had been fully organised, enabled the church to set about sanctifying human life within time by consecrating the chief natural points of every day—the quiet of the night, dawn, the beginning of work, the approach

⁸⁴ Geertz, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90, 126-127. See above n. 3.

⁸⁵ On the transition from the civic/ secular time of Rome to Christian time, see Markus, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-135; M. Salzman, "The Christianization of Sacred Time and Sacred Space," in *The Transformations of Urbs Roma in Late Antiquity*, ed. by W.V. Harris (Portsmouth, 1999), pp. 123-134; and C. Pietri, "Le temps de la semaine à Rome et dans l'Italie Chrétienne (IV-VIe S.)," in *Le Temps Chrétien de la Fin de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge, IIIe-XIIIe siècles*, Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris, 1984), pp. 63-98.

⁸⁶ Dix, *op. cit.*, p. 333. Taft, *Beyond East and West*, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-276, esp. pp. 271-274 eschews Dix's idea of the "sanctification of time" based on the distinction Dix makes between liturgies of "history" and the eschatological liturgy of the eucharist. Instead, Taft maintains that all Christian rituals were meant to create an *anamnesis* of the entirety of salvation history (see also pp. 182-183). My conception of the term "sanctification of time" takes into account Taft's criticisms and is inclusive of eschatological perspectives as a part of the sanctification process.

of the day's heat, noon, the return to the afternoon's work, sunset, rest—with appropriate christian [*sic*] prayers, publicly offered on behalf of the whole community. So in the same way, the liturgical cycle, when its main outline had been completed, sanctified the annual round of the seasons, and set out to imprint on the rhythm of nature and its reflection in social life the stamp of distinctly christian ideas. There is no more effective method of keeping the plain christian man and woman in mind of elementary facts of christian doctrine than the perpetual round of the Hours of the Passion set in the ordered sequence of the liturgical seasons.

By “consecrating” the chief points of the day and the year with liturgical celebration, the daily office and the annual liturgical cycle were important vehicles for maintaining and spreading Christian belief throughout the West in the fourth century and beyond.

Early Christian Latin hymns provide a unique opportunity to explore the mechanisms that drive the sanctification of time. In particular, these hymns foreground the alignment between myth, ritual, and experience. Each temporal strand has its own markers, and by plotting out these strands we can observe how the ritual alignment is constructed. The mythical strand is immediately apparent in the hymns through references to the narrative of salvation history. These references often point toward a specific verse or episode from the Bible. From the OT, episodes from Genesis and Exodus are particularly common, and from the NT, the episodes from the Gospel narratives feature prominently, especially the incarnation, nativity, passion, and crucifixion. From the fifth century onward, Jerome's Vulgate version was in widespread use, but before then, fourth-century hymn writers such as Ambrose and Prudentius would have used Old Latin versions of the Bible.⁸⁷ Considering the difficulties in reconstructing the specific version of the Old Latin Bible used by a given author, I rely on the Vulgate

⁸⁷ On Ambrose's text of the Bible, see R. Muncey, *The New Testament Text of St. Ambrose* (Cambridge, 1959); on Prudentius', see J. Charlet, “Prudence et la Bible,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 18 (1983), pp. 3-149.

as a standard text for adducing biblical sources if the argument requires evidence of direct verbal overlap.⁸⁸ In many cases, however, references to the narrative of salvation history did not engage the Bible directly, but instead they were filtered through intermediary sources, such as creedal texts, sermons, and exegetical works. Nonetheless, these still serve as markers for the mythical strand.

The phenomenological strand designates the lived experience of those performing the hymn, and within a temporal framework, it can be identified as the “now” or “present of performance.” It is marked by the expressions that point to the present, such as the temporal adverbs *nunc* or *iam*. One can also see references to it in the use of verbs or pronouns in first-person plural, since they point toward the collective experience of those performing. This is particularly true in cases when a first-person-plural verb marks an utterance as song. In his study of the language of verbal performance in classical Latin, Thomas Habinek draws distinctions between the verb *cano* and other verbs of utterance.⁸⁹ Whereas *loquor* refers to the unmarked act of speaking, *cano* marks an utterance as ritual or ritualized speech, *i.e.*, song.⁹⁰ He further differentiates between the verbs *cano* and *dico*, suggesting that “*dico* emphasizes the validity or authoritativeness of the utterance, while *cano* points to its aesthetic qualities and performance context.”⁹¹ Yet he also notes that the meanings of *cano* and *dico* can overlap, such that any sung utterance naturally

⁸⁸ For the text of the Vulgate, I use R. Weber and R. Gryson (eds.), *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 5th ed. (Stuttgart, 2007). Translations are from B. Metzger and R. Murphy (eds.), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (NRSV), (New York, 1994).

⁸⁹ T. Habinek, *The World of Roman Song: From Ritualized Speech to Social Order* (Baltimore, 2005), pp. 58-74.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-63.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

has a claim to authority, whereas not every authoritative utterance can claim to be a song.⁹² Another marker for the phenomenological element is the use of the demonstrative pronoun *hic*, which can be thought of as “the demonstrative of the first person,” since it points to what is near the speaker.⁹³

The ritual strand can be seen in references to the liturgical moment for which the hymn was intended. My focus is on hymns oriented around the liturgy for daily and yearly worship, and the examples treated here highlight the significance of the liturgical strand for structuring an alignment between myth and experience. Further study is needed to account for the mechanisms at work behind the hymns associated with saints’ days.

Temporal alignment is designed to create a sense that myth becomes enacted within the experience of believers, and as is expected, markers for enactment are visible within the hymns as well. These markers correspond to elements from Richard Schechner’s notion of “actuals”:⁹⁴

An actual has five basic qualities...: 1) *process*, something happens *here and now*; 2) *consequential, irremediable, and irrevocable* acts, exchanges, or situations; 3) *contest*, something is at stake for the performers and often for the spectators; 4) *initiation, a change in status* for the participants; 5) space used *concretely and organically*.

Given that hymns are only small parts of much larger liturgical scripts for a much wider performance context, we cannot always observe all five qualities of actuals, especially the fifth one dealing with space. The first quality, “process,” pertains to the phenomenological markers evident in the hymns, which indicate that something is

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 65.

⁹³ J.B. Greenough *et al.* (eds.) *Allen and Greenough’s New Latin Grammar*, revised by A. Mahoney (Newburyport, MA, 2001 [1903]), § 297a.

⁹⁴ Schechner, *op. cit.*, p. 51. The italics are his.

supposed to happen “here and now” in the experience of those performing. The second quality consisting of “consequential, irremediable, and irrevocable acts” are envisioned in the hymns as transformations in nature or objects, and these transformations serve as the markers for enactment. Furthermore, these transformations are cues that encourage the transformation of the participants, which fits with the fourth category of “initiation” as “a change in status.” In addition, the hymns often generate a sense of “contest” by naming what is “at stake,” specifically salvation, which likewise works as a marker for enactment. In some cases, the sense of contest is extended through an opposition between two groups, those who engage in transformation and therefore receive salvation versus those who do not.

Instruction works across this perceived interface between myth and experience. If successful, enactment encourages believers to accept the version of myth presented within the hymn into their world view. Therefore, by attending to the nuance of mythical strand, we can observe the particular ideas that the author intends to transmit to those performing. These can range from a basic understanding of the contours of salvation history to complex theological doctrines that are adapted from exegetical sources.

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Although one can see evidence of alignment and enactment throughout the corpus of early Christian Latin hymns, I have chosen to demonstrate the model by focusing on four hymns: Ambrose’s Hymn III, Prudentius’ *Cathemerinon* XI, Sedulius’ Hymn II, and Fortunatus’ *Carmen* II.2. Each chapter of this study explores the mechanisms of alignment and enactment within one hymn in order to explain how they work as tools of instruction. I begin by considering Ambrose’s Hymn III for the third hour because it

offers the clearest demonstration of markers for alignment. I show how the recurrence of the third hour serves as a vehicle for actualizing the effects of Christ's crucifixion and Pentecost, and I draw attention to instances where Ambrose infuses the sacred element of the alignment with complex Mariological and ecclesiological ideas.

Prudentius' *Cathemerinon* XI allows us to see the markers for enactment most clearly. The hymn is constructed around the occasion of Christmas, though it is unlikely that the hymn was performed in a liturgical setting. Nonetheless, markers for alignment and enactment are embedded within the text. Prudentius extends the alignment by weaving in a fourth temporal strand for cosmological time, and this allows him to magnify the enactment. In order to promote a sense of something "at stake," he incorporates stock motifs of anti-Judaism into the mechanisms of enactment.

Sedulius' Hymn II highlights the importance of temporal alignment for creating enactment. In its original form, this ritualizing hymn was designed to create an alignment around its abecedarian structure, but when the hymn was adapted for use in the liturgy, the dynamics of alignment and enactment were modified. The adaptations rely instead on an alignment with the liturgical moment, and therefore reinforce the significance of temporal overlap for producing successful enactment.

Fortunatus' *Carmen* II.2 allows us to expand the model presented by considering a different mode of alignment. The hymn was written for the installation of the relics of the True Cross in Poitiers in 569, and as such it promotes an alignment between performance and myth oriented toward the relics themselves. The applicability of alignment and enactment within a relic context suggests a potential for developing this model beyond the sanctification of time to the sanctification of experience in general.

AMBROSE, HYMN III: SANCTIFYING THE THIRD HOUR

Ambrose's Hymn III is the most accessible place to begin because it allows us to recognize the mechanisms of alignment most clearly.⁹⁵ Each of the three temporal strands—phenomenological, liturgical, and mythical—have markers embedded within the text, which taken together clearly demonstrate alignment around the liturgical moment. As its first line suggests (*Iam surgit hora tertia*), the hymn was written for the daily office of the third hour, roughly equivalent to 9 o'clock in the morning.⁹⁶ This office was one of the three "little hours," along with the sixth and ninth hours, established for daily prayer.⁹⁷ As we shall see below, the liturgical moment of the third hour is the central organizing feature of the hymn. Ambrose connects alignment at the third hour with the effects of Christ's crucifixion and Pentecost in order to promote enactment. Ultimately, the ritual structure embedded within hymns serves as a mode of instruction for believers. Ambrose infuses the mythical element of the alignment with the idea of Mary's perpetual virginity, which, as we shall see, was integral to Ambrose's Mariological and ecclesiological thinking as expressed in his exegetical works.

⁹⁵ The authenticity of Hymn III is certain based on a reference by Augustine, who quotes lines from the hymn and associates them with Ambrose (*De Natura et Gratia*, 74 [lxiii]). See also J.-L. Charlet, "Hymne 3, '*Iam Surgit hora tertia*,'" in Fontaine et al. *Hymnes*, op. cit., p. 207.

⁹⁶ Franz, op. cit., pp. 456-469 argues that the hymn should be understood as a part of the midday office, rather than the office for the third hour, but this does not make sense within the temporal dynamics of the hymn.

⁹⁷ On the history of the daily hours, see Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours*, op. cit. On the third hour specifically, see Franz, op. cit., pp. 448-455.

Alignment in Action

We can observe a clear example of alignment at the opening of the hymn: “Now the third hour arises/ at which Christ ascended/ascends to the cross” (*Iam surgit hora tertia/ qua Christus ascendit crucem*, vv. 1-2).⁹⁸ As the first word, the adverb “now” (*iam*, v. 1) marks “the present” for those performing the hymn and therefore points to their phenomenological perception of time. Their experience is then set alongside the liturgical moment (*tertia hora*, v. 1). This ritual framework corresponds to Ricoeur’s notion of calendar time, in this case a daily office, which entails recurrence of the rite everyday at the same time, roughly correlated to the rising of the sun. What makes the third hour more than just a marker of objective time is its alignment with the mythical strand. In the second verse, the third hour is redefined in terms of the mythical event of Christ’s crucifixion (“in which Christ ascended/ascends to the cross,” *qua Christus ascendit crucem*).⁹⁹ The word order in these lines mirrors this alignment since *tertia hora* (“the third hour,” v. 1) appears in between the phenomenological marker *iam* and the mythical indication *qua Christus ascendit crucem*. The hour stands as the middle term that enables the alignment to happen.

The perception of contemporaneity between the phenomenological strand and the mythical strand is enhanced by the fact that the verb *ascendit* (v. 2) can be understood both in the perfect tense and in the present tense.¹⁰⁰ As a perfect tense verb, “he ascended” refers back to a mythical event that has already occurred, but as a present tense

⁹⁸ I use the text from Fontaine *et al.*, *Hymnes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 211, 213. Translations are my own.

⁹⁹ Mk 15.25 is the only account to indicate that Jesus was crucified at the third hour.

¹⁰⁰ J. den Boeft, “Ambrosius Lyricus,” in *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays*, edited by J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1993), pp. 88-89. Cf. Franz, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

verb, “he ascends” describes an ongoing action that recurs at the same interval that the third hour arises (*surgit*, v. 1). The choice of *ascendit* adds a further layer of meaning, for the same form appears in the early Western creeds to describe Christ’s ascension into heaven.¹⁰¹ In this context, the appearance of the verb suggests that the strand of mythical time also includes the ascension, and in effect, it allows the ritual moment to align the phenomenological now with a second moment of mythical time. Ansgar Franz points to this “Zeitgleichheit zwischen dem Vollzug des Liedes und der Chronologie der biblischen Ereignisse” as the central meaning of the hymn.¹⁰² Indeed, the goal of this ritual alignment is to create a sense that the “now” of performance is contemporaneous with the moment of the crucifixion, and the third hour serves as the intermediary that allows this to happen.

Yet, the hymn does not dwell on this alignment exclusively. Another biblical event is incorporated into the strand of mythical time in the final lines of stanza 4: “truth has filled with faith/ Churches throughout the whole world” (*fide repleuit ueritas/ totum per orbem ecclesias*, vv. 15-16). This picture of truth filling the churches with faith recalls the description of Pentecost at Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit descended among the apostles at the third hour enabling them to speak many languages and expand their following.¹⁰³ Ambrose’s choice of the verb *repleuit* (“it filled,” v. 15) echoes the biblical context, where forms of the same verb *repleo* are used to describe both how the Holy Spirit fills a space, specifically a house (“the Spirit filled the whole house,”

¹⁰¹ Cf. Old Roman and Nicene Creed text: *ascendit in caelum* (“he ascended into heaven”).

¹⁰² Franz, *op. cit.*, p. 476. Cf. J. den Boeft, “Aeternae Rerum Conditor: Ambrose’s Hymn about ‘Time’,” in *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome: Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst*, ed. by F. Martinez and G. Luttikhuisen (Leiden, Boston, 2003), p. 33.

¹⁰³ The third hour is mentioned at Acts 2.15.

spiritus...repleuit totam domum, Acts 2.2), and also how it fills people (“All were filled with the Holy Spirit,” *et repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto*, Acts 2.4). The biblical context also stresses the completeness of the filling with the terms *totam* and *omnes*, a sense which is also carried over into the hymn in the phrase *totum per orbem* (“throughout the entire world,” v. 16).

*

Ambrose is not the first to align biblical moments with the experience of those engaged in the ritual of the daily office. A reconstruction of the *Apostolic Tradition*, a liturgical source dating from the first quarter of the third century and originally written in Greek,¹⁰⁴ perhaps by Hippolytus of Rome, connects the observance of daily prayer with events surrounding Christ’s crucifixion (41):¹⁰⁵

Pray at the third hour and bless God.... For at that hour, Christ was nailed to a tree....Pray likewise at the time of the sixth hour. For when Christ was nailed to the wood of the cross, the day was divided, and darkness fell....And also at the ninth hour, let them pray a great prayer and a great blessing....For at that hour Christ was pierced in the side and poured out water and blood.

Later in the third century, Tertullian and Cyprian, both writing in Latin in North Africa, also mention times for daily prayer at the third, sixth, and ninth hours, yet they link them with different biblical events largely from Acts. Tertullian (d. after 220), for instance, states (*On Prayer* 25):¹⁰⁶

Concerning the time [of prayer], however, the external observance of certain hours will not be unprofitable. I mean those common hours that mark intervals of

¹⁰⁴ The text of the *Apostolic Tradition* that deals with the daily hours is reconstructed from an eleventh century manuscript to fill a lacuna in an existing fourth-century manuscript. I follow the arguments of Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁰⁵ I borrow Taft’s translation, *Liturgy of the Hours*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ Taft’s translation, *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

the day: the third, sixth, and ninth, which are found to have been more solemn in the Scriptures. At the third hour the Holy Spirit was first poured out upon the gathered disciples (Acts 2.15). Peter on the day he experienced the vision of the whole community in that small vessel, had gone upstairs to pray at the sixth hour (Acts 10.9). The same one was going to the temple with John at the ninth hour when he restored the paralytic to health (Acts 3.1).¹⁰⁷

Ambrose's contribution is to bring these two traditions of daily prayer together so that the third hour connects with the crucifixion and Pentecost. Thus, both mythical events, and perhaps a third with the suggestion of the ascension, become aligned with the phenomenological experience of those participating in the ritual by virtue of occurring at the same time of day.

Enacting Salvation and the Formation of the Church

The purpose of this ritual alignment is to give a sense that mythical time is, or can be, enacted within lived experience. In Ambrose's Hymn III, enactment can be seen in how biblical events are elided with their effects, which spill over from the mythical realm into lived experience. Ambrose develops this idea in relation to Christ's crucifixion in the third and fourth stanzas (vv. 9-16):

Haec hora, quae finem dedit diri ueterno criminis, mortisque regnum diruit culpamque ab aeuo sustulit.	10
---	----

Hinc iam beata tempora Christi coepere gratia: fide repleuit ueritas totum per orbem ecclesias.	15
--	----

This hour that gives an end to the old ways of ill-boding crime	10
--	----

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Cyprian (d. c. 258), *On the Lord's Prayer*, 34.

both destroys the kingdom of death
and wipes out the sin from the age.

Now from here on the blessed times
have begun by the grace of Christ:
truth has filled with faith 15
Churches throughout the whole world.

The expression “this hour” (*haec hora*, v. 9) again evokes the liturgical moment of the third hour, and the demonstrative *haec* points to those performing the hymn, who would experience the hour as “this one” in the present. Enactment is evident in the construction of the third hour as a point of transition: it marked an end of crime (*finem dedit/ diri ueterno criminis*, vv. 9-10); it destroyed death (*mortisque regnum diruit*, v. 10); it brought an end to sin (*culpamque ab aeuo sustulit*, v. 12). By setting *haec hora* as the subject of *dedit* (v. 9), *diruit* (v. 11), and *sustulit* (v. 12), rather than Christ, Ambrose foregrounds the ritual moment as the mediating element between myth and experience. The expression *hinc iam* (“now from here,” v. 13) marks the boundary between the evils that diminish in stanza 3 (vv. 9-12) and the “blessed times” depicted in stanza 4 (vv. 13-16). The “grace of Christ” (*Christi...gratia*, v. 14) is seen as the cause of this change,¹⁰⁸ but it is striking that here the third hour defines the change and thereby actualizes it for believers.

This transition recalls the opposition between Adam and Christ in Romans 5.12-21. Whereas Adam introduced sin and death into the world through his transgression (Rom 5.12-14), Christ through his grace replaced sin with righteousness and death with life (Rom 5. 15-17). Paul frames this opposition in terms of its effects on humanity, and

¹⁰⁸ Rom 5.15, 17, 21.

by repeatedly speaking of “us” within this larger notion of humanity,¹⁰⁹ he makes it clear that he sees the effects of the crucifixion as reaching into the realm of lived experience. By conceiving of the third hour in terms similar to Romans, Ambrose indicates that Christ’s crucifixion has effects beyond the mythical that become actualized for those performing the hymn. The alignment of “now” with Christ’s crucifixion suggests that crime, sin, and death have been eliminated not in the abstract, but in reality, and that the blessed times (*beata tempora*) have in fact begun, when salvation becomes accessible for believers.

Alignment with Pentecost in vv. 15-16 is also associated with an enactment of the mythical event. The passage from Acts marks an important point in the foundation narrative of the Church. The biblical sequence of events begins with the Holy Spirit descending and filling the disciples, who then gained the ability to speak in many different languages (Acts 2.1-2.6); then Peter preaches the message of Christ and the second coming to non-believers (Acts 2.14-2.36); in the end, nearly three thousand converted and were baptized (Acts 2.41). In Ambrose’s adaptation of Acts, the entire process is condensed into a single action, which requires some unpacking: “truth has filled with faith/ Churches throughout the whole world” (*fide repleuit ueritas/ totum per orbem ecclesias*, vv. 15-16). Ambrose’s version does not include the Holy Spirit or the apostles. Instead, the abstract “truth” (*ueritas*) seems to combine the message that the Holy Spirit passed on to the apostles and that they subsequently preached to potential converts. Likewise, “faith” (*fide*) seems to encompass the reaction of the apostles to the

¹⁰⁹ See Rom 5.1-11, 6.1-11.

Holy Spirit and also the reaction of the crowd to the apostles' message. Thus the two stages are abstracted and integrated into a single process whereby truth produces faith.

The outcome is that the churches are filled (*replevit... ecclesias*, vv. 15-16). Here Ambrose plays on two possible meanings for *ecclesia*. First, "church" can signify a place of assembly for Christian believers,¹¹⁰ in which case filling the churches would recall how the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples and filled their gathering place (Acts 2.2). Second, "Church" can refer to the congregation of Christian believers gathered together,¹¹¹ which would recall the mass conversion in the Acts narrative. But the fact that there are multiple churches (*ecclesias*) distributed "throughout the whole world" (*totum per orbem*) suggests a scale beyond what is reported in Acts. Instead, Ambrose seems to envision a stage when Christianity attracted a wider following.

In effect, enactment of Pentecost becomes associated with the formation and expansion of the Church. By condensing and abstracting the Pentecost narrative, Ambrose creates a process that is actualized each time the third hour recurs: truth creates faith, which in turn increases the size of the Church. Thus, the third hour becomes an opportunity to spread truth, reaffirm faith, and expand the Christian following. Perhaps we can even understand the performance of the hymn as a realization of this process. The words of the hymn would be the element of truth, and in singing them, participants would produce faith for themselves and anyone hearing the hymns, while the sound of singing would fill the church.

¹¹⁰ Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1965 [1879]), s.v., *ecclesia* II.3.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, s.v., *ecclesia* II.1.

Ritual alignment with the two biblical moments thus results in two complementary enactments. Through an alignment with the crucifixion, the third hour allows believers to feel that salvation becomes accessible to them. The promise of salvation produces faith on an individual level, which then translates to a corporate level through membership in the Church and participation in the ritual.

Modifying Belief and Behavior

By creating a sense that the myth is actualized in lived experience, enactment has the potential to shape participants' understanding of myth. We can observe this process in the second half of the hymn. Here Ambrose reprises the themes of crucifixion, salvation, and Church formation, thus creating continuity with the first half. Within this framework he infuses a particular theological perspective on the issue of Mary's virginity, which, as we shall see, is connected with his wider Mariological and ecclesiological views.

Mary is introduced in connection with the crucifixion in stanza 5 (vv. 17-20):

Celsus triumphi uertice
matri loquebatur suae:
“en filius, mater, tuus;
apostole, en mater tua.” 20

High upon the apex of triumph
he was saying to his own mother:
“Behold, mother, your son;
Apostle, behold your mother.” 20

Verses 18-20 give a near-direct quotation from the crucifixion narrative in John's Gospel (19.26-27):

(26) cum vidisset ergo Iesus matrem et discipulum stantem quem diligebat
dicit matri suae mulier ecce filius tuus (27) deinde dicit discipulo ecce
mater tua et ex illa hora accepit eam discipulus in sua

(26) When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” (27) Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own house.

The next stanza provides starting point for interpreting this biblical reference (vv. 21-24):

praetenta nuptae foedera
alto docens mysterio
ne uirginis partus sacer
matris pudorem laederet.

Teaching that the contracts of the bride
were concealed in deep mystery
lest the sacred birth-giving by the virgin
harm the shame of the mother.¹¹²

Although Ambrose generally avoids enjambment between stanzas, here he links vv. 21-22 to the stanza before with the participle *docens* (“teaching,” v. 22), which modifies Jesus as the subject of *loquebatur* (“he was saying,” v. 18). Ambrose thus connects what Jesus says in stanza 5 with his own interpretation of what Jesus’ words “teach” in stanza 6.

Elsewhere in his corpus, Ambrose gives two different interpretations of John 19.26-27, and both are activated in Hymn III. In his arguments for the perpetual virginity of Mary, Ambrose adduces John 19.26-27 as evidence that Mary and Joseph never consummated their marriage (*De institutione virginis*, 7.47-48):¹¹³

Dignum quippe erat ut ... matrem dubio pudoris absolueret. Dicit ergo ad matrem: Mulier, ecce filius tuus. Dicit et ad discipulum: Ecce mater tua. Ipse est discipulus, cui mater commendebatur. Quomodo marito uxorem tolleret, si fuerat Maria mixta coniugio aut usum tori iugalis agnouerat?

¹¹² As I discuss below, multiple interpretations are possible for this stanza.

¹¹³ Text is from *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera* 14.1. The translation is my own.

Indeed it was right that he absolve his mother from any doubt of shame. Therefore he said to his mother: “Woman, behold your son.” Then he said to the disciple: “Behold your mother.” The disciple is the one to whom his mother was entrusted. In what way could he have separated a wife from her husband, if Mary had had intercourse or observed the custom of the marriage bed?

The line of argument is that if Mary and Joseph had consummated their marriage, then she would not have been able to enter into the custody of the apostle John, since she would have been totally subject to her husband. Instead, given that Jesus’ words asking the apostle to behold his mother effectively transfer her into his care, she could not have had intercourse with Joseph.¹¹⁴ If we apply this interpretation to the hymn, we can understand the phrase *nuptae foedera* (“contracts of the bride,” v. 21) as the marriage contract between Mary and Joseph. Fontaine takes the qualifier *praetenta* to mean “placed in front of so as to conceal,” and the “deep mystery” (*alto... mysterio*, v. 22) to be a dative indicating what is concealed,¹¹⁵ namely how Mary remained a virgin even though she conceived and bore a child.¹¹⁶ Then a fuller translation of vv. 21-22 would be, “[Jesus] teaching that the marriage contract between Mary and Joseph was set forth to conceal the deep mystery of Mary’s virginal conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.”

A second interpretation is possible if we consider that for Ambrose, the issue of Mary’s perpetual virginity was intimately linked with her role as a type of the Church.¹¹⁷ Elsewhere he reads the Church into John 19.26-27 (*Exp. in Luc.* VII.5):¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ *Exp. in Luc.* II.4. See also *de Inst. virg.* 7.46-47.

¹¹⁵ Charlet, “Hymne 3,” *op. cit.*, *ad loc.* renders *alto mysterio* as a dative with the compound verb *praetendo* on the authority of Pliny, *Natural History* 11.67. Cf. his translation of vv. 21-22: “montrant que le pacte des nocces/ avait voilé un grand mystère.”

¹¹⁶ Ambrose uses the term *mysterium* to describe Mary’s virginal conception at *Exp. in Luc.* II.6, a passage which will be discussed in greater detail below.

¹¹⁷ Ambrose refers to Mary as a “type of the church” (*typus ecclesiae*) at *Exp. in Luc.* II. 7. 104 and *de Paenitentia* 1.15.

Eris filius tonitrui, si fueris filius ecclesiae. Dicat et tibi de patibulo crucis Christus: *ecce mater tua*, dicat et ecclesiae: *ecce filius tuus*; tunc enim incipies esse filius ecclesiae, cum in cruce uictorem uideris Christum.

You will be the son of the Thunderer, if you were the son of the Church. Let Christ also speak to you from the cross: “behold your mother,” and let him also say to the Church: “behold your son”; for from that time forward you will become a son of the Church, when you look upon Christ as a victor on the cross.

In this excerpt, Ambrose reverses the order of expressions from the biblical context so that the words *ecce mater tua* (“behold your mother”) appear first, which allows him to alter the identity of the mother, replacing *matri suae* (“your mother,” John 19.26) with *ecclesiae* (“Church,” *Exp. in Luc.* VII.5). This change renders Mary as the embodiment of the Church and the apostle as the first “son of the Church” (*filius ecclesiae*). Ambrose presents the mutual recognition between the Church and her son as a victory for Christ on the cross (“when you look upon Christ as a victor on the cross,” *cum in cruce uictorem uideris Christum*). The use of the generalizing second-person “you” transforms this moment of recognition from a singular instance that applies to the apostle into a paradigm to be followed by all believers. Ambrose thus suggests that believers can likewise become “sons of the Church” by seeing Christ in triumph on the cross.

This connection between Mary and the Church opens up a symbolic framework for interpreting vv. 17-22. If we understand *mater* (v. 20) as a symbol for *ecclesia*, then Jesus’ words in vv. 19-20 would likewise acknowledge John as a member of the Church. As in the *Expositions on the Gospel of Luke*, this act is linked with the notion of Christ’s victory on the cross, which is evident in the phrase “pinnacle of triumph” (*triumphi uertice*, v. 17). Furthermore, the adjective *celsus* (“lofty,” v. 17) indicates a higher

¹¹⁸ Text is that of M. Adriaen, *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Mediolansis Opera*, Pars IV, CSEL14 (Turnhout, 1957), p. 216, ll. 65-69. Translation is my own.

physical position,¹¹⁹ which Jesus would have had on the cross, but it also carries also a sense of authority and status,¹²⁰ inverting the acts of mockery directed at Jesus before his death. This equation between Mary and the Church carries over to the image of *nupta* (“bride”) in v. 21, which recalls conceptions of the Church as the “bride of Christ.”¹²¹ In this context, *praetenta* (v. 21) is best understood on the basis of a parallel in the *de Paenitentia*, where Ambrose uses a form of the same verb *praetendo* to indicate the symbolic correspondence between Mary and the Church: “that evangelical woman shows herself to be the type of the Church” (*illa mulier evangelica...quae typum praetendit ecclesiae*, 1.15). The entire phrase *praetenta nuptae foedera* (v. 21) would then indicate that the marriage contract between Christ and the Church was symbolically manifested in the words that Christ spoke to Mary and John the apostle.

A passage from the *Expositions on the Gospel of Luke* offers a possibility for understanding *alto mysterio* (“holy mystery,” v. 22) within this framework as well (*Exp. in Luc. II.7*):¹²²

Certe quando iustum docuit Ioseph, satis declaravit, quod sancti spiritus templum, matrem domini, utrum mysterii non violare potuit....Discamus mysterium. Bene desponsata, sed uirgo, quia est ecclesiae typus, quae est immaculata, sed nupta. Concepit nos uirgo de spiritu, parit nos uirgo sine gemitu.

Certainly when Joseph reveals this just state of affairs [i.e., that he had not slept with Mary], he rather declares that he is not able to desecrate the temple of the

¹¹⁹ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. 1. *celsus*, I.

¹²⁰ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. 1. *celsus*, II.2.

¹²¹ For a history of this doctrine, especially as relates to Origen, see F. Ledegang, *Mysterium Ecclesiae: Images of the Church and its Members in Origen* (Leuven, 2001), pp. 129-200, 661, esp. 139-171.

¹²² Text is that of Adriaen, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, ll. 102-106. Translation augmented from that of D. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 198.

Holy Spirit, the mother of the Lord, the uterus of mystery.... Let us learn the mystery. It is well that she was betrothed but a virgin, for she is a symbol of the Church, which is untainted, but married. She conceived us as a virgin by the Spirit, she gives birth to us without groaning.

In this excerpt, Ambrose draws a parallel between Mary and the Church in terms of *mysterium*: just as Mary experiences the mystery of conceiving by the Spirit and giving birth to Jesus while still a virgin, so too the Church as a virgin experiences the mystery of conceiving by the Spirit and giving birth to “us” (“She conceived us as a virgin by the Spirit, she gives birth to us,” *concepit nos uirgo de spiritu, parit nos uirgo*), meaning members of the Church. The phrase “teaching by holy mystery” (*alto docens mysterio*, v. 22) suggests that the mystery happens at the same time as Jesus speaks, and therefore that Jesus’ words from the cross signify the moment when the Church conceived and gave birth to Christian believers, collectively represented by John. Thus vv. 17-22 can be understood as a representation of the foundational moment for the Church, a reading which fits with the thrust of vv. 15-16, treated above. Those verses highlighted the role of Pentecost in the formation and growth of the Church, but here, Ambrose gives one step prior to Pentecost, where the very notion of a Church with followers comes into being.

The infusion of orthodox doctrine is particularly evident in the final two lines of stanza 6 (vv. 23-24), which state that Jesus’ purpose in “teaching” (*docens*, v. 22) such things was to ensure that Mary’s virginity would not be impugned: “lest the sacred birth-giving by the virgin/ harm the shame of the mother,” (*ne uirginis partus sacer/ matris pudorem laederet*, vv. 23-24). The need for defense suggests that the idea of Mary as an “ever-virgin” did come under scrutiny. David Hunter has shown that the issue of Mary’s

virginity figured prominently in fourth-century debates on marriage and asceticism.¹²³

Ambrose in particular was deeply invested in maintaining that Mary remained a virgin throughout her life, even at the moment when she gave birth to Jesus, a theological view which is evident in Hymn III with the phrases “sacred birth-giving of the virgin” (*uirginis partus sacer*, v. 23) and “birth-giving of a sacred virgin” (*partum uirginis sacrae*, v. 30).

As Hunter demonstrates, Ambrose’s insistence Mary’s virginity was bound up with his view of sexual purity as both the origin of salvation and the means for attaining it.

Ambrose’s position on Mary’s *virginitas in partu* came under attack in the late 380s and early 390s by Jovinian, who held that although Mary conceived Jesus as a virgin, she did not retain her physical integrity during the birthing process.¹²⁴

This controversy provides a context for understanding the following stanza of the hymn (vv. 25-28):

cui fidem caelestibus	25
Iesus dedit miraculis;	
nec credidit plebs impia,	
qui credidit saluus erit.	

to which Jesus provides assurance	25
with celestial miracles;	
and even then the impious race did not believe,	
but the one who believed, will be saved.	

Here Ambrose distinguishes between two groups, those who believe (*qui credidit*, v. 28) and those who do not (*nec credidit*, v. 27). Jesus himself provides the basis of belief (“he gives faith,” *fidem... dedit*, vv. 25-26) through his “celestial miracles” (*caelestibus*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-204 gives an analysis of the development of Ambrose’s position on Mary’s virginity and its relationship to the church and salvation in light of the debate with Jovinian.

¹²⁴ Ambrose, *Ep. extra collectionem* 15.4 (CSEL 82.3, 305) reports Jovinian’s position: “as a virgin she conceived, but she gave birth not as a virgin” (*virgo concepit, non virgo generavit*). Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23, 203-204, suggests that the virulence of Ambrose’s response indicates that Jovinian challenged his orthodoxy on the issue.

...*miraculis*, vv. 25-26).¹²⁵ If *caelestis* is interpreted as “having to do with the Holy Spirit,” a sense that is common in Ambrose’s writings, then these “celestial miracles” would include both possible meanings of *alto mysterio* treated above: the virginal conception of Mary through the Spirit and the virginal conception of the Church through the Spirit. In the former case, we can understand that Jesus “gives faith” through his birth from the Virgin Mary, and in the latter case, we can see how he “gives faith” by acknowledging the apostle John as the symbolic offspring of the Church and the Spirit. These “miracles of the Holy Spirit” may also point back to the miracle of Pentecost from vv. 15-16.

Ambrose refers to those who reject this faith as an “impious race” (*plebs impia*), using language that is often deployed against the Jews. Elsewhere he uses the label “impious” against those, like Jovinian and his followers, who questioned Mary’s virginity. His treatise *De institutione virginis*, written at the height of the controversy with Jovinian, provides the closest parallel. Immediately following a quotation from John 19.26-27, treated above, Ambrose commands: “Shut your mouths, impious ones; open your ears, pious ones; listen to what Christ is saying [that Joseph and Mary had never consummated their marriage]” (*Claudite ora, impii; aperite aures, pii; audite quid Christus loquatur*, 7.48). The opposition between those who are “impious” (*impii*) and those who are “pious” (*pii*) is predicated upon an understanding of Mary’s perpetual virginity. In the hymn, piety is also linked with belief. Those who do not believe (*nec credidit*, v. 27) are labeled as “the impious race” (*plebs impia*, v. 27). On the other hand,

¹²⁵ Cf. Charlet, “Hymne 3,” *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

he assures those who do believe (*qui credidit*, v. 28) that they “will be saved” (*saluus erit*, v. 28).

In this move, Ambrose connects the benefits enacted by the crucifixion, which we saw above at vv. 9-14 with the elimination of sin and death and instantiation of the “blessed times.” With salvation contingent upon belief, the stark separation between belief and non-belief thus works as an exhortation to accept the doctrine that Ambrose sets forth in the hymn. He is careful to integrate the notion of Mary’s perpetual virginity with both elements of the ritual alignment. On the one hand, it becomes linked with the crucifixion because of the words that Christ speaks to Mary and John from the cross, and on the other, it becomes linked with the formation of the Church because of Mary’s symbolic relationship to the Church. By virtue of being connected with the alignment, the doctrine of Mary’s perpetual virginity works as a kind of gatekeeper for the benefits of enactment: in order to receive salvation and count oneself as a member of the Church, one must accept this doctrine as true.

Thus, this doctrine to which “Christ gives faith” (*fidem... dedit*, vv. 25-26) can be seen as equivalent to the faith with which the Churches were filled (*fide repleuit...ecclesias*, vv. 15-16). Perhaps too the phrase *fidem dedit* (“gives faith”) is meant to echo the similar sounding phrase *finem dedit* (“gives an end,” v. 9). The expressions are two sides of the same coin: “bringing an end” to sin and death frames the effects of the third hour in negative terms, whereas the promise of salvation frames the same consequences in positive terms.¹²⁶ Yet for Ambrose, both are accessible only through acceptance of Mary’s status as a perpetual virgin.

¹²⁶ I borrow the terminology “negative” and “positive” from Charlet, “Hymne 3,” *op. cit.*, p. 219.

Performance of Belief

This call to faith leads to a collective affirmation of belief in the final stanza (vv. 29-32):

Nos credimus natum Deum
partumque uirginis sacrae, 30
peccata qui mundi tulit
ad dexteram sedens Patris.

We believe that God is born
and delivered of the sacred virgin, 30
who took away the sins of the world
sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Like a creed, these verses lay out a statement of belief, following the phrase “we believe” (*nos credimus*, v. 29). The progression of verses within the stanza fits with the structure of standard orthodox creeds, including the Old Roman Creed and the Nicene Creed, which feature a narrative of Christ’s life that begins with his birth and continues through his death and resurrection.¹²⁷ Likewise, Ambrose’s quasi-creedal statement progresses from Christ’s birth (vv. 29-30); to absolution of sins, presumably at his death; to his resurrection (v. 32). The final verse of the hymn (*ad dexteram sedens Patris*, v. 32) comes closest to the language of the creeds (*sedet ad dexteram Patris*),¹²⁸ and evokes Christ’s position in heaven following the resurrection and ascension but before the second coming.

Closer investigation, however, reveals how Ambrose adapts his quasi-creedal statement in order to promote the doctrine of Mary’s *virginitas in partu*. This is particularly evident in verse 30, where *partus* (“delivered”) appears. Neither of the

¹²⁷ For text of these creeds, see J. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London, 1960).

¹²⁸ Both the Old Roman Creed and the Nicene Creed feature this phrase.

standard creeds includes a reference to “delivery” in relation to Christ’s birth. The text of the Old Roman Creed from Milan, for instance, gives “[Christ] who was born of the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary” (*qui natus est de Spiritu sancto ex Maria virgine*).¹²⁹ There the emphasis is on the birth (*natus est*), which is also present in Ambrose’s version (*natum Deum*, v. 29), but Ambrose makes sure to mention the aspect of delivery (*partum*, v. 30) in conjunction with Mary’s virginity (*sacrae uirginis*, v. 30). The intensity of shared language between this verse (“delivered of the sacred virgin,” *partumque uirginis sacrae*, v. 30) and v. 23 (“the holy birth-giving of the virgin,” *uirginis partus sacer*) further underscores the importance of the delivery.

This insertion has implications for interpreting the verse that follows, since the relative clause “who took away the sins of the world,” (*peccata qui mundi tulit*, v. 31) is dependent on *partus* (v. 30). The language *peccata qui mundi tulit* echoes John 1.29 (“who takes away the sins of the world,” *qui tollit peccatum mundi*), but substitutes the perfect tense verb *tulit* for the similar-sounding present *tollit*. The change is significant because it frames absolution as something that has already happened, rather than something that has yet to occur. Moreover, as Fontaine points out, the notion of removing sin harks back to vv. 9-12, which connected the third hour with the elimination of sin and death.¹³⁰ In linking this clause with *partus* in the line before, Ambrose makes absolution dependent on the doctrine of the virgin birth, effectively limiting the benefits of enactment to those who accept the doctrine as true.

¹²⁹ Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

¹³⁰ Charlet, “Hymne 3,” *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

Creeds worked as ways to affirm collective identity around a central core of belief, and likewise Ambrose's adaptation of the standard creeds aims at a similar effect. The verb *credimus* ("we believe," v. 29) uses the first person plural to declare a shared belief that includes the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity. Forms of the same verb appear in the same metrical position in vv. 27 and 28 ("believed," *credidit*), calling attention to the relationship between this stanza and the one before it. This correspondence locates those performing the hymn within the group of believers ("he who believed," *qui credidit*, v. 28) as opposed to the group of non-believers ("the impious race did not believe," *nec credidit plebs impia*, v. 27). In effect, this quasi-creedal statement is a performance of their belief and their membership in the Church. Declaring their belief means that the effects of the crucifixion enacted at the third hour become available to them ("he who believed will be saved," *qui credidit saluus erit*, v. 28). Moreover, the fact that the declaration is collective ("we believe," *nos credimus*, v. 29) itself can be seen as an enactment "truth filling the churches with faith," associated with Pentecost in vv. 15-16.

Conclusion

In Hymn III, Ambrose constructs a unity around the moment of the third hour. The alignment between the experience of those participating in the ritual and the mythical events of the crucifixion and Pentecost is intended to bring about an enactment of salvation and church formation. Ambrose also combines these ideas in the statement that Jesus makes to Mary and John from the cross, whereby the moment of his crucifixion also becomes a foundational moment for the Church. The two then seem to be

interdependent such that the Church becomes the vehicle through which believers can access salvation. As we have seen, the connection between mythical time and phenomenological experience that happens in the ritual moment promotes an uptake of doctrine. In this case, the words of the hymn are infused with theological views about Mary's perpetual virginity, which is itself bound up with the idea of Mary as a type of the Church. Ultimately, those singing the hymn perform their belief in this doctrine, and so gain access to the benefits of enactment that become available to them at the third hour.

TRANSFORMATION AS ENACTMENT IN PRUDENTIUS' *CATHEMERINON* XI

We can see a similar pattern at work in Prudentius' *Cathemerinon* XI, celebrating Christmas, but whereas Ambrose's Hymn III emphasizes alignment, Prudentius' hymn concentrates on enactment. Prudentius describes the *Cathemerinon* by hoping that his spirit will "continue the days with hymns, so that no night will be left empty without singing of the Lord" (*Hymnis continuat dies/ nec nox ulla uacet, quin dominum canat, Pref. 37-38*).¹³¹ This idea of "continuing" the days and nights with hymns suggests that hymns would become the new mechanism for reckoning time, and that by filling the succession of days and nights with hymns one could create an uninterrupted experience of time that would be directed toward the Lord. In other words, Prudentius intends his hymns as vehicles for generating enactment. As such, hymns would allow believers to leave behind their ordinary experience of time and feel that they have transcended into the realm of myth.¹³²

¹³¹ Prudentius' text is that of M. Cunningham, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, CCSL 126 (Turnhout, 1966); translations are my own. For an overview of Prudentius' life and works, see Cunningham's introduction; also, M. van Assendelft, *Sol Ecce Surgit Igneus: A Commentary on the Morning and Evening Hymns of Prudentius (Cathemerinon 1, 2, 5, and 6)*, (Groningen, 1976), pp. 1-7.

¹³² Cf. J.-L. Charlet, "Prière et Poésie: La Sanctification du Temps dans le *Cathemerinon* de Prudence," in *Le Temps Chrétien de la Fin de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge, IIIe-XIIIe siècles*, Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris, 1984), p. 394 on "synchronization": "Cette synchronisation établie entre le temps présent de la prière, le temps passé de l'histoire sainte et le temps futur des perspectives eschatologiques confère à la louange quotidienne de Prudence une valeur liturgique dans la mesure où elle deviant ainsi à la fois mémorial du passé biblique et anticipation des fins dernières de l'homme."

But in using the terms "past" and "future" in reference to salvation history, he employs a conception that Ricoeur would refer to as "historical time," which allows people to understand cosmological or historical events in relation to their own lived experience of the present (Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, *TN* 3, pp. 104-126; see above, introduction, pp. 17-19.). The problem with conceiving of salvation history

The *Cathemerinon* consists of twelve poems in various meters, both classical and Ambrosian.¹³³ In analyzing the overarching structure of these hymns, Jean-Louis Charlet draws parallels with the structure of monastic life. Hymns I-VI are organized around the same six hours that are celebrated in the liturgy of the daily offices, and Hymns VII-XII are organized around the seasons of the liturgical year, including Lent (Hymns VII and VIII), Easter (Hymns IX and X), Christmas (Hymn XI), and Epiphany (Hymn XII).¹³⁴ Despite these similarities, Charlet affirms that the hymns were not liturgical, but rather “inspired by liturgy.”¹³⁵ Instead, he sees them as paraliturgical pieces, intended for “spiritual meditation.”¹³⁶

But the term meditation suggests a context of private devotion. While I agree with Charlet that the hymns were most likely ritualizing rather than ritual in nature, one should not discount the possibility of collective performance, perhaps among a small group of believers.¹³⁷ Moreover, the classicizing nature of the hymns has caused some to speculate, as for biblical epic as well, that they were intended to attract converts from the

in historical terms, at least for the purposes of examining the temporal dynamics of Prudentius' hymns, is that it obscures the sense of contemporaneity with myth that comes through alignment and enactment.

¹³³ Charlet, *La création*, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-59 gives a helpful overview of the metrical scheme of the *Cathemerinon*, with chart on p. 59.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-55; *idem*, “Prière et Poésie,” *op. cit.*, p. 392.

¹³⁵ Charlet, *La création*, *op. cit.*, p. 86: “elles s’inspirent de la prière liturgique.”

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87; *idem*, “Prière et Poésie,” *op. cit.*, p. 393.

¹³⁷ Cf. context proposed for biblical epic by J. McClure, “Biblical Epic and its Audience in Late Antiquity,” in *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar*, 3rd vol., ed. by F. Cairns (Liverpool, 1981), pp. 305-321. The question of the *Sitz im Leben* of Prudentius' works, his hymns in particular, has not been satisfactorily settled. See, e.g., M. Cunningham, “Contexts of Prudentius' Poems,” *Classical Philology* 71 (1976), pp. 56-66; J. Fontaine, “Société et culture chrétiennes sur l'aire circumpyréenne au siècle de Théodose,” in his *Études sur la Poésie Latine Tardive d'Ausone à Prudence* (Paris, 1980 [1974]), pp. 267-308, esp. pp. 281-287, and E. Sanford, “Were Prudentius' Hymns Intended to Be Sung?” *Classical Philology* 31 (1936), p. 71.

“pagan elite.”¹³⁸ But I tend to agree with Roger Green in his views on biblical epic, that an evangelical aim is less likely and that these hymns would appeal to educated believers as well as neophytes who had received a classical education.¹³⁹

In *Cathemerinon* XI, Prudentius combines mechanisms of alignment to celebrate both the liturgical event of Christmas and the cosmological event of the winter solstice. But, as we shall see, the focus of the hymn is on enactment. Prudentius imagines successful enactment through his depictions of nature and the animals, and he also imagines the failure of enactment with his portrayal of the Jews.

Sermone Carnem Glutinans

Prudentius lays out the alignment between myth and experience in verses 49-52:

Hic ille natalis dies
quo te creator arduus
spiravit et limo indidit
sermone carnem glutinans.

This is that day of birth,
on which the lofty creator breathed
into you [Christ] and placed you in clay,
molding together flesh with the Word.

As in the first two verses of Ambrose’s Hymn III, three temporal strands are evident. The phenomenological strand appears in the pronoun *hic*, which marks “this day” as the present for those engaged with the hymn. The liturgical strand is evident in the phrase “day of birth” (*natalis dies*, v. 49), which introduces Christmas as the liturgical event.

¹³⁸ Cf. C. Witke, *Numen Litterarum: The Old and the New in Latin Poetry from Constantine to Gregory the Great* (Leiden and Köln, 1971). See also A. Cameron’s recent study, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford, 2011), which gives a thorough revision of the evidence of this “pagan elite” of the late-fourth century.

¹³⁹ Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-248.

The remaining three lines draw out the mythical strand with biblical language describing creation and incarnation. Breathing into man (*spiravit*, v. 51) and making man from clay (*limo indidit*, v. 51) recall Genesis 2.7: “Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (*formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae et inspiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vitae*). The transformation of the Word into flesh (*sermone carnem glutinans*, v. 52) echoes John 1.14: “And the Word became flesh” (*Et Verbum caro factum est*). These three strands appear in the same order as we saw above in Ambrose’s hymn, where the liturgical element stands in between the phenomenological and the mythical. This arrangement promotes an alignment between experience and myth through the liturgical event of Christmas.

Yet Prudentius’ treatment of the mythical element differs from Ambrose’s. As we saw in Hymn III, the crucifixion and Pentecost become related to each other through their connection with the moment of the third hour. In the case of *Cathemerinon* XI, however, creation and incarnation are related to each other at the level of myth. Prudentius focuses the creation narrative on the formation of Adam as the first man (vv.50-51), and then he renames this event as the incarnation with the participial phrase “molding flesh with Word” (*sermone carnem glutinans*, v. 52).

Prudentius’ treatment is both similar to and different from traditional typological techniques, which Erich Auerbach defines using the Latin term *figura*.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ E. Auerbach, “Figura,” transl. by R. Manheim, in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis, 1984 [1944]), p.53. Cf. N. Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, ed. by A. Lee (Toronto, 1996 [1982]), pp. 96-121 for the use of typology in the Bible.

Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles are separate in time, but both being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life.

Writing a few decades after Prudentius, Orientus provides a convenient example of this kind of interpretation. He names Christ the “new Adam” (Hymn II.3) and goes on to explain, “Why a second Adam? Because he himself is the chief man for those who are reborn” (*unde secundus Adam? Quia sit caput ipse renatis*, Hymn III.135).¹⁴¹ Orientus’ conception preserves the historical relationship between Adam and Christ, setting them in a temporal framework whereby the “first Adam” looks toward the “second” and the second fulfills the first. In *Cathemerinon* XI, however, Prudentius eliminates any idea of sequence between the creation and the incarnation; the two coalesce into a single moment. In a way, the participle *glutinans* (“molding together,” v. 52) represents what Prudentius has done with the two biblical events: fusing them together to form a new substance.

Prudentius fills out the picture of creation/ incarnation in stanzas preceding the alignment (vv.17-24):

Ex ore quamlibet patris
sis ortus et uerbo editus,
tamen paterno in pectore
sofia callebas prius. 20

Quae prompta caelum condidit,
caelum diemque et cetera;
uirtute uerbi effecta sunt
haec cuncta, nam uerbum deus.

¹⁴¹ Orientus’ text is that of R. Ellis, *Orientii Carmina*, in *Poetae Latini Minores* I, CSEL 16 (Vienna, 1888). The translation is my own.

Even though from the mouth of the Father
you were born and came into existence from the Word.
nevertheless, in the breast of the father
you as wisdom gained experience beforehand. 20

She being present established the heavens,
the heavens and the day and the rest;
by the power of the Word all these things
were brought about, for God is the Word.

These lines address Christ using language that evokes John's Gospel and its depiction of the incarnation. The expression *uerbum deus* ("God is the Word," v. 24) recalls the final clause of John 1.1: *Deus erat verbum* ("the Word was God"). The Word appears again in the phrase *sis ortus et editus uerbo* ("you were born and came into existence from the Word," v. 18). Playing on the dual meanings of the verb *edo* as "utter, publish" in speech or writing and also "put forth, beget,"¹⁴² the poet indicates that the Word is both something spoken by the Father (*ex ore patris*, v. 17) and also born in the flesh. In fact, the same verb appears in the preceding stanza to describe Christ's physical birth: "[he] whom his mother, chastity herself, puts forth" (*quem mater edit castitas*, v. 14).

These verses also link the Word with creation through the medium of Wisdom. The mention of *sofia* (v. 20) in conjunction with creation recalls Proverbs 8.22-31, where Wisdom *in propria persona* insists on her antiquity, herself preceding creation and accompanying God as he creates the heavens, sky, sea, and earth.¹⁴³ The continuation of the second person ("you gained experience," *callebas*, v. 20) from the previous stanza, along with the use of the nominative *sofia*, sets up an equation between Wisdom and the

¹⁴² Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *edo* II.A and II.C.

¹⁴³ Prudentius' choice of the Greek *sofia* in preference to the Latin *sapientia*, which appears in the Vulgate version of Proverbs 8, can perhaps be explained *metri causa*, though it may also reveal some basic familiarity with the Septuagint or exegetical sources in Greek.

Word. This joint entity of Word and Wisdom takes on the form of a united “she” (*quae*, v. 21) and becomes the agent who creates the heavens (*caelum*, vv. 21, 22) and the day (*diem*, v. 22). These two terms correspond to the two names that God gives to the elements that he creates on the first and second days of creation in Genesis 1, albeit in reverse order: *dies* being the name for light (Gen 1.5) and *caelum* being the name for the firmament (Gen 1.8). The phrase “and the rest” (*et cetera*, v. 22) suggests that the reader should supply for herself those elements created on the remaining four days in the Genesis account. Prudentius incorporates God the Son into the account by setting up another equation between the Word and God (*nam uerbum deus*, v. 24), and in doing so, Prudentius draws on a common thread of Christian exegesis that identified the Wisdom of Proverbs 8 and the Word of John 1 with God the Son.¹⁴⁴

The two depictions of creation/ incarnation (vv. 17-24 and vv. 49-52) work as bookends that frame the mythical narrative, and between them Prudentius fills in other events of salvation history, beginning with the fall of humanity (“sinning world,” *peccantem...orbem*, vv. 31-32). This version concentrates on sin as the worship of idols (vv. 33-40):

Nam caeca uis mortalium
uenerans inanes nenas
uel aera uel saxa algida 35
uel ligna credebat deum.

Haec dum sequuntur perfidi,
praedonis in ius uenerant
et mancipatam fumido
uitam baratro inmerserant. 40

¹⁴⁴ See Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation*, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-124. J.-M. Fontanier, “La création et le Christ créateur dans l’oeuvre de Prudence,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* XXII (1987), pp. 109-128, esp. pp.109-112, discusses this passage (*Cath.* XI. 17-24) and the relationship between Word and Wisdom in his treatment of Prudentius’ poetical-theological program, but he does not note the connection with Proverbs 8, focusing instead on Wisdom as a Pauline feature.

For the blind will of mortals,
 honoring empty nothings,
 believed that objects of bronze or cold stone 35
 or wood were God.

While the faithless ones were pursuing such things,
 they came under the law of the plunderer
 and plunged their now enslaved existence
 into the smoking depths of the abyss. 40

Prudentius describes the idols as objects composed of “bronze” (*aera*, v. 35), “stone” (*saxa*, v. 35), or “wood” (*ligna*, v. 36). He names these “empty nothings” (*inanes nenas*, v. 34) to indicate that these objects do not contain a divine presence, even though people believe that they do (*credebat Deum*, v. 36). Moreover, he identifies humans’ inability to distinguish between idols and God as “blind force” (*caeca vis*, v. 33). The adjective *caeca* suggests a failure of the sense of sight, while the noun *vis* implies that this blindness was not something passively endured by humanity, but rather actively chosen. As such, the worship of idols serves as an example of humankind’s willful tendency to sin, an idea also conveyed with the term “faithless ones” (*perfidi*, v. 37).

These references to idol worship recall the apostasy of the Israelites depicted in the OT. The second of the Ten Commandments forbids them from worshipping idols (Ex 20.4-6). The Israelites break this commandment with the worship of the image of a golden calf (Ex 32.1-35) and also with the worship of native Canaanite gods (Num 25.3 and Jdgs 2.11-2.15), both of which instances are recalled at 2 Kings 17.15-16. Prudentius draws the details of the “law of the plunderer” (*praedonis in ius*, v. 38) and “enslaved existence” (*mancipatam...uitam*, vv. 39-40) from Judges 2.11-2.15. There, the Lord responds to the Israelites’ apostasy by turning them over to thieves and then selling them

introduce Christ as the one who would break that connection (*mortis catenam frangeret*, v. 47) and prevent humanity from perishing (*ne.../Patris periret fabrica*, vv. 43-44). The hymn also names the means through which Christ brings about salvation from death: the incarnation (“he clothed himself in a mortal body,” *mortale corpus induit*, v. 45) and the resurrection (“by raising the body up,” *excitato corpore*, v. 46). By including the resurrection, Prudentius echoes Paul’s emphasis on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.12-22. For Paul, Christ’s resurrection reverses the effects of Adam’s sin and brings about eternal life for the faithful.

Thus, verses 16-52 encapsulate the narrative of salvation history, beginning with creation/ incarnation (vv. 16-24), followed by the fall of humanity (vv. 32-40), in turn followed by Christ’s redemption of mankind through incarnation and resurrection (vv. 41-48), and culminating with another reference to creation/ incarnation (vv. 50-52).¹⁴⁸ This trajectory is in keeping with the narrative of the Bible that moves from the OT (creation and fall) to the NT (redemption through incarnation and resurrection), yet at the same time it defies a purely linear narrative through the recurrence of the incarnation. As a part of both creation and redemption, the incarnation is presented as the nexus connecting the events of the mythical narrative. This has implications for the ritual alignment. By aligning the experience of those performing the hymn with the incarnation, Prudentius suggests that all of salvation history becomes accessible through the liturgical moment of Christmas.

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¹⁴⁸ Cf. V. Buchheit, “Göttlicher Heilsplan bei Prudentius (*Cath.* 11, 25-48),” *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990), pp. 222-241.

(“returning,” v. 2),¹⁵⁰ as well as in the description of its path as a “circle” (*circulum*, v. 1). The mentions of “day” (*dies*, v. 6), “light” (*lucis*, v. 4), and “torch” (*facem*, v. 7) characterize the sun’s path as a daily recurrence of daylight alternating with nighttime, while the verbs “increase” (*auget*, v. 4) and “extinguish” (*extinxerat*, v. 8) call to mind the yearly cycle of the sun’s movements. Between the winter solstice and the summer solstice, the sun could be thought of as “increasing” because the hours of daylight grow as compared with night, whereas after the summer solstice, the hours of daylight diminish. The adjectives “narrow” (*artum*, v. 1), “hastening” (*festina*, v. 6), and “waning” (*recisa*, v. 8) indicate a point on this yearly cycle during winter when the hours of daylight are reduced.

In fact, the hymn is more precise in locating the cosmological moment at the winter solstice itself. The notion that the light has waned gradually almost to the point of being extinguished altogether (*quam paene subductam facem/ sensim recisa extinxerat*, vv. 7-8) suggests that Prudentius is thinking of the shortest day of the year. Moreover, the next verses present the reverse process, in which the light climbs little by little (*gradatim*, v. 11) toward the level of its former brightness (*scandit...iubar priores lineas*, vv. 11-12), reflecting the fact that the days begin to grow longer again after the winter solstice.

This cosmological strand creates an alternate mechanism of alignment. The first two verses bring together the cosmological strand and the phenomenological strand, where “the sun [deserting] his narrow circle” (*artum circulum/ sol deserit*, vv. 1-2) at the solstice is marked as “now” (*iam*, v. 2) in the experience of those performing the hymn.

¹⁵⁰ V. Buchheit, “Sonnenwende—Geburt des *Sol verus* (Prud. *Cath.* 11, 1-12),” *Wiener Studien* 99 (1986), p. 246 notes that Prudentius draws the language *sol recurrens* from Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.100, a reminiscence unfortunately overlooked by M.Lükken, *Christianorum Maro et Flaccus: Zur Vergil- und Horazrezeption des Prudentius* (Göttingen, 2002).

In turn, this moment is linked with the mythical event of Christ's birth (*Christusne terris nascitur*, v. 3), and thus the cosmological event works as the medium connecting the "now" with Christ's birth. If we factor in the liturgical moment of Christmas, a double alignment results. On one side is lived experience, and on the other is the narrative of salvation history, including Christ's birth and incarnation. These strands are joined through both the liturgical celebration of Christmas and the cosmological event of the solstice, which ultimately become aligned with each other.

In fact, a common hypothesis for the dating of Christmas is that December 25 was chosen to coincide with the pagan festival of the winter solstice.¹⁵¹ Associated with the cult of traditional solar deity *Sol Invictus*, a festival had occupied that date since the inception of the Julian calendar in 45 BCE, if not earlier, but had fallen out of practice until 274 CE, when Aurelian re-established it as a festival celebrating the birth of *Sol Invictus* (*dies natalis solis invicti*).¹⁵² Whether or not one agrees with the hypothesis for the dating of Christmas, it is clear that the symbolism surrounding the Christmas celebration was indebted to traditional solar imagery.¹⁵³ By bringing together the cosmological and liturgical strands in Cathemerinon XI, Prudentius contributes to the Christian appropriation of traditional cult imagery.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ See S. Roll, "The Origins of Christmas: The State of the Question," in *Between Memory and Hope: Readings in the Liturgical Year*, ed. by M. Johnson (Collegeville, 2000), pp. 273-290.

¹⁵² T. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (New York, 1986), p. 87. He discusses the question of the relationship between the solstice festival and Christmas at length, pp. 87-102.

¹⁵³ See, e.g., M. Wallraff, *Christus Verus Sol: Sonnenverehrung und Christentum in der Spätantike* (Munster, 2001).

¹⁵⁴ On this point, see V. Buchheit, "Sonnenwende," *op. cit.*

Enactment as Transformation

This four-part alignment between phenomenological, liturgical, cosmological, and mythical time is designed to create an enactment of myth. The goal is for those performing the hymn to feel that incarnation, creation, sin, redemption, and Christ's birth become accessible to them through their experience of Christmas and the solstice. The hymn promotes enactment by depicting a series of transformations that demonstrate the efficacy of mythical events beyond the mythical realm.

The first transformation shows the effect of myth on the cosmological strand. Prudentius links the shift from darkness to light with Christ's birth: "Is Christ born to the earth,/ who now increases the path of light?" (*Christusne terris nascitur,/ qui lucis auget tramitem*, vv. 3-4). As an actualized event, Christ's birth results in an increase in the amount of light. The ability of myth to affect the cosmos suggests that the cosmological strand does not have its own autonomy. Rather than seeing the increase of daylight after the solstice as a function of cosmological phenomena with their own forces of cause and effect, the hymn makes the myth the ultimate cause for the change and thereby supports a conception of reality wherein myth governs the cosmos.

The effect of enactment on the cosmological realm extends to the landscape as well (vv. 61-76):

Vagitus ille exordium
uernantis orbis prodidit;
nam tunc renatus sordidum
mundus ueternum depulit.

Sparsisse tellurem reor
rus omne densis floribus
ipsasque harenas Syrtium
flagrasse nardo et nectare.

65

Te cuncta nascentem, puer,
sensere dura et barbara 70
uictusque saxorum rigor
obduxit herbam cotibus.

Iam mella de scopulis fluunt,
iam stillat ilex arido
sudans amomum stipite, 75
iam sunt myricis balsama.

That one crying out brought about the establishment of the earth in bloom; for at that time the reborn world cast off its former filthiness.

I would think that the earth sprinkled the entire countryside 65
so that it would become thick with flowers
and that it would have made the sands of Syria itself
fragrant with nard and nectar.

All the hard and savage things,
felt that you were born, boy, 70
and the hardness of the rocks, now overcome,
spread out a blanket of grass over the stones.

Now honey flows from the crags,
Now the oak drips with the sweat
of perfume from its dry trunk,
now there is balsam from the tamarisks.

The idea of transformation is evident in the phrase “establishment of earth in bloom” (*exordium/ uernantis orbis*, vv. 61-62), suggesting a period of new growth. The participle *uernantis* suggests that this growth is associated with the emergence of springtime following winter,¹⁵⁵ and this change of seasons represents another aspect of the yearly cosmological cycle. New growth is evident in the images of the countryside becoming “dense with flowers” (*rus omne densis floribus*, v. 66); the desert becoming “fragrant with nard and nectar” (*ipsasque arenas syrtium/ fragrasse nardo et nectare*, vv. 67-68);

¹⁵⁵ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v., *verno*.

and rocks becoming covered with vegetation (*obduxit herbam cotibus*, v. 72). In each case, growth represents a reversal of the previous state of nature. The hardness of the rocks is overcome by the softness of the grass (*uictusque saxorum rigor*, v. 71); the floral fragrances contrast with the dryness of the desert; the wild flowers disrupt the cultivation of the countryside.

In verses 73-76, the transformation of the landscape is envisioned as the realization of *adynata*. Rocks flow with honey (*iam mella de scopulis fluunt*, v. 73); the oak, dry and brittle, sweats out perfume (*iam stillat ilex arido/ sudans amomum stipite*, vv. 74-75); and the tamarisk bush produces balsam sap (*iam sunt myricis balsama*, v. 76). Here Prudentius adapts an old proverb, where sap from the tamarisk bush signifies something impossible.¹⁵⁶ The two previous examples of moisture from rocks and the oak tree are variations on the same theme. The anaphora of the adverb *iam*, emphatically placed at the beginning of verses 73, 74, and 76, draws further attention to how the setting is transformed.

The hymn explicitly sees this renewal as the direct result of Christ's birth, which is depicted with a baby's cries ("That one crying out brought about/ the establishment of the earth in bloom," *uagitus ille exordium/ uernantis orbis prodidit*, vv. 61-62).¹⁵⁷ These verses also imply an enactment of myth beyond Christ's birth. The phrase *exordium orbis* can be understood as "the creation of the world," suggesting that a new creation is enacted as well. A different relationship between myth and landscape emerges within the

¹⁵⁶ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *myrice* 1. Cf., e.g., Vergil, *Ecl.* 8.54: "let the tamarisk bushes sweat out fat amber drops from their bark" (*pinguia corticibus sudent electra myricae*). Vergil envisions this with other *adynata* that are realized with the playing of "Maenalian verses" (*Ecl.* 8.51-56).

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v., *vagio* I.

transformation of the rocks from hardness to softness (vv. 69-72). Instead of framing this reversal as a direct outcome of enactment, these verses frame the contact between the cosmological and mythical realms in terms of sense-perception: “All the hard and savage things felt that you were born, boy” (Te *cuncta nascentem puer/ sensere dura et barbara*). The verb *sensere* (“they felt,” v. 70) suggests that the “hard and savage things” (*dura et barbara*) perceive the presence of Christ. Initially, this perception entails a passive response whereby “the hardness of the rocks [is] overcome” (*uictusque saxorum rigor*, v. 71), but then the response becomes active as “the hardness of the rocks” tries to soften itself by “[spreading] out a blanket of grass over the stones” (*saxorum rigor/ obduxit herbam cotibus*, vv. 71-72).

Verses 63-64 envision a similar passive/ active response to enactment: “for at that time the reborn world/ cast off its former filthiness” (*nam tunc renatus sordidum/ mundus ueternum depulit*). The participle *renatus* frames the passive response of the world (“being reborn”) in terms that parallel Christ’s birth, reinforcing the link between enactment of the mythical and its potential to affect the cosmological realm. The world then responds by restoring a sense of cleanliness. This action plays on the double meaning of *mundus* as both a noun (“world”) and an adjective (“clean”),¹⁵⁸ which one might encapsulate with the translation, “the world now clean cast off its former filthiness.” In addition, the substantive *sordidum* carries a moral overtone,¹⁵⁹ which suggests that the world is capable of an ethical response: upon being reborn, the world chooses to abandon its previous sinful ways.

¹⁵⁸ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v., 1. *mundus* and 2. *mundus*.

¹⁵⁹ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v., *sordidus* II.A.

Both instances impart a sentience to nature that is apparent in the description of the solstice as well: “Let the sky shine forth happier, and let the earth show its gratitude by rejoicing” (*Caelum nitescat laetius,/ gratetur et gaudens humus*, vv. 9-10). The adverb *laetius* suggests that the sky is able to feel happiness, and what is more, its comparative aspect implies that the sky will feel more happiness following enactment. This affective response is extended to the ground as well, which is depicted as being capable of gratitude (*grateretur*) and joy (*gaudens*).

The hymn also treats the effects of enactment on the animal kingdom (vv. 77-88):

O sancta praesepe tui,
 aeternae rex, cunabula,
 populisque per saeculum sacra
 mutis et ipsis credita. 80

Adorat haec brutum pecus,
 indocta turba scilicet,
 adorat excors natio,
 uis cuius in pastu sita est.

Sed cum fidei spiritu 85
 concurrat ad praesepe
 pagana gens et quadrupes
 sapiatque quod brutum fuit,

O how sacred the cradle
 of your manger, eternal king,
 held as sacred through the ages
 by the peoples, even the mute beasts! 80

The stupid herd honors these things,
 the unlearned crowd of course,
 the senseless nation,
 who only have the capacity for feeding.

But although with faithful spirit 85
 the heathen and four-footed clan
 flocks together beside the manger,
 and what was stupid comes to know...

This depiction of animals adoring Christ at the nativity takes its cue from the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, which imagines the ox and ass coming to adore Jesus in the stable.¹⁶⁰ Prudentius emphasizes the idea that the animals lack the capacity for reason (*brutum*, v. 81; *indocta*, v. 82; *excors*, v. 83), along with the capacity for speech (*mutis*, v. 80). The depiction indicates that any cognitive function they have is directed toward feeding (*vis cuius in pastu sita est*, v. 84). Here as before, enactment brings a reversal of the natural order: “what was stupid comes to know” (*sapiatque quod brutum fuit*, v. 88). The hymn makes it clear, though, that this knowledge is not brought about by a newfound intelligence, but rather by faith (“faithful spirit,” *fideli spiritu*, v. 85; “held as sacred,” *credita... sacra*, vv. 79-80).

The reaction of the animals continues the cosmological progression observed above. The animals represent an increase in the sentience over the landscape and the heavens. For them “perceiving” (*sentire*) involves a purely sensory experience, whereas for the animals “knowing” (*sapere*) indicates an intellectual understanding. This increased awareness is evident in the animals’ response as compared with nature’s response. As we saw above, the capacity of nature to feel Christ’s birth is manifested in both passive and active ways; enactment happens to it, and it responds by transforming. In the case of the animals, however, their knowledge generates only active responses that indicate their cognitive transformation: they “adore” him (*adorat*, vv. 81, 83), and they “flock together beside his manger” (*concurrat ad praesepe*, v. 86). Perhaps the term for “manger,” occurring twice in this section (*praesepe*, v. 77; *praesepe*, v. 86), is meant to

¹⁶⁰ Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 14.

emphasize their knowledge even further with a pun on the roots *sep-/ saep-* (“a fence”)¹⁶¹ and *sap-* (“to know”).

Prudentius’ description of the animals invites us to understand their transformation in cultural terms as well. The collective nouns *turba* (“crowd,” v. 82), *natio* (“race,” v. 83), and *gens* (“clan,” v.87) can refer to groups of animals as well as groups of people.¹⁶² The adjective *pagana* (v. 87) modifying *gens* can work on both levels as well. While its original meaning “of the countryside” would be appropriate for animals, the pejorative sense of “pagan” or “heathen” had become current in Christian usage by the fourth century.¹⁶³ Prudentius uses the adjective *paganus* only two other times in his corpus, both in the religious sense of “pagan” as opposed to Christian.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, *gens* and *natio* were common in ecclesiastical usage in reference to the “heathen races” or “Gentiles,” as opposed to the Christians and the Jews.¹⁶⁵ Thus the transformation of the animals represents the conversion of pagans to Christianity.

It is possible that Prudentius is thinking of the official and exclusive adoption of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire under Theodosius I and his fellow emperors. In 380, an edict was passed that affirmed belief in the Trinity and commanded all Roman

¹⁶¹ See Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v., *praesaepe*; also s.v., *saepes*.

¹⁶² Cf. *Ibid.*, s.v., *gens* II.C-F; *natio* II; *turba*, II.B.1-3.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, s.v., *paganus* III.B.

¹⁶⁴ *Contra Symmachum* I, pref. 5-6: *ut ceremonias/ gens pagana deo sperneret agnito* (“so that the pagan race might spurn its own rituals after acknowledging God”); and *Peristephanon* X.1008-1009: *miserrime/ pagane* (“wretched pagan,” addressing the persecutor of St. Romanus). In addition, Prudentius uses likens followers of traditional cultic rituals to four-footed beasts at *Contra Symmachum* II.816-820.

¹⁶⁵ Lewis and Short, s.v., *natio* II.B.3.

citizens to embrace the Christian faith.¹⁶⁶ Another edict issued in 391 banned pagan practices, such as sacrificing animals and visiting cultic shrines.¹⁶⁷ Prudentius dramatizes the empire-wide adoption of Christianity in *Contra Symmachum* I.415-505. There he has the emperor address Rome herself and urge her to give up the worship of idols.¹⁶⁸ In his idealized version, Rome immediately heeds Theodosius' words and converts to Christianity.¹⁶⁹

We can see a similar idealization underlying the transformation of the animals in *Cathemerinon* XI. By depicting the *pagana gens* coming to know Christ, Prudentius implies that enactment brings the empire-wide abandonment of traditional beliefs in favor of Christianity. This backdrop provides a context for understanding why the poet includes idol worship in his version of salvation history (vv. 33-40), discussed above. In adoring Christ, the *pagana gens* breaks from the legacy of sin that Prudentius associates with idol worship. Their conversion means that they gain access to the benefits of redemption through the enactment of salvation history.

The Jews and the Failure of Enactment

Framed by an overarching concessive clause after *cum* (v. 85), the conversion of the pagans is set against the Jews' reaction to Christ's birth (vv. 89-96):

¹⁶⁶ Codex Theodosianus XVI.1.2. The edict was issued in the name of Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I.

¹⁶⁷ Codex Theodosianus XVI.10.10. The edict was issued in the name of Valentinian II, Theodosius I, and Arcadius.

¹⁶⁸ See esp. *Contra Symmachum* I.433-460 and 496-500.

¹⁶⁹ *Contra Symmachum* I.506-513. Cf. Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp. 121, 337ff.

negat patrum prosapia
perosa praesentem deum;
credas uenenis ebriam
furiisne lymfatam rapi.

Quid prona per scelus ruis?
Agnosce, si quidquam tibi
mentis resedit integrae,
ducem tuorum principum.

The ancient race of the fathers denies
that God is present, hateful as they are;
you would believe that they were drunk with poison
or overcome with madness at the hands of the furies.

Why do you rush headlong in your wickedness?
Acknowledge, if you have any
sound mind left at all,
the leader of your princes.

The shift in focus from pagans to Jews is evident in the phrase *patrum prosapia* (“ancient race of the fathers,” v. 89). The plural “fathers” was used throughout the OT and NT to refer to the ancestors of the Jewish tradition, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses,¹⁷⁰ and the archaic term *prosapia* from the root *se-/sa-* (“to sow”)¹⁷¹ alludes to the Jews as the seed of Abraham, continuing the line of the Israelites of the OT.¹⁷² This identification is further supported by a pun on the adjective *ebriam* (“drunk,” v. 91), evoking the similar-sounding *Hebraeus* (“belonging to the Hebrews, Jewish”). Moreover, the Jews are named outright toward the end of the hymn in the collective noun “Judaea” (*Iudaea*, v. 113).

¹⁷⁰ See, e.g., Ex 3.15, Lk 1.55.

¹⁷¹ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *prosapia*.

¹⁷² Cf. Gen 17.7-9; Gen 22.17; Lk 1.55.

The Jews serve as a counterpoint to the cosmological/ cultural transformations depicted up to this point. Whereas the animals/ pagans are described as senseless, the Jews are portrayed as having the capacity for knowledge. The expression “leader of princes” (*ducem ... principum*, v. 96) recalls the messianic prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, which promised a king via the Davidic line who would restore Israel.¹⁷³ Addressed to the Jews, the possessive pronoun *tuorum* suggests that they are aware of these prophecies through their knowledge of the Scriptures. Prudentius emphasizes their knowledge further with another pun on the root *sap-* (“to know”). In referring to the Jews as *prosapia*, he implies that the Jews have “foreknowledge” in addition to being seeds sown by Abraham.

As before, Christ’s birth brings about a reversal of the former state of affairs. On the one hand, the *pagana gens* gains knowledge, but the Jews lose it by “[denying] that God is present” (*negat...praesentem Deum*, vv. 89-90). The phrase *praesentem Deum* recalls the messianic title “God with us,” in Hebrew *Emmanuel*, in Latin *Nobiscum Deus*,¹⁷⁴ and thereby points to their refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah.¹⁷⁵ In calling the Jews to “acknowledge the leader of their princes” (*agnosce ...ducem tuorum principem*, vv. 94-96), Prudentius indicates that they do not recognize the fulfillment of their own Scriptures and therefore do not take advantage of the knowledge they should have. The conditional “if you have any sound mind left at all” (*si quidquam tibi/ mentis*

¹⁷³ See, e.g., Is 9.6-7; Jer 23.5-6.

¹⁷⁴ Is 7.14; Mt 1.23.

¹⁷⁵ For Jesus as Messiah, see Mt 16.16; Lk 2.11; Jn 4.22; Ac 2.36; for the Jews’ denial of his messianic claims, see the crucifixion scenes at Mt 27.1-44; Mk 15.1-15; Lk 22.66-23.25; Jn 18.19-19.23.

resedit integrae, vv. 94-95) presumes that the Jews once had the capacity for reason (*mens integra*), but that their denial of Christ entails a lack of reason.

The language of the hymn attributes their denial to madness, which Prudentius describes elsewhere as “Jewish fury” (*iudaico furori*, *Apoth.* 552). Here he likens their madness to being drunk with poison (*uenenis ebriam*, v. 91)¹⁷⁶ and being possessed by furies (*furiisque lymfatam rapi*, v. 92). This depiction of the Jews as deranged is consistent with contemporary sources. John Chrysostom goes on at length about the drunkenness of the Jews.¹⁷⁷ Theodosius II’s third novella explaining the promulgation of the law code addresses the issue of Jews, pagans, and heretics, asking, “Who is so demented, so damned by the enormity of the strange savagery, ...that he does not seek the author of so great a mystery,” to which the answer is in the first place, “the Jews, with blinded senses.”¹⁷⁸

Despite the Jews’ transformation from knowledge to madness in the hymn, they do not experience enactment. If enactment is supposed to result in a sense that myth becomes “present,” then the Jews’ denial that “God is present” (*negat...praesentem Deum*, vv. 89-90) means that enactment does not work for them. Instead, their transformation results from the failure of it. Whereas the heavens, landscape, and animals/ pagans are transformed through their connection with salvation history, the Jews choose not to participate in this dynamic. The implication is that by disregarding the Scriptures and not acknowledging Christ, they surrender the knowledge they once had.

¹⁷⁶ For the equation of the derangement of the Jews with drunkenness, cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom.* 8.1.

¹⁷⁷ *Homilies against the Jews* 1 (2).

¹⁷⁸ Theodosius II, *Novella* 3 (1). Text quoted from B. Ehrman and A. Jacobs (eds.), *Christianity in Late Antiquity (300-450 C.E.): A Reader* (New York, Oxford, 2004), p. 74.

The Jews' refusal to engage with the realm of myth means that redemption does not become available to them, as it did for the animals/ pagans. The image of the Jews "[rushing] headlong through their wickedness" (*prona per scelus ruis*, v. 93) suggests that instead they continue the legacy of sin. This is perhaps another reason why Prudentius characterizes sin as idol worship in verses 33-40. Accusations of idol worship are among the conventional motifs of theological anti-Judaism.¹⁷⁹ This tradition cites biblical instances of the Israelites worshipping the golden calf and native Canaanite gods as precedents for the faithlessness of the Jews and therefore as evidence for displacing them from their position as God's chosen people.¹⁸⁰

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Nonetheless, Prudentius envisions that the Jews will recognize Christ at the second coming (vv. 97-116):

Hunc, quem latebra et obsetrix et uirgo feta et cunulae et inbecilla infantia regem dederunt gentibus,	100
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peccator intueberis
celsum coruscis nubibus
deiectus ipse et inritis
plangens reatum fletibus,

cum uasta signum bucina terris cremandis miserit et scissus axis cardinem mundi ruentis soluerit.	105
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¹⁷⁹ See, e.g., P. Bori, *The Golden Calf and the Origins of the Anti-Jewish Controversy*, translated by D. Ward (Atlanta, 1990); R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1974), pp. 124-127.

¹⁸⁰ Worship of golden calf at Ex. 32.1-32.6; worship of native Canaanite gods at Num. 25.3 and Jdgs 2.11-2.15. For Christian displacement of the Jews, see R. Ruether, *op.cit.*, pp. 131-149; M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135-425)*, (Oxford, 1986), pp. 169-173; M. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 134-136.

Insignis ipse et praeminens
meritis rependet congrua, 110
his lucis usum perpetis,
illis gehennam tartarum.

Iudaea, tunc fulmen crucis
experta, qui sit senties
quem, te furoris praesule, 115
mors hausit et mox reddidit.

This child, whom place of refuge and midwife
and pregnant virgin and cradle
and feeble infancy
have given to the peoples as king, 100

sinner, you will look upon
him up in the heavens with the flashing clouds,
you yourself dejected and weeping at
your offenses with ineffectual tears,

when the harsh trumpet sends the signal 105
for the destruction of the lands
and the axis of the world now rushing to its destruction
is cut in half and breaks free from its fixed position.

He himself distinguished by signs and eminent over all
will mete out things according to what each deserves: 110
to these the enjoyment of perpetual light;
to those hell and Tartarus.

Judaea, at that time when you experience
the thunderbolt of the cross,
you will feel who he is, whom death swallowed up 115
under your regime of fury and then later restored.

This scene combines two mythical events: the nativity of Christ and the second coming of the Lord. Prudentius describes the nativity using terms that are intended to confirm the status of the baby as the messianic king (“king to the peoples,” *regem ... gentibus*, v. 100). The place of refuge (*latebra*, v. 98), swaddling clothes (*cunulae*, v. 98), and infancy (*infantia*, v. 99) evoke the markers of the Messiah promised to the shepherds in Luke

2.12.¹⁸¹ The “pregnant virgin” (*uirgo feta*, v. 98) encapsulates the prophecy-fulfillment formula of Matthew 1.22-1.23, which sees Mary’s pregnancy as a fulfillment of Isaiah 7.14.¹⁸²

The second coming is marked by cosmic signs that recall Jesus’ eschatological prophecies as reported in the Gospels. The weeping of the peoples (*plangens*, v. 104), the “harsh war-horn” (*uasta...bucina*, v.105), and the earthquakes that cause the earth to fall from its axis (vv.106-108) fit with details from Matthew’s Gospel in particular. There Jesus foretells that at the coming of the Son of Man, “all the tribes of the earth will mourn” (*plangent omnes tribus terrae*, Mt 24.30), that the angels will sound “a loud trumpet call” (*cum tuba et voce magna*, Mt 24.31), and that “the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of heaven will be shaken” (*stellae cadent de caelo et virtutes caelorum commovebuntur*, Mt 24.29).¹⁸³ Moreover, the adjectives *celsum* (“lofty” v. 102), *praeminens* (“eminent over all,” v. 109), and *insignis* (“distinguished by signs,” v. 109) are in keeping with descriptions of the Son of Man as appearing with great power and glory, heralded by cosmic signs.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, his actions correspond with those of the Son of Man: in keeping Matthew 16.27, judgment corresponds to what each deserves

¹⁸¹ Lk 2.12: “This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger” (*et hoc vobis signum: inuenietis infantem pannis involutum et positum in praesepio*). Cf. Lk 2.7, 2.16-17.

¹⁸² Mt 1.22-23: “All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us’” (*hoc autem totum factum est ut adimpleretur id quod dictum est a Domino per prophetam dicentem: ecce virgo in utero habebit et pariet filium et vocabunt nomen eius Emmanuel, quod est interpretatum Nobiscum Deus*). Cf. Is 7.14: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” (*propter hoc dabit Dominus ipse vobis signum: ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium et vocabitis nomen eius Emmanuel*).

¹⁸³ Cf. Mk 13.24-27 and Lk 21.25-28, which describe the second coming in similar terms, though without the war-horn or weeping.

¹⁸⁴ Mt 24.30; Mk 13.26; Lk 21.27. Cf. Mt 25.31.

(*meritis rependet congrua*, v.110);¹⁸⁵ and as in Matthew 25.32-46, those being judged are divided into two distinct groups, those whose good deeds earn them “the use of eternal light” (*his lucis usum perpetis*, v. 111) and those whose wicked deeds condemn them to “hell and Tartarus” (*illis gehennam et tartarum*, v. 112).¹⁸⁶

Prudentius relates the nativity and the second coming together in a way that is similar to Erich Auerbach’s notion of “figural prophecy”.¹⁸⁷

Figural prophecy implies the interpretation of one worldly event through another; the first signifies the second, the second fulfills the first. Both remain historical events; yet both, looked at in this way, have something provisional and incomplete about them; they point to one another and both point to something in the future, something still to come, which will be the actual, real, and definitive event.

This conception envisions three events in a historical sequence, with the third event both anticipated by and privileged over the previous two. At the end of *Cathemerinon* XI, the second coming works as the third event; the nativity works as the second event; and the messianic prophecies of the OT work as the first event. The predictions of the Messiah signify the birth of Christ, which then fulfills those predictions. At the same time, the birth of Christ as the Messiah (the “first coming”) points toward the second coming as the “actual, real, and definitive event.” In creating this figural relationship, Prudentius effectively expands the mythical element of the hymn so that it includes the second

¹⁸⁵ Mt 16.27: “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done” (*Filius enim hominis venturus est in gloria Patris sui cum angelis suis et tunc reddet unicuique secundum opus eius*). See also 2 Cor 5.10.

¹⁸⁶ See esp. Mt 25.46: “And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (*et ibunt hii in supplicium aeternum iusti autem in vitam aeternam*).

¹⁸⁷ E. Auerbach, *op.cit.*, p. 58. His evidence for the concept of “figural prophecy” comes from the works of the Church Fathers, roughly contemporary with Prudentius. At p. 54 n36, Auerbach suggests that “Prudentius does not seem to recognize figural interpretation, [though] examples of it occur in his *Dittochaëon*.” Although it is unclear why Auerbach speculates that Prudentius would be unaware of the function of *figurae*, the poet seems to deploy figural prophecy successfully in this instance.

coming, along with the general narrative of salvation history that we saw earlier in the hymn.

Prudentius envisions the second coming as the time when the Jews will experience the effects of salvation history. He predicts that the Jews, addressed collectively in the second person, “as a sinner will look upon this one” (*hunc ...peccator intueberis*, vv. 97-101). The act of “looking” indicates that the Jews’ experience of the mythical realm will come through direct contact, rather than through enactment, which relies on the ritual moment as an intermediary. Their perception of myth is encapsulated by the pronoun *hunc*. It is immediately followed by a relative clause (*quem...gentibus*, vv. 97-100), which inscribes “this one” into the nativity scene and, as we saw above, portrays him as the Messiah. In the next stanza, this same *hunc* is modified by the adjective *celsum* (v. 102), which portrays him as the Son of Man. The figural relationship between the nativity and the second coming means that in looking at “this one,” the Jews will see the entire narrative of salvation history flash before their eyes.

In the final stanza, Prudentius imagines how the Jews, like nature and the animals/pagans, will be transformed by their experience of myth. The ablative absolute “under [their] regime of fury” (*te furoris praesule*, v.115) recalls their prior madness. Their transformation back to sanity follows a similar pattern to that of the landscape, discussed above. Initially, there is a passive response: “Judaea, at that time when you experience the thunderbolt of the cross” (*Iudaea, tunc fulmen crucis/ experta*, vv. 113-114), implying that they are struck by the thunderbolt. Then there is an active response: “you will feel who he is” (*qui sit senties*, v. 114). As before, the verb *sentio* indicates awareness that comes through sense perception. In this case, the enactment experienced by the Jews

brings an awareness of the identity of Christ. He is described in terms of the crucifixion and resurrection as “the one whom death swallowed up under your regime of fury and soon returned” (*quem, te furoris praesule,/ mors hausit et mox reddidit*, vv. 115-116). As we saw above, Prudentius links resurrection with redemption (vv. 46-48), and the Jews’ recognition of the resurrection means that they gain an awareness of Christ’s role as Savior.

Moreover, by linking the crucifixion with the Jews’ “regime of fury” (*furoris praesule*, v. 115), Prudentius suggests that the Jews become aware of their own role in putting Christ to death. In doing so, he deploys another common motif of anti-Jewish rhetoric, namely that the crucifixion was the culmination of a history of apostasy on the part of the Jews.¹⁸⁸ The Jews’ recognition of their own culpability is also evident in their affective response upon seeing Christ. The depiction of them as “dejected” (*deiectus*, v. 103) and “weeping at [their] offenses with ineffectual tears” (*inritus/ plangens reatum fletibus*, vv. 103-104) conveys a sense of remorse and despair that arises from recognition.

The language used throughout this final section indicates that despite the Jews’ eventual acceptance of Christ, they will not be saved. They are addressed collectively as a “sinner” (*peccator*, v. 101), and according to the stated principle that the judge “metes out things according to what each deserves” (*meritis repondet congrua*, v. 110), as sinners they should find themselves among those condemned to “hell and Tartarus” (*illis gehennam et tartarum*, v. 112), rather than among those given “the enjoyment of perpetual light” (*his lucis usum perpetis*, v. 113). In addition, the description of the

¹⁸⁸ R. Ruether, *op.cit.*, pp. 128-131.

peccator as being “cast down” (*deiectus*, v. 103) also gestures toward the underworld. A similar downward thrust is implied elsewhere in the hymn, both in the image of the faithless idol worshippers (*perfidi*, v. 37) who “plunged their enslaved existence/ into the smoking depths of the abyss” (*mancipatam fumido/ uitam barathro inmerserant*, vv. 39-40) and in the portrayal of the Jews as “[rushing] headlong through their wickedness” (*prona per scelus ruis*, v. 93). Thus, the final image of the *peccator deiectus* can be understood as part of a larger pattern of damnation that goes all the way back to the Israelite apostasy.

This idea is supported further by Prudentius’ use of the term *reatum* (v. 104) to describe the offense of the Jews. The same noun appears within the golden calf episode in Exodus.¹⁸⁹ There, the Lord promised to punish the Israelites at the day of judgment “for the crime of the calf” (*pro reatu vituli*, Ex 32.35). In choosing this term for *Cathemerinon* XI, Prudentius presents the Jews’ condemnation as a fulfillment of that OT prophecy. Thus, we can understand that their tears are “in vain” (*inritis ...fletibus*, vv. 103-104) because their punishment is preordained.

The condemnation of the Jews represents a complete reversal of roles in the final stanzas. The phrase “under their regime of fury” (*te furoris praesule*, v. 115) recalls how at the crucifixion the Jews were in the position of authority (*praesul*) over Jesus. In their madness, they condemned him, and “death swallowed him up” (*mors hausit*, v. 115). Within the judgment scene, however, Christ holds the position of authority as the one

¹⁸⁹ Forms of the noun *reatus* appear only twice in the Bible, both in the OT, one asking that Israel not be punished for a crime they did not commit (Deut 21.8), the other referring to the golden calf episode (Ex 32.5).

“distinguished and eminent over all” (*insignis ipse et praeminens*, v. 109), and the Jews are the ones swallowed up.

Rewriting Myth and Encouraging Transformation

As in Ambrose, the alignment between lived experience and myth encourages believers to feel that a certain version of myth becomes enacted for them and to accept that version into their world view. We have seen above how Prudentius uses the liturgical moment of Christmas to create an alignment with the entire narrative of salvation history, beginning with creation and including the fall of humanity, the incarnation, redemption through resurrection, and finally the second coming. His treatment of creation and incarnation as a unified event speaks to Trinitarian concerns in the fourth century.¹⁹⁰ This is particularly evident in his inclusion of Wisdom alongside the Word. Proverbs 8.22-8.31 featured heavily in fourth-century debates between neo-Arian and pro-Nicene factions over the relationship between members of the Trinity.¹⁹¹ On the one hand, neo-Arians pointed to Proverbs 8.22 as evidence that Christ *qua* Wisdom was created by the Father and therefore subordinate to the Father.¹⁹² A different interpretation was adopted by those in favor of the Nicene position that the Father and the Son share the same substance, including Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, Gregory of Nazianzus, and

¹⁹⁰ On Trinitarian and Christological concerns of the fourth century, see L. Ayers, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford, 2004); and R. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh, 1988).

¹⁹¹ For an overview of the debate between Arians and orthodox Christians over Proverbs 8.22 and 8.25, see Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation*, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 127-128.

¹⁹² Prv 8.22, spoken in the voice of Wisdom: “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.”

Ambrose.¹⁹³ They drew a distinction between the language of “creating” used at Proverbs 8.22, which in their view points to Jesus’ human birth, and the language of “bringing forth” used a few verses later at Proverbs 8.25,¹⁹⁴ which they took to signify his divine generation. Prudentius’ depiction attempts to capture both the divine and human elements of the Son’s birth and unify them as a single account, thus conveying a pro-Nicene position.¹⁹⁵

Another way that Prudentius attempts to generate instruction is by overwriting alternative myths. This is evident in his inclusion of the cosmological element of the solstice. As we saw above, the winter solstice becomes linked with Christmas as part of the mechanism of alignment, and the increased amount of daylight following the solstice is presented as a product of the enactment of Christ’s birth and the new creation. The connection Prudentius makes between the sun and salvation history is meant to interrupt any ritual alignment promoted by traditional cult worship of *Sol Invictus*. We can imagine a scenario in which converts to Christianity, whether recent or not, would have had some exposure to traditional practices associated with the worship of a solar deity. Just as with Christianity, cultic rituals would encourage them to feel as though they could participate in the mythical realm, which would in turn reinforce belief in cultic myth. In order to prevent this from happening, Prudentius appropriates the cosmological phenomena from the system of cult and integrates them within a Christian mythical realm. This means that

¹⁹³ See, for instance, Athanasius, *Statement of Faith* 3-4; Hilary, *de Trin.* 1.35; Gregory of Nazianzus, Or. 4 (30).2; Ambrose, *On Christian Faith* 3.7.46-47.

¹⁹⁴ Proverbs 8.25, also spoken in the voice of Wisdom: “Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hill, I was brought forth.”

¹⁹⁵ On Prudentius’ Trinitarian vision, see also V. Buchheit, “Prudentius über Christus als *duplex genus* und *conditor* (Cath. 11, 13-24),” *Wiener Studien* 101 (1988), pp. 297-312.

believers would not need to give up the idea that the movement of the heavens is connected with myth; instead, Prudentius encourages them to redirect this idea so that the association is with Christian myth, rather than traditional cultic myth.

Prudentius' treatment of idol worship (vv. 33-40) also opposes cult practices. Representations of traditional deities became an important concern during the so-called "pagan revival" of the late-fourth century, and the issue came to a head in 384 in the controversy over the Altar of Victory.¹⁹⁶ Led by the senator Symmachus, the senatorial elite sought toleration for traditional practices and petitioned for the Altar to be restored as part of the Roman cultural heritage.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, church fathers, most notably Ambrose, argued that such representations promoted polytheistic beliefs and undermined Christian belief and authority.¹⁹⁸ At their insistence, the altar was never restored. Prudentius weighed in on the debate in two poetic treatises entitled *Contra Symmachum*, which were published early in the fifth century at the same time as the hymns, almost twenty years later. There he revives Ambrose's arguments in dramatic/ poetic form and attacks all representations of pagan gods as idols,¹⁹⁹ an indication that the practice of worshipping them continued to be a problem even after the issue of the Altar of Victory was settled.

¹⁹⁶ See H. Bloch, "The Pagan Revival in the West at the End of the Fourth Century," in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. by A. Momigliano (Oxford, 1964), pp. 193-218.

¹⁹⁷ See Memorial of Symmachus, Prefect of the City.

¹⁹⁸ See Ambrose, Letters XVII and XVIII.

¹⁹⁹ See esp. *Contra Symmachum* II.1-66.

In *Cathemerinon* XI, Prudentius challenges the practice of worshipping divine images by insisting that it does not result in the enactment of myth.²⁰⁰ As we saw above, he refers to idols as “empty nothings” (*inanes nenias*, v. 34), suggesting that they do not have any connection with the mythical realm and therefore do not have any potential to enact myth. He asserts that those who worship idols attempt to make a false connection with myth by “[believing] that objects of bronze or cold stone or wood [are] God” (*vel aera vel saxa algida/ vel ligna credebat Deum*, vv. 35-36). Furthermore, he attempts to discourage idol worship with the threat of damnation (*uitam barathro inmeraserant*, v. 40).

*

Perhaps the most important instructive element in the hymn is modeling of enactment. The sentience attributed to nature invites us to understand the heavens and the landscape as examples of how enactment should work. Just as the experience of myth transforms nature, so too should it transform those performing the hymn. Enactment means that people should “feel” (*sentire*, v. 70) the birth of Christ in the present. As we saw above in the case of the landscape, this perception should generate both passive and active responses. Each person should be “overcome” (*uictus*, v.71) and “reborn” (*renatus*, v. 63), and these experiences should prompt them to change their nature (vv. 69-76) and to give up their former sinfulness (*sordidum/ ...ueternum depulit*, vv. 63-64). Furthermore, transformation should produce feelings of happiness (*laetius*, v. 9), gratitude (*gratetur*, v. 10), and joy (*gaudens*, v. 10).

²⁰⁰ On eschewing idol worship, cf. 1 Cor 14-23.

The depiction of the animals offers another opportunity for instruction since their increased sentience makes them even more like people. The scene encourages those performing to “understand” (*sapiat*, v. 88) that Christ’s birth becomes enacted, and it recommends faith (*fideli spiritu*, v. 85) as the vehicle for acquiring this knowledge. In addition, it suggests that believers should demonstrate their awareness of Christ in active ways, such as by “adoring” him. Understood at a cultural level, the conversion of the *pagana gens* also serves as a model for Christian believers. Like the pagans, they should give up their former beliefs, and as a result, they will receive redemption.

The Jews, on the other hand, serve as a negative example. The implication is that anyone who refuses to acknowledge Christ and participate in enactment “rushes headlong through [his] wickedness” (*prona per scelus ruis*, v. 93) and will receive “hell and Tartarus” (*gehennam et Tartarum*, v. 112). Yet, it does not make sense to interpret the example as a warning to those performing the hymn, since it seems unlikely that they would identify with such an extreme rejection of Christian belief. Nor does an evangelical explanation make sense, since it would be equally unlikely that Jews or other non-Christians would encounter the hymn. Even if they did, there is no reason to suppose that Prudentius’ threats of damnation would cause them to adopt Christianity.

One possible way to explain the negative example of the Jews is that it is meant as pure polemic. Perhaps by vilifying the Jews, Prudentius intends to perpetuate ideas about their madness and their history of apostasy. Promoting such anti-Jewish sentiments would reinforce the sense of collective identity felt by Christian believers, who would conceive of themselves as being saved in contrast with the Jews. One could also suggest an

apotropaic explanation. By foisting damnation on the Jews, perhaps Prudentius intends to keep it away from the faithful and thereby protect them.

A better explanation, though, is that the example of the Jews works in tandem with the example of the pagans to serve a paraenetic end. That is, together the two examples encourage believers to examine their own behavior and choose to act in ways that are faithful rather than sinful. This self-examination is prompted by the enactment of the second coming at the end of the hymn. The inclusion of the second coming in the mythical purview of the hymn means that this event would be enacted for believers, just as the events of the incarnation and creation would be enacted. As a result, those performing the hymn should feel as though they are participating in the second coming now in the present, even if the hymn indicates that the Jews will not experience this event until the future. As we have seen, Prudentius envisions the second coming as a time of cosmic upheaval and also of judgment (vv. 105-112). If enactment works, each person should feel that (s)he is about to be judged by the one “distinguished and eminent over all” (*insignis ipse et praeminens*, v. 109). Faced with this prospect, each person should question which outcome (s)he deserves (*meritis ...congrua*, v. 110): whether (s)he will be among those who receive perpetual light (*his lucis usum perpetis*, v. 111) or those who receive hell and Tartarus (*illis gehennam et Tartarum*, v. 112).

The pagans and the Jews represent these two alternatives. On the one hand, the pagans are guided by an unwavering faith and they experience an immediate and total conversion from their former sin; as discussed above, their righteousness associates them with redemption and eternal life. On the other hand, the Jews in their madness refuse to accept Christ and therefore continue the legacy of sin until the bitter end; as we have seen

above, their sinfulness brings them eternal damnation. Confronted with these two idealized extremes, believers should examine their own actions: have they given up sin completely, like the pagans, or have they held on to it, like the Jews? What is more, the hymn has primed them to consider this question through the lens of idol worship: have they given up all beliefs and practices associated with traditional cults, as the *pagana gens* does, or have they stubbornly continued with their apostasy, as the Jews do?

Such questions are designed to prompt ethical change. Upon examining their behavior, if believers find that they still engage in sinful actions, such as participating in traditional festivals, they should identify with the Jews “as a sinner” looking upon their judge (*peccator intueberis*, v. 101). Thus, they should have the same response as the Jews in terms of recognizing their crime and feeling remorse and despair (*deiectus ipse et inritis/ plangens reatum fletibus*, vv. 103-104). Furthermore, they should feel fear at the prospect of eternal damnation, and this fear should provoke them to change their ways before it is too late. Thus, the hymn holds out the promise of eternal life for those who, like the pagans, give up their former sins and experience transformation through the enactment of salvation history.

ENACTING COMPLETENESS:
SEDULIUS' HYMN II AND ITS LITURGICAL ADAPTATIONS

Sedulius' Hymn II is another example of a ritualizing text that takes advantage of the conventions of alignment and enactment.²⁰¹ It depicts Christ's life in twenty-three Ambrosian stanzas, each beginning with a letter of the Latin alphabet proceeding in sequence from A to Z.²⁰² Little can be known about the original performance context of this hymn, but in the first stanza, the verb *canamus* ("let us sing," v. 3) offers a clue. The choice of the verb *cano* is indicative of a ritual or ritualized setting, and the use of the first-person plural suggests collective performance. Although it is impossible to tell whether this implied performance matched the actual performance, I shall proceed on the assumption that the hymn was performed collectively, and I shall refer to those engaged in the performance of the hymn as "those performing" or "those singing." By "singing," I do not necessarily mean that they incanted the hymn or sang it to a musical melody. Rather, I mean "singing" in Habinek's definition, as a form of ritualized utterance marked by its difference from ordinary speech.²⁰³

²⁰¹ For an overview of Sedulius' life and writings, see C. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity: The Paschale Carmen of Sedulius* (Leiden, New York, 1988), pp. 23-32; and Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-142.

²⁰² C. Springer, "Sedulius' '*A Solis Ortus Cardine*': The Hymn and Its Tradition," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 101 (1987), pp. 69-75, esp. pp. 70-71, gives an overview of the use of the abecedarian form beginning in the West with Hilary of Poitiers and continuing through the middle ages. Fortunatus also uses an abecedarian form for *Carm.* I.16.

²⁰³ See above, introduction, pp. 22-23.

As far of the identity of those performing the hymn, we are likewise unable to know for certain. One possibility is that Sedulius intended this hymn to be sung by the same people for whom his biblical epic was intended. Carl Springer considers the immediate audience of the *Carmen Paschale* to be the literary circle of Macedonius,²⁰⁴ made up of “fifth-century orthodox Christians, devoted and knowledgeable believers, concerned not only with the general problem of paganism but also with Christian heresy.”²⁰⁵ Similarly, in her treatment of biblical epic and its audience, Judith McClure posits an educated Christian readership that would have been familiar with the biblical text as well as some exegetical treatments.²⁰⁶ Perhaps the “ritualizing” context of this hymn is similar to that of Prudentius’ *Cathemerinon* hymns, discussed above.²⁰⁷

Hymn II was well-known in the medieval period. A version of it was known to Bede writing in the late-seventh or early-eighth century, who quotes the first three verses of this “hymn of Sedulius” (*hymnus Sedulii*) in his *de Arte Metrica*.²⁰⁸ Abridged versions of it were also widely sung within medieval liturgies. A MS of hymnal dating from the first half of the ninth century, likely from Trier, includes a version of the hymn made up

²⁰⁴ On the identity of Macedonius and the possible members of the circle, see Springer, *Gospel as Epic*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁰⁶ McClure, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-321, esp. p. 312.

²⁰⁷ See above pp. 48-49.

²⁰⁸ Text of Bede’s *de Arte Metrica* can be found in H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini*, vol. VII (Leipzig, 1880), pp. 217-260, with this reference occurring on p. 256, ll. 29-32. He includes the first three lines of Sedulius’ Hymn II as his first example of a work written in what he refers to as iambic tetrameter. Bede reckons a foot based on a single two-syllable iambic unit, yielding four feet in the Ambrosian meter, whereas modern reckoning counts two iambic units in a foot so that this same meter is understood as iambic dimeter. Unfortunately, this mention does not tell us much about the potential liturgical use of the hymn since it is impossible to know whether Bede encountered the hymn within a collection of Sedulius’ works, within a prayer book, or within a collection of hymns.

of only the first seven stanzas (A-G), an adaptation often referred to as *A Solis Ortus Cardine*.²⁰⁹ Another ninth-century MS of collected hymns written at Tours includes a second adaptation consisting of stanzas HILN, referred to as *Hostis Herodes*.²¹⁰ Helmut Gneuss includes these two adaptations of Hymn II within the “New Hymnal” (NH_y), a type of hymnal which emerged on the continent in the ninth century and replaced older types of hymnals as a part of the “Romanization” of the liturgy in Gaul in the Carolingian period.²¹¹ It is impossible to tell, though, whether this hymnal-type was intended for use in monastic or canonical contexts or both.²¹²

These adaptations make the hymn an important test case for the overarching model presented here because they reveal how the structures of alignment were altered to enhance enactment through the liturgy. In its original form, Hymn II was designed to bring together myth and experience through the medium of the abecedarian form and thereby enact a sense of completeness. This alignment through the formal, textual

²⁰⁹ Manchester, John Rylands Library Lat. 116 (Crawford 133): see entry in C. Springer, *The Manuscripts of Sedulius: A Provisional Handbook*, TAPA 85.5 (Philadelphia, 1995), p. 152; see also Gneuss, *Hymnar und Hymnen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 49 and *idem*, “Latin Hymns in Medieval England: Future Research,” in *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honor of Rossell Hope Robbins*, ed. by B. Rowland (Kent State, 1974), pp. 407-424, esp. 412.

²¹⁰ Paris, Bibliothèque National, Lat. 13388: see entry in Springer, *MSS of Sedulius*, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175; see also Gneuss, *Hymnar und Hymnen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49 and *idem*, “Latin Hymns,” *op. cit.*, p. 412.

²¹¹ Gneuss, *Hymnar und Hymnen*, *op. cit.*, p. 62 gives a table of the hymns of the New Hymnal, which includes *A Solis Ortus Cardine* as NH_y 44 and *Hostis Herodes* as NH_y 45. He discusses the emergence of NH_y on pp. 41-54, where he posits a connection with the monastic reforms undertaken by Benedict of Aniane in 817 under Louis the Pious, esp. pp. 45-51. D. Bullough and A. Corrêa, “Texts, Chant, and the Chapel of Louis the Pious,” in *Charlemagne’s Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. by P. Godman and R. Collins (Oxford, 1990), pp. 489-508, esp. pp. 496-507 give evidence against the specific association of the New Hymnal with the decrees of 817; instead, they explore the role of Louis’s court in the development and dissemination of the New Hymnal. For a general overview of the “Romanization” of the liturgy during the Carolingian period, see C. Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*, rev. and transl. by W. Storey and N. Rasmussen (Washington, D.C., 1986 [1981]), pp. 1-3, 61-62, 145-150.

²¹² Gneuss’s, *Hymnar und Hymnen*, *op. cit.*, position presupposes a monastic context for the New Hymnal, whereas D. Bullough and A. Corrêa’s, *op. cit.*, position pre-supposes a canonical context. Cf. I. Mifull, *The Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church: A Study and Edition of the ‘Durham Hymnal’* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 6.

element of the alphabet does not conform to the pattern of alignment around a liturgical moment that we observed in Ambrose's Hymn III and Prudentius' *Cathemerinon* XI. Yet when the hymn was adapted for liturgical use, the original structures of alignment were reconfigured so as to restore a temporal framework for aligning myth and experience.

Abecedarian Form and Narrative Trajectory

In his analysis of Hymn II, Carl Springer emphasizes that Sedulius' innovation lies in combining the abecedarian form with narrative movement.²¹³ He observes that over the course of the hymn, the progression of letters through the alphabet matches the chronological succession of events of Christ's life depicted in the hymn, beginning with the incarnation in stanza A and continuing through to the ascension in stanza Z, and he contrasts this with previous abecedarian compositions in Latin. Whereas Hilary and Augustine chose non-narrative subjects for their alphabetical verses, Sedulius follows the Gospel narratives and thereby takes advantage of the symbolic value of the alphabet for representing completeness.²¹⁴ According to Springer, the progression of letters evokes the idea of Christ as the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. As he puts it, "Christ is the alphabet—and the alphabet is Christ."²¹⁵ Although Springer is right that the abecedarian progression and the narrative of Christ's life both aim at completeness, it is important to observe that the two trajectories do not keep pace with each other over the course of the hymn: each new letter does not necessarily introduce a new episode of

²¹³ Springer, "Sedulius' 'A Solis Ortus Cardine'," *op. cit.*, p. 73.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Christ's life. Rather, the narrative progression has its own structuring elements, and thus it forms a separate trajectory from the abecedarian movement.

The narrative progression includes events of Christ's life derived from the Gospels. Major structural breaks are determined by changes in content, producing three sections that move teleologically from the beginning of Christ's life to the end: stanzas A-L treat his early years; stanzas M-S focus on Christ's miracles; and stanzas T-Z deal with the end of Christ's earthly life. Within each section are a number of smaller episodes, which generally follow a teleological arrangement and at the same time reveal a complex system of responson underlying the narrative.

The narrative begins in stanza A (vv. 1-4):²¹⁶

A solis ortus cardine
Adusque terrae limitem
Christum canamus principem,
Natum Maria uirgine.

All the way from the pole of the sun's rising
To the end of the earth
Let us sing forth Christ the first man,
Born from the Virgin Mary.

Christ first appears in the hymn at verse 3, where he is referred to as "first man" (*Christum... principem*), and the narrative proper begins in the next verse with the mention of his birth from the Virgin Mary (*Natum Maria uirgine*, v. 4). Springer interprets the first two lines in reference to Christ as an expression of his "all-encompassing" nature.²¹⁷ These verses introduce the idea of completeness by invoking

²¹⁶ The text of Sedulius is that of J. Huemer, *Sedulii Opera Omnia*, CSEL 10 (Vienna, 1999 [1885]), pp. 163-168. Translations are my own.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

extreme boundaries. On one side, the boundary “all the way from the pole of the rising of the sun,” (*A solis ortus cardine*, v. 1) is temporal, signaling the beginning of the day, and also spatial, pointing to a point at the horizon in the east. The limit on the other side is explicitly spatial (“to the end of the earth,” *adusque terrae limitem*), but it also implies the end of the day where the sun sets in the west. Taken together, the verses suggest a sense of “bounded boundlessness” that echoes Psalm 112.3, which features a similar phrase “from the rising of the sun all the way to its setting” (*ab ortu solis usque ad occasum eius*) that renames eternity. It is also possible to take these first two lines in reference to the narrative itself, namely that it will proceed from the very beginning to the very end of Christ’s life. And as we shall see, it does just this.

Although stanza A opens this narrative with the mention of Christ’s birth, the specific episodes of his early years begin with stanza B: incarnation (stanzas B-D), nativity (stanzas E-G), “post-nativity” (stanzas H-K), and baptism (stanza L). The divisions between the four episodes are marked by their relationship to the source narratives in the Gospels, and they appear in the same order as in Sedulius’ *Paschale Carmen*,²¹⁸ which presents a unified narrative of Christ’s life based on an amalgamation of the Gospels. The episodes are also related to each other through carefully constructed antitheses.²¹⁹

The first episode spans three stanzas (vv. 5-16):

²¹⁸ Cf. *Paschale Carmen* II.35-174: incarnation at II.35-40; nativity at II.41-72; post-nativity at II.73-133; baptism at II.141-174. The *Paschale Carmen* also includes one more episode of the commissioning of the disciples (II.134-140).

²¹⁹ On Sedulius’ use of antithesis in the *Paschale Carmen*, see M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity* (Liverpool, 1985), p. 165 n. 13; R. Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike: Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung*, vol 1 (Munich, 1975), p. 142; P. Mayr, *Studien zu dem Paschale Carmen des christlichen Dicters Sedulius*, (Augsburg, 1916), pp. 14, 27, 85-86.

Beatus auctor saeculi	5
Seruile corpus induit,	
Vt carne carnem liberans	
Non perderet quod condidit.	

Clausae parentis uiscera	
Caelestis intrat gratia,	10
Venter puella baiulat	
Secreta quae non nouerat.	

Domus pudici pectoris	
Templum repente fit Dei,	
Intacta nesciens uirum	15
Verbo creauit filium.	

Blessed originator of the world	5
Clothes himself in a slavish body	
So that freeing the flesh by flesh	
He would not lose what he had brought into being.	

Celestial grace enters	
The womb of the sealed mother,	10
The belly of the girl carries	
The concealed cargo	
That even she had no knowledge of.	

Dwelling of a chaste heart	
Immediately becomes the temple of God,	
With complete integrity, not knowing a man	15
She created the Son from the Word.	

Sedulius structures this treatment of the incarnation around John 1.14: “The Word was made flesh” (*et Verbum caro factum est*). Stanza B includes a double emphasis on “flesh” (*carne carnem*, v. 7), while stanza D makes reference to the “Word” (*Verbo*, v. 16). These stanzas are also bound together by the antithesis created between the first line of stanza B (“Blessed originator of the world,” *Beatus auctor saeculi*, v. 5) and the last line of stanza D (“She created the Son from the Word,” *Verbo creauit filium*, v. 16). The opposition hinges on the idea that Christ is at once the subject and the object of creation,

both creator (*auctor*) and created (*creavit filium*). Sedulius fills in this frame with further antitheses. Christ's divine status as creator of the world is also set against his "servile body" (*servile corpus*, v. 6), an emblem of his human status. Moreover, Mary is named as both a parent (*parentis*, v. 9) and a maiden (*puellae*, v. 11), who is pregnant (*venter...baiulat*, v. 11) yet has never known a man (*intacta nesciens virum*, v. 15). Her human status as compared with the divinity of Christ is emphasized through an architectural metaphor: a modest house (*domus*, v. 13) becomes a "temple of God" (*templum...Dei*, v. 14).

The next episode is structured around Luke's account of the nativity (vv. 17-28):²²⁰

Enixa est puerpera
 Quem Gabrihel praedixerat,
 Quem matris aluo gestiens
 Clausus Iohannes senserat. 20

Faeno iacere pertulit,
 Praesepe non abhorruit,
 Paruoque lacte pastus est,
 Per quem nec ales esurit.

Gaudet chorus caelestium, 25
 Et angeli canunt Deum,
 Palamque fit pastoribus
 Pastor creatorque omnium.

Exerting herself in labor, the woman gave birth
 To him whom Gabriel had predicted
 Whom John had sensed with joy
 Though sealed up in his mother's womb. 20

Finding himself lying in hay, he endured
 He did not despise the manger,
 He was nourished with modest milk,
 Because of him not even birds went hungry.

²²⁰ Lk 1.26-2.20, esp. Lk 2.7-2.13.

phrase “originator of the world,” (*auctor saeculi*, v. 5), mentioned above, which matches *creator omnium* (v. 28) in meaning and structure; both suggest Christ’s role in creation, and both consist of a nominative agent noun with an objective genitive. Taken together, these two expressions, one in the first line of stanza B and the other in the last line of stanza G, frame stanzas B-G as a single unit. The reference to the creation of the Son in verse 16 (*creavit filium*) bi-sects this unit, producing two halves that mirror each other. *Auctor* → *creavit* encloses the incarnation episode in a transition from creator to created, while *creavit* → *creator* encloses the nativity episode in the reverse transition from created back to creator. This second transition is echoed in a similar opposition based on the root *past-* (“to nourish”). Within the nativity scene, Christ is depicted as being nourished by milk (*paruoque lacte pastus est*, v. 23) and also as the nourisher (“shepherd,” *pastor*, v. 28), even to those who already nourish (“shepherds,” *pastoribus*, v. 27). Ultimately, the frame *auctor saeculi* to *creator omnium* suggests that Christ’s life moves through a cycle of creator → created → creator.

The nativity episode works as the reverse of the incarnation episode in other ways as well. In describing the incarnation, Sedulius puts great emphasis on limits to access and also to knowledge. Mary is portrayed a “closed parent” (*clausae parentis*, v. 9), who remains “intact” (*intacta*, v. 15), and her pregnancy is a “secret,” which at least initially not even she was aware of (*secreta quae non nouerat*, v. 12). By contrast, in the nativity episode, the emphasis is on openness and knowledge. Sedulius notes how Christ’s status “is acknowledged publicly to the shepherds” (*palamque fit pastoribus*, v. 27). The portrayal of John the Baptist as a joyful fetus captures the essence of the reversal: “John had sensed him with joy,/ Though sealed up in his mother’s womb,” (*Quem matris aluo*

gestiens/ Clausus Iohannes senserat, vv. 19-20). Used before of Mary, the adjective *clausus* again suggests inaccessibility, but in this case, knowledge of Christ comes to John nonetheless (*quem....senserat*).

The next three stanzas (H-K) form a unit based on Matthew 2 (vv. 29-40):

Hostis Herodes impie,	
Christum uenire quid times?	30
Non eripit mortalia	
Qui regna dat caelestia.	

Ibant magi qua uenerant,	
Stellam sequentes praeuiam;	
Lumen requirunt lumine,	35
Deum fatentur munere.	

Katerua matrum personat,	
Conlisa deflens pignora,	
Quorum tyrannus milia	
Christo sacrauit uictimam.	40

Herod, you impious enemy,	
Why are you afraid of Christ coming?	30
He does not steal away mortal kingdoms,	
But provides heavenly kingdoms.	

In the same way they had come, the magi leave,	
Following the star that marks their path;	
They seek light from light,	35
They acknowledge God with gifts.	

Krowd of mothers sounds aloud,	
Weeping for their dashed hopes:	
Thousands of children whom the tyrant	
Consecrated as a sacrificial offering to Christ.	40

Here Sedulius' narrative is split into three scenes. Stanza H deals with Herod's desire for power; stanza I features the adoration of the Magi; and stanza K treats the grief of mothers whose children are massacred. Although the scenes are distinct, they are bound together into a quasi-episode, which I refer to as the "post-nativity." Matthew's account

begins with the interaction between the wise men and Herod, in which they ask him where to find the Messiah (Mt 2.1-2), and frightened by their news, Herod asks them to report back with the child's location (Mt 2.3-8). Then the Gospel narrative follows the Magi as they find the infant Jesus, give him their gifts, and depart for the East without returning to Herod (Mt 2.9-12). At that point, the focus shifts to Joseph's attempt to save Jesus and Mary by taking them to Egypt (Mt 2.13-15) before Herod kills all the children in and around Bethlehem in order to preserve his power (Mt 2.16-18). Sedulius condenses Matthew's narrative, but he does so in ways that make it difficult to follow the narrative progression of the hymn. He eliminates the interaction between Herod and the wise men as well as Jesus' flight to Egypt, and he gives only a cursory mention of Herod's involvement in the massacre of the innocents (*tyrannus*, v. 40).²²² Without these elements, the narrative coherence of the hymn depends heavily on Matthew's account, and Sedulius clearly expects that those encountering the hymn would be familiar with the Gospel source.

One possible reason that Sedulius chooses to configure the narrative into three distinct scenes has to do with the relationship between this "episode" and the one before. Each scene creates an antithesis when paired with the stanza from the nativity episode that corresponds in order. When set against the first stanza of the nativity (stanza E), stanza H creates a contrast between Herod's reaction of fear upon learning of Christ's birth (*Christum uenire quid times*, v. 30) and John's reaction of joy (*gestiens*, v. 19). Similarly, the adoration of the Magi in stanza I emphasizes Christ's divine status (*Deum fatentur munere*, v. 35), as opposed to stanza F, which emphasizes his human status

²²² These elements are included in Sedulius' epic version of the post-nativity narrative at *Paschale Carmen* II.73-133.

(*faeno*, v. 21; *praesepe*, v. 22; *paruoque lacte pastus est*, v. 23). Finally, the plaintive sound of the mothers depicted in stanza K (*katerua matrum personat*, v. 37; *deflens*, v. 38) finds its counterpart in the joyful sound of the heavenly host in stanza G (*gaudet chorus caelestium*, v. 25; *et angeli canunt Deum*, v. 26).

Stanza L presents Christ's baptism as the final episode in his early life using language from John 1.29 (vv.41-44):

Lavacra puri gurgitis
Caelestis agnus attigit,
Peccata qui mundi tulit
Nos abluendo sustulit.

Lamb of heaven touched
The bath of pure flowing water,
The one who took away the sins of the world,
He raised us up by cleansing us.

The expression "lamb of heaven" (*caelestis agnus*, v. 42) echoes John 1.29. There, the evangelist has John the Baptist refer to Jesus as the "Lamb of God" (*agnus Dei*).²²³ The next verse of the hymn ("The one who took away the sins of the world," *Peccata qui mundi tulit*, v. 43) is also ultimately derived from John 1.29 ("Who takes away the sin of the world," *qui tollit peccatum mundi*), but it comes more immediately from Ambrose, Hymn III.31 ("The one who took away the sins of the world," *Peccata qui mundi tulit*). Most likely, Sedulius chooses to replicate Ambrose's version to fit the constraints of the iambic dimeter, while not straying too far from John's account of the baptism.²²⁴

This baptism episode differs from the previous episodes in terms of size, comprised of just one stanza as opposed to three stanzas. Moreover, this episode is less

²²³ The phrase appears again at Jn 1.35.

²²⁴ Jesus' baptism is also related at Mt 3.13-17, Mk 1.9-11, and Lk 3.21-22.

integrated with those that come before it. As we have seen, the incarnation, nativity, and post-nativity episodes respond to each other through carefully constructed antitheses, but the baptism episode only responds to the massacre of the innocents scene in the previous stanza. By referring to Christ as the “celestial lamb” (*caelestis agnus*, v. 42), Sedulius casts Christ as a sacrificial victim, which points back to verse 40, where he names the children slaughtered by Herod as “sacrificial offering” (*uictimam*, v. 40). The two sacrifices work as mirror images of each other. Sedulius specifies that the innocents are sacrificed for Christ (*Christo sacrauit*, v. 40), while Christ’s sacrifice is for humanity (“the lamb took away the sins of the world” (*agnus...peccata qui mundi tulit*, vv. 43-44). The differences between the baptism episode and the previous episodes suggest that it performs a different function in the hymn, specifically as a transition to the miracle section, a point will return to below.

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Stanzas M-S form a section treating Christ’s miracles. Each episode depicts a transformation related to a specific passage or passages in the Gospel narratives, and in general, the section proceeds with one episode per stanza. Stanza N features the miracle at the wedding of Cana, in which Jesus changes water into wine.²²⁵ Stanza O is an exception since it includes two miracles: the healing of the centurion’s servant and Peter’s mother-in-law, but it seems that Sedulius considered them part of a single episode because the two events are related one after the other in Matthew 8.5-17.²²⁶ Stanza P

²²⁵ Jn 2.1-11 gives the only account of this miracle.

²²⁶ The healing of the centurion’s servant is related at Mt 8.5-13 and also at Lk 7.1-10 and Jn 4.46-53; the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law is related at Mt 8.14-17 and also at Mk 1.29-34 and Lk 4.38-41, but Matthew’s account is the only one that has the two miracles in succession.

gives the miracle of Peter walking on water,²²⁷ and stanza Q features the raising of Lazarus.²²⁸ In stanza R, Sedulius treats the miracle of the hemorrhaging woman,²²⁹ which is followed by the healing of the paralytic man in stanza S.²³⁰

Stanza M fits within the miracle section, but it does not constitute its own episode (vv. 45-48):

Miraculis dedit fidem,
Habere se Deum patrem,
Infirma sanans corpora
Et suscitans cadauera.

Miracles are the vehicle for him to instill faith
That he himself as God has God as his father,
By curing sickly bodies,
And bringing dead bodies back to life.

Springer points out that this stanza marks the midpoint of the hymn, and he therefore sees it as a transitional element between Christ's early life (stanzas A-L) and his later ministry (stanzas N-Z).²³¹ While I agree with Springer that the stanza has a transitional function, I take a different view regarding how the transition works. Springer's suggestion sets stanza M apart from the miracles related in stanzas N-S, yet the initial word (*miraculis*, v. 45) clearly joins this stanza with the miracles that follow. Nonetheless, stanza M does not constitute its own episode since its two examples of healing the sick (v. 47) and reviving the dead (v. 48) are too generic to refer to particular events from the Gospels, in contrast

²²⁷ Mt 14.28-33 gives the only account of Peter walking on water.

²²⁸ The raising of Lazarus only appears in the Gospels at Jn 11.1-44.

²²⁹ Mt 9.20-22, Mk 5.25-34, and Lk 8.43-48.

²³⁰ Mt 9.2-8, Mk 2.1-12, and Lk 5.17-26.

²³¹ Springer, "Sedulius' 'A Solis Ortus Cardine'," *op. cit.*, p. 73.

with the episodes mentioned above (stanzas N-S). Instead, this stanza marks the beginning of the miracle section and thereby makes a transition between the section describing Christ's early life (A-L) and his miracles (M-S).

The miracle section differs from the previous section with regard to how the episodes are ordered. Whereas the episodes of Christ's early life are arranged in chronological succession, the miracle episodes do not follow the order of the Gospel narratives. This disjuncture is particularly evident in stanzas R and S. The miracle of the hemorrhaging woman reported in stanza R comes immediately before the miracle of the paralytic man in stanza S, but in Matthew's, Mark's, and Luke's Gospels this order is reversed.²³² What is more, Sedulius follows the order of the Gospel narratives in the *Paschale Carmen*. There the story of the paralytic man (III.91-102) precedes that of the hemorrhaging woman (III.115-128).²³³ Furthermore, the placement of the raising of Lazarus episode in the hymn also confounds a narrative progression based on the Gospels. The scene appears at stanza Q, immediately preceding the miracles of the hemorrhaging woman and the paralytic man, but in the Gospel of John, the raising of Lazarus is Jesus' final miracle (Jn 11.1-44) before his entry into Jerusalem on Palm

²³² In Matthew, paralytic man at 9.2-8 and hemorrhaging woman at 9.20-22; in Mark, paralytic man at 2.1-12 and hemorrhaging woman at 5.25-34; and in Luke, paralytic man at 5.17-26 and hemorrhaging woman at 8.43-48; John's Gospel does not include either of these miracles.

²³³ In the *Paschale Carmen*, the synagogue leader's request for help for his daughter (III.103-114) comes in between the miracles of the paralytic man and the hemorrhaging woman, and then subsequent to the healing of the hemorrhaging woman, the narrative returns to synagogue leader's daughter, who is raised from the dead (III.129-142). This sequence of miracles related in the *Paschale Carmen* (paralytic man; synagogue leader's daughter, part 1; hemorrhaging woman; synagogue leader's daughter, part 2) is most parallel to Matthew 9.1-26, even though that account also includes a confrontation with the Pharisees in between the paralytic man and the synagogue leader's plea (Mt 9.9-17). Mark's and Luke's accounts (Mk 5.21-43 and Lk 8.40-56) follow a similar sequence of miracles (synagogue leader's daughter, part 1; hemorrhaging woman; synagogue leader's daughter, part 2), except that the miracle of the paralytic man is related several chapters before (Mk 2. 1-12 and Lk 5.17-26), with many intervening episodes.

Sunday (Jn 12.12-19).²³⁴ Again, in the *Paschale Carmen*, Sedulius follows John's Gospel by including the raising of Lazarus (IV.271-290) just before the Palm Sunday procession (IV.291-309), and he places the episodes of the paralytic man and the hemorrhaging woman a book and a half earlier (III.91-102 and III.115-128).

The fact that stanzas Q-S do not follow the order of events in the Gospels or in Sedulius' amalgamation of the Gospels suggests that there is another framework for arranging the miracle episodes. Upon closer observation, we can see that Sedulius arranged these episodes to create an alternation between miracles involving liquids (stanzas N, P, R) and miracles involving bodies (stanzas O, Q, S).

The wedding of Cana episode (stanza N) begins the alternation with a miracle involving transformation of liquid (vv. 49-52):²³⁵

Nouum genus potentiae:
Aquaе rubescunt hydriae,
Vinumque iussa fundere
Mutauit unda originem.

New kind of power:
The water-jugs full of water turn red,
And when ordered to pour out wine
The flow has changed its original state.

Notable here is how Sedulius distills the biblical source into the essence of the miracle.²³⁶

Details from John's account (2.1-11) are excluded, such as the presence of Mary and the steward and even the setting at a wedding. Carl Springer notes a similar process in

²³⁴ The raising of Lazarus is only included in the Gospel of John (11.1-44), whereas the Palm Sunday procession is related in all four Gospels (Mt 21.1-11; Mk 11.1-10; Lk 19.28-38; Jn 12.12-19).

²³⁵ Cf. Maximus of Turin's account of the same miracle, which also focuses on the transformation of liquid (*Serm.* 101.3).

²³⁶ Cf. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113 on Sedulius' paraphrastic technique in treating the miracle episodes in the *Paschale Carmen*.

Sedulius' treatment of the same episode in the *Paschale Carmen*, and he concludes that the effect is to "[focus] on Christ and his actions," since there his agency in the miracle is mentioned twice.²³⁷ But in the hymn, Christ is not named at all. Instead, the verbs *rubescunt* ("they turn red," v. 50) and *mutauit* ("it changes," v. 52), concentrate on the change of state from water into wine. Moreover, the scene includes a number of terms for liquids ("water," *aquae*, v. 50; "wine," *uinum*, v. 51; "flow," *unda*, v. 52), as well as actions that apply only to liquids ("to pour out," *fundere*, v. 51). We may detect the presence of Christ obliquely in the participle *iussa* modifying *unda* ("flow ordered to pour out wine," *uinumque iussa fundere/ ...unda*, vv. 51-52), but the passive voice of the participle subordinates Christ's role in giving the order to the transformation of the water that happens as a result.

The miracle of Peter walking on water (stanza P) also fits with the liquid miracles (vv. 57-60):

Petrus per undas ambulat
Christi leuatus dextera:
Natura quam negauerat
Fides parauit semitam.

Peter walks across the waves
Lifted by the right hand of Christ:
The path that nature had denied
Faith has prepared.

Sedulius adapts the miracle from Matthew 14.28-31 by focusing not so much on Peter's ability to walk on water as on the water's ability to support him. The "path that nature had denied" (*natura quam negauerat/...semitam*, vv. 59-60) refers to the route Peter took "across the waves" (*per undas*, v. 57), and its natural state entails that the water should

²³⁷ *Paschale Carmen* III.1-11 discussed by Springer, *Gospel as Epic*, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-127, esp. p. 113.

not support human weight. Nevertheless, Peter's faith turns it into a path that he can walk on ("Faith prepares the path," *fides parauit semitam*, v. 60).²³⁸

Sedulius also portrays the healing of the hemorrhaging woman as a miracle involving liquid (vv. 65-68):²³⁹

Riuos cruoris torridi
Contacta uestis obstruit,
Fletu rigante supplicis
Arent fluenta sanguinis.

Rivers of dried gore were dammed up
After the garment was touched;
Because of the wet weeping of the suppliant,
The flow of blood became dry.

The scene focuses on the liquid nature of the blood, described as both "rivers of gore"

(*riuos cruoris*, v. 65) and "flow of blood" (*fluenta sanguinis*, v. 68). More language

emphasizing liquid occurs in the description of the woman's tears as "wet weeping" (*fletu rigante*, v. 67). Aside from the verb *rigo* ("to become damp with moisture"),²⁴⁰ the noun

²³⁸ Cf. Maximus of Turin's (d. 408/423) treatment of the same miracle (*Serm.* 77.2, translation is that of B. Ramsey, *The Sermons of Maximus of Turin*, ACW 50 [New York, 1989], pp. 187-188; text is that of A. Mutzenbecher, *Maximi Episcopi Taurinensis Sermones*, CCSL 23 [Turnholt, 1962]):

... Thus in the sea, as the audacious wayfarer steps out upon the waves (*super undas*),... his feet go under but he is supported by the hand of Christ (*sed Christi dextera sustentatur*). Faith supported the one whom the water was causing to sink (*Sustentabat fides quem unda mergebatur*).... He believes that faith can find a solid foothold even amidst the waves (*Credit fidem etiam inter undas solidum inuenire uestigium*). Although the sea is tossed by billows and the waters are shaken by winds, still Peter's path (*Petri semita*), which leads to the Lord, is not disturbed. Peter walks upon the waters (*Ambulat igitur super aquas Petrus*), then, and under his feet the yielding liquid does not give way (*mollis unda non cedit*). We read in the Old Testament that the children of Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry paths (*siccis itineribus*) and that for the safety of those proceeding, the water was transformed into a kind of solid mass (*unda in soliditatem quandam eam fuisse mutatam*), lest it slip back. How much better this, when as Peter walks, the waves are neither transformed nor moved (*nec mutatur unda nec labitur*), and the water is neither solidified nor does it flee away (*nec solidatur aqua nec refugit*)! Better, I say, is this, when the very waves that toss also provide support (*eadem unda quae fluctuat et sustentat*), when the flood that drowns also acts as a servant (*idem gurges qui mergitur et famulatur*).

²³⁹ Springer, *MSS of Sedulius*, *op. cit.*, p. 14 notes that these four lines were excerpted in at least one eighth-century MSS as a charm against bloodletting.

²⁴⁰ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v., *rigo* I.A.

fletu forms a pun with the similar sounding *fluenta* in the following line, suggesting that her tears flow like streams. The essence of the miracle involves stopping the flow of the liquid (*riuos...obstruit*, vv. 65-66), and the method for doing this involves “drying it up” (*arent fluenta sanguinis*, v. 68). Drying is also evident in the phrase *cruori torridi* (“dried up gore,” v. 65), which works as a hysteron proteron; the blood is referred to by its later state, *i.e.*, dried up, before the act of drying has taken place. Thus, as in the two previous fluid miracles, the scene revolves around a transformation, in this case from drenched to dry.

The corporeal miracles depicted in stanzas O, Q, and S entail transformations as well, but transformations of bodies instead of liquids. In stanza O, the centurion’s servant and Peter’s mother-in-law both recover their health (*salutem*, v. 53); in stanza Q, Lazarus, who is already “stinking with death” (*fetidus*, v. 61), “receives life” (*uitam recepit*, v. 62); and in stanza S, the paralytic man, who is “separated from the control of his whole body” (*Solutus omni corpore*, v. 69), finds his strength restored. These corporeal transformations, either from sickness to health or from death to life, recall the generic examples of miracles given in stanza M: “curing sickly bodies,/ and bringing dead bodies back to life” (*Infirma sanans corpora/ Et suscitans cadauera*, vv. 47-48). This overlap suggests that stanza M fits with the corporeal miracles, even though it does not itself count as an episode.

Grouping stanza M this way extends the pattern of alternation that governs the miracle stanzas: stanza M (corporeal), stanza N (fluid), stanza O (corporeal), stanza P (fluid), stanza Q (corporeal), stanza R (fluid), and stanza S (corporeal). Moreover, this pattern can be drawn out even further to include stanza L from the previous section. In

describing the scene of Christ's baptism, that stanza features a number of words pertaining to liquids: "bath" (*lauacra*, v. 41); "pure flowing water" (*puri gurgitis*, v. 41); "cleansing" (*abluendo*, v. 44). Although stanza L stands outside the miracle section as demarcated by the word *miraculis* (v. 45) at the beginning of stanza M, nevertheless it fits within the liquid/corporeal alternation and thereby smoothes the transition between the early life section and the miracle section. One possible interpretation of this alternation relates to the sacrament of the eucharist, which was part of the regular Sunday liturgy.²⁴¹ Perhaps Sedulius intended for the corporeal miracles to be reminiscent of Christ's body, while the liquid miracles were meant to be reminiscent of his blood.

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The final section of the hymn (stanzas T-Z) deals with the end of Christ's earthly life. There is a clear break from the previous section in terms of content since these stanzas no longer focus on miracles, and this break is reinforced by the temporal adverb *tunc* ("then," v. 73) at the beginning of stanza T, indicating a new sequence of events.²⁴² Within this section, each episode is marked by the use of antithesis,²⁴³ and the order of the episodes follows the succession of events in the Gospel narratives.

Stanza T treats the episode of Judas' betrayal (vv. 73-76):

Tunc ille Iudas carnifex
Ausus magistrum tradere,
Pacem ferebat osculo,
Quam non habebat pectore.

Then Judas that destroyer of the flesh

²⁴¹ On the Sunday liturgy and the sacrament of the eucharist, see above, introduction, p. 13.

²⁴² Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *tunc* B.1.γ.

²⁴³ On Sedulius' use of antithesis, see above n. 219.

With the audacity to hand over his master,
He brought peace with a kiss,
Although he did not have it in his heart.

While Judas' betrayal of Jesus is reported in all four Gospels,²⁴⁴ Sedulius chooses to focus on the detail of the kiss from the Synoptic Gospels,²⁴⁵ and he refers to the gesture by its common meaning, as an outward sign of peace and friendship ("He gave him peace with a kiss," *Pacem ferebat osculo*, v. 75).²⁴⁶ In doing so, he sets up an antithesis with the following line: "[Judas] did not have [peace] in his heart" (*Quam non habebat pectore*, v. 76). The opposition arises from Judas' outward demonstration of peace and his inward lack of peace, shown through his intent to betray Jesus. A similar juxtaposition can be found in Augustine's Sermon 313E, delivered on the birthday of St. Cyprian in 410.²⁴⁷ In the sermon, Augustine uses Judas as an example of how separation from the Church is to be avoided, just as Christ did not separate a traitor from himself. Speaking of Judas, he says, "He gave the kiss of peace, though he didn't have peace in his heart," (*osculum pacis dedit, qui pacem non habebat*, *Serm.* 313E.3).²⁴⁸ The overlap in language is striking. Augustine's *pacem non habebat* is nearly identical to Sedulius' *quam non habebat*, where *quam* refers to *pacem* in the previous line. Moreover, the two versions have a similar syntax consisting of main clause and relative clause, with the only

²⁴⁴ Mt 26.47-56; Mk 14.43-52; Lk 22.47-53; Jn 18.2-11.

²⁴⁵ Mt 26.48; Mk 14.44; Lk 22.48. John's account does not mention a kiss.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Ambrose, *Explanatio Psalmorum XII*, 39.16, which describes the difference between what a kiss should mean and how Judas uses it. See also Augustine, *Serm.* 227, 229.3.

²⁴⁷ September 14, 410 CE. For dating see, the chronological table in M. Pellegrino's introduction to *The Works of Saint Augustine, Part III/I: Sermons* (New York, 1990), pp. 138-163, esp. p. 158.

²⁴⁸ Latin text is that of G. Morin, *Miscellanea Agostiniana, Vol. I: Sancti Augustini Sermones Post Maurinos Reperti* (Rome, 1930), *Serm.* XXVIII, p. 537, l. 26. English translation is that of E. Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine, Part III/9: Sermons (306-340A) on the Saints* (New York, 1994), pp. 109-117.

difference that Augustine makes his relative pronoun dependent on Judas (*qui*) instead of peace (*quam*). Given these similarities, it seems likely that Sedulius was familiar with Augustine's sermon.

Stanza V frames Christ's trial, passion, and crucifixion with a series of antitheses (vv. 77-80):

Verax datur fallacibus,
Pium flagellat impius,
Crucique fixus innocens
Coniunctus est latronibus.

Very essence of truth is given over to frauds,
The wicked beats the pious,
The innocent one nailed to the cross
Is flanked by thieves.

Within this stanza, each opposition represents an episode. The first antithesis between true (*uerax*, v. 77) and false (*fallacibus*, v. 77) recalls the Gospel accounts of Jesus' trials before Caiaphas and Pilate, where he is condemned to death.²⁴⁹ In particular, Matthew and Mark depict these scenes as being full of false testimony against Jesus on the part of the Jewish high priests and the crowd of Jews.²⁵⁰ The second opposition between pious (*pium*, v. 78) and wicked (*impius*, v. 78) hinges on a reversal of expectations. Instead of the pious punishing the wicked, the hymn has the "wicked [punishing] the pious" (*pium flagellat impius*, v. 78). The verb *flagellat* echoes language used in Matthew's, Mark's, and John's accounts to describe how Jesus is flogged by Pilate before he is sent to be crucified: *flagellatum* ("to be flogged," Mt 27.26); *flagellis caesum* ("cut with whips,"

²⁴⁹ Mt 26.57-27.24; Mk 14.53-15.14; Lk 22.63-23.25; Jn 18.19-18.40.

²⁵⁰ See esp. Mt 26.59-68; Mk 14.55-64.

Mk 15.16); *flagellavit* (“he whipped [Jesus],” Jn 19.1).²⁵¹ It seems likely, then, that Sedulius intended *pius* to refer to Jesus and *impius* to refer to Pilate. The third antithesis frames the episode of Christ’s crucifixion (*crucique fixus*, v. 79) in terms of an incongruity between Jesus as “the innocent one” (*innocens*, v. 79) and his punishment alongside common thieves (*coniunctus est latronibus*, v. 80). This depiction draws upon a detail mentioned in all four Gospels that two thieves are crucified at the same time as Jesus, one on either side of him.²⁵² It is possible that Sedulius’ treatment of the passion and crucifixion in stanza V was influenced by a similar series of juxtapositions from one of Augustine’s Christmas sermons (*Serm.* 191.1).²⁵³

falsis testibus veritas accusaretur,
iudex vivorum et mortuorum a iudice mortali iudicaretur,
ab iniustis iustitia damnaretur,
flagellis disciplina caederetur,
spinis botrus coronaretur,
in ligno fundamentum suspendaretur,
virtus infirmaretur,
salus vulnaretur,
vita moreretur.

[The maker of man, he was made man so that] the truth might be accused by false witnesses, and the judge of the living and the dead be judged by a mortal judge; that justice might be convicted by the unjust, and discipline be scourged with whips; that the cluster of grapes might be crowned with thorns, and the foundation be hung up on a tree; that strength might grow weak, eternal health be wounded, life die.

²⁵¹ Luke does not mention that Jesus was flogged.

²⁵² Mt 27.38; Mk 15.27; Lk 23.32-33; Jn 19.18.

²⁵³ Text is that of H. Drobner, *Augustinus von Hippo: Predigten zum Weihnachtsfest (Sermons 184-196)*, (Frankfurt, 2003), p. 200. Translation is that of E. Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine, Part III/6: Sermons (184-229Z) on the Liturgical Seasons* (New York, 1993), p. 42. Hill dates this sermon to 411 or 412, though other authorities have dated it earlier to 395 (*Ibid.*, p. 44n1). On the frequency of antithesis in Augustine’s works, see H. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique*, 4th ed. (Paris, 1958), p. 80.

Stanza X represents Christ's resurrection using antithesis as well (vv. 81-84):

Xeromyrrham post sabbatum
Quaedam uehebant compares,
Quas adlocutus angelus
Viuum sepulchro non tegi.

Xpensive spices after the Sabbath
Were being carried by some female followers,
Whom an angel addressed saying
That the living one is not enclosed in a tomb.

This episode takes its cue from the Gospel narratives of the first Easter. There, a group of women comes to Jesus' tomb after the Sabbath to dress his body for burial, and finding the tomb empty, they are told by an angel or angels that Jesus has been raised from the dead.²⁵⁴ In Sedulius' version, the episode centers on the opposition between the living and the dead, encapsulated by the juxtaposition *uiuum sepulchro* ("living in a tomb," v. 84). The women approach the tomb with the expectation that Jesus is dead, and yet they are told he is alive (*uiuum*).

Antithesis also occurs in stanza Y to mark the resurrection, yet it works alongside other structural cues (vv. 85-88):

Ymnis uenite dulcibus,
Omnes canamus subditum
Christi triumpho tartarum,
Qui nos redemit uenditus.

You, come with sweet hymns,
Let us all sing that hell
Has been subdued by the triumph of Christ,
Who redeemed us by being sold.

²⁵⁴ In Matthew's account, the women are Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary," who are greeted by one angel (Mt 28.1-10). In Mark's account, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome are greeted by a man in dazzling white (Mk 16.1-8). In Luke, unnamed women are greeted by two men in dazzling white (Lk 23.54-24.9). And in John, Mary Magdalene comes upon the tomb alone and reports her discovery to Peter and John before being greeted by two angels (Jn 20.1-18).

The first two lines of the stanza break from the narrative thread by switching the mode of address from the third person in stanza X to the second person (*uenite*, v. 85) and then again to the first person (*canamus*, v. 86). I will examine these structuring elements in greater detail below. The narrative picks up again with “Tartarus subdued by the triumph of Christ” (*subditum/ Christi triumpho tartarum*, vv. 86-87), drawing on the theme of Christ’s descent into hell and his triumph over the forces of death, which was common in the Christian discourse of the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries.²⁵⁵ The antithesis comes in the expression “[he] redeemed by being sold” (*Qui nos redemit uenditus*, v. 88). Christ is both the buyer (*qui redemit*) and the one being sold (*uenditus*). The same antithesis occurs in Augustine’s sermon on Philippians 4.4-6: “[Christ] redeemed us by being sold” (*redemit uenditus*, *Serm.* 171.5).²⁵⁶ Moreover, the expression is included within a list of antitheses that pertain to Christ: “He bought himself brothers and sisters with his blood, he accepted us though he rejected himself, he redeemed us though he sold himself, he did us honor though dishonored himself, he gave us life though slain himself” (*Emit sibi fratres sanguine suo, probauit reprobates, redemit uenditus, honorauit iniuriatus, uiuificauit occisus*, *Serm.* 171.5). These correspondences reveal another instance in which Sedulius borrows from Augustine’s sermons to frame his narrative.

The final stanza of the hymn extends the narrative progression through Christ’s ascension (vv. 89-92):

²⁵⁵ See, e.g., Hilary, Hymn II.19-24; Paulinus, *Carm.* XXXI.103-11; Prudentius, *Cath.* I.65-71, *Cath.* V.126-135; Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* 83.3, 5; 121.1; Maximus of Turin, *Serm.* 53.

²⁵⁶ Text is from PL 38, col. 935, accessed via Brepols Latin-A database 01/23/2012. Translation is adapted from that of E. Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine, Part III/5: Sermons (148-183) on the New Testament* (New York, 1992), p. 250. The date of this sermon is uncertain; see M. Pellegrino, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

Zelum draconis inuidi
Et os leonis pessimi
Calcauit unicus Dei
Seseque caelis reddidit.

Zealous dragon's envy
And wicked lion's mouth,
The only Son of God trampled them
And restored himself to heaven.

Springer characterizes these lines as describing the ascension of Christ,²⁵⁷ but this explanation only fits the final line (“he restores himself to heaven,” *seseque caelis reddidit*, v. 92). The previous three lines show Christ overcoming the lion and the dragon (vv. 89-91). This scene does not contain antithesis to mark it as a new episode. Rather, it represents a continuation of the episode from the stanza prior. The trampling of the dragon and the lion renames Christ’s act of subduing Tartarus (*subditum... tartarum*, vv. 86-87). The language is reminiscent of Psalm 90 (91).13: “The young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot,” (*conculcabis leonem et draconem*),²⁵⁸ but Sedulius also colors these lines with eschatological images. The “invidious dragon” (*draconis inuidi*, v. 89) recalls Revelation 12.3-17, which features a dragon that is equated with Satan. The jealousy of the beast is evident in its attempt to devour the messianic child of a pregnant woman (Rev 12.4), and in its determination to harm the rest of her children (Rev 12.13-17). Moreover, the phrase “lion’s mouth” (*os leonis*, v. 90) appears in Revelation immediately following the scene of the dragon and the woman. There a beast emerges from the sea, and among many other features, it has a “mouth like a lion’s mouth” (*os*

²⁵⁷ Springer, “Sedulius’ *A Solis Ortus Cardine*,” *op. cit.*, p. 73.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Aug. *Serm.* 284.5 and 359 B.14-15 (*Sermones Novissimi* 2D).

eius sicut os leonis, Rev 13.2).²⁵⁹ Its mouth is mentioned two further times in association with blasphemies against God (Rev 13.5 and 13.6). Perhaps blasphemy is what Sedulius means by describing the lion with the superlative *pessimi* (“the worst,” v. 90).

From this analysis, we can see that the structure of the final section (stanzas T-Z) is also based around a three-stanza core. Stanzas T, V, and X, each use antithesis to separate episodes. Stanzas T and X have one episode each (Judas’ betrayal and Christ’s resurrection, respectively), while stanza V has three episodes (Christ’s trials, suffering, and crucifixion). These five episodes are linked together through the chronological succession of the Gospel narratives. The final episode of Christ’s triumph over hell (stanzas Y-Z) is separated from the others by a change in addressivity, but it nevertheless is linked to them through antithesis in stanza Y. Furthermore, Sedulius uses antithesis to create a transition between this section and the one before it. The final line of the miracle section anticipates the antitheses to come: “The sick man was carrying his bed” (*Aeger uehebat lectulum*, v. 72). This verse confounds the expectation that a sick man, not least one who is paralyzed, would remain in his bed, but in this case, the paralytic man is even strong enough to carry his own bed.

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Identifying the sections, episodes, and patterns within the narrative of Christ’s life enables us to observe a unified narrative structure in the hymn. The narrative progression moves from Christ’s early years, to his miracles, to the end of his earthly life. This represents the mythical trajectory of the hymn because it connects with the wider

²⁵⁹ Aside from Revelation, the phrase *os leonis* or *ora leonis* also occurs at Ps 21 (22).21; Dn 6.22; I Mcc 2.60; II Tim 4.17; Hebr 7.33.

narrative of salvation history.²⁶⁰ In treating Christ's life, the hymn makes an implicit connection with salvation history since Christ is the central figure of that narrative. The hymn also invokes the frame of salvation history more explicitly by referring to creation with the phrases "originator of the world" (*auctor saeculi*, v. 5) and "creator of everything" (*creator omnium*, v. 28) and also by alluding to the end times with eschatological imagery in stanza Z. Moreover, the cycle embedded within the first two episodes (creator → created → creator) matches the progression of salvation history, which begins with creation and involves Christ's incarnation and ultimately his return to heaven to bring a new creation at judgment day.

This analysis forces us to step back from Springer's idea that the hymn creates a complete overlap between the alphabet and Christ, and instead recognize the autonomy of the narrative trajectory. Although the property of completeness belongs both to the narrative and to the abecedarian form, the narrative trajectory takes on a sense of completeness not from its relation to the alphabet, but from its relation to Christ. It embodies this idea through its depiction of Christ's life from his birth to his ascension and through the association of Christ with salvation history. In recognizing the separation between the two trajectories, I suggest that the abecedarian form has another function within the hymn, specifically to align the narrative of Christ's life with the experience of those performing.

Experience, Alphabet, and Alignment

²⁶⁰ Springer, "Sedulius' *A Solis Ortus Cardine*," *op. cit.*, p. 74 also notes the connection with salvation history.

Within the first stanza, the verb *canamus* (“let us sing,” v. 3) points to the experience of those performing. Although ostensibly an exhortation to sing, *canamus* in fact works as a marker for a third trajectory, namely the phenomenological one. The use of the first-person plural places “we” or “us” in the role of the utterer of ritualized speech, which would match the action of those singing the hymn. This point becomes clearer if we consider another form of *cano* that appears in verse 26: “The angels sing of God” (*Et angeli canunt Deum*). Here the third-person *canunt* indicates a ritualized setting at the level of narrative, and the angels fill the role of utterers, in keeping with the narrative of Luke’s Gospel. By contrast, the first-person *canamus* self-referentially evokes the ritualized setting at the level of performance.

Moreover, this phenomenological element takes on the property of completeness if it is read with the adverbial expression *A solis ortus cardine/ Adusque terrae limitem* (vv. 1-2): “let us sing all the way from the pole of the sun’s rising/ to the limit of the earth.”²⁶¹ This reading receives further support if we consider the psalm source for the first two verses. Psalm 112.1-3 concentrates on the communication of the Lord’s name and on extending that communication as far as possible. There, the adverbial expression “from the rising of the sun to its setting” (*ab ortu solis usque ad occasum eius*, Ps 112.3) indicates the extent to which the name of the Lord (*nomen Domini*) should be praised (*sit...laudabile*). Likewise, the first stanza calls those singing to fill the expanse of space and time with their song.

²⁶¹ I discuss these first two lines above in relation to the narrative progression, pp. 89-90, and the full text of stanza A is quoted there. I do not intend this reading of vv. 1-2 to negate the previous readings, but rather to complement them.

The verb *canamus* appears a second time near the end of the hymn in stanza Y: “Let us all sing that hell/ Has been subdued by the triumph of Christ,” (*Omnes canamus subditum/ Christi triumpho*, vv. 86-87). Taken together, the two instances of *canamus* create a trajectory of performance that runs in between them, *canamus* → *canamus*. At verse 3, as we have seen, the verb works in combination with verses 1-2 to prescribe that singing should carry on from the rising of the sun to the ends of the earth, and at the same time it marks the beginning boundary of that extent. This second instance of *canamus* (v. 86) serves as the latter boundary, marking the experience of those singing at the end of the hymn.

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The significance of the abecedarian trajectory lies in its potential to align the frame of performance with the mythical narrative. In essence, the movement through the letters of the alphabet connects the act of singing with the content of the song. We can observe the mediating function of the abecedarian form if we consider the relationship between the trajectory of performance and the narrative of Christ’s life. The first use of *canamus* calls performers to sing of Christ’s birth from the Virgin Mary (*Christus canamus principem,/ Natum Maria uirgine*, vv. 3-4), and the second instance calls performers to sing of Christ’s triumph over hell and death (*Omnes canamus subditum/ Christi triumpho tartarum*, vv. 86-87). And yet, the stanzas enclosed within the frame *canamus* → *canamus* do not proceed exclusively through the narrative progression; rather, the content of each stanza is introduced by a new letter of the alphabet, with the result that those singing utter the letter first, followed by the next element of the narrative.

The alignment through the abecedarian form is meant to enact the notion of completeness, and in this way, I agree with Springer that the hymn “exploits the symbolism of the alphabet.”²⁶² Each trajectory has a teleological thrust that aims at completeness. The alphabetical progression A to Z embodies this idea through its inclusion of all the letters. The narrative progression takes its completeness from its relation to Christ and salvation history. For phenomenological trajectory, however, completeness exists only within the hymn through the structural frame *canamus* → *canamus* that runs from beginning to end. It does not have its own inherent completeness, as the other two trajectories do. Enactment means that the phenomenological trajectory gains a sense of completeness through the mediation of the alphabet.

We can observe the effect of enactment on the phenomenological trajectory by comparing it with the other two trajectories. All three begin at the same point. The initial ‘A’ starts the alphabetical progression and also opens the adverbial expression *A solis ortus cardine* (“from the pole of the sun’s rising”), which, as we have seen, pertains both to the narrative progression through Christ’s life (*Christum*, v. 3) and to the act of singing (*canamus*, v. 3). But each trajectory is not equally complete. The end of the phenomenological trajectory comes at verse 86 with the second instance of *canamus*. The abecedarian trajectory reaches its completion in verse 89 with ‘Z’ the word *Zelum*. The narrative of Christ’s life ends in the final line of the hymn, describing Christ’s ascension into heaven (*Seseque caelis reddidit*, v. 92). Thus, the phenomenological trajectory falls short of the narrative progression by an entire stanza. Perhaps the exclusion of the final stanza from the frame *canamus* → *canamus* is meant to convey the idea that the human

²⁶² Springer, “Sedulius’ *A Solis Ortus Cardine*,” *op. cit.*, p. 71.

capacity to represent the God is limited in comparison with the expansiveness of God, an idea also found in Augustine.²⁶³

Nonetheless, a tension arises between the actual performance and the frame of performance. After all, stanza Z would have been performed along with the rest of the hymn, even though it is excluded from the frame *canamus* → *canamus*. The abecedarian form relieves this tension by bridging the distance between the end of the phenomenological frame and the end of the hymn. The endpoint of the abecedarian progression with the ‘Z’ of verse 89 stands equidistant between the final marker of singing (*canamus*, v. 86) and the completion of the narrative at the end of the hymn (v. 92). Thus, the abecedarian form allows the trajectory of performance to carry through the final stanza and in effect, makes completeness available to those singing the hymn.

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The ultimate aim of enactment is for those singing the hymn to feel as though they can participate in the mythical completeness of salvation history. We can observe this aim in instances where the hymn tries to make a direct connection between experience and myth, as occurs at the end of stanza Y: “[Christ] who redeemed us by being sold” (*Qui nos redemit uenditus*, v. 88). The phenomenological element is present in the first-person plural pronoun *nos*, while the mythical element is present in the relative pronoun *qui*, which refers back to Christ in verse 87 (*Christi triumpho tartarum*). With *qui* as the subject of the verb *redemit* (“he redeemed”) and *nos* is its object, the statement envisions that the mythical realm of Christ acts directly upon the phenomenological realm of “us” (“Christ redeemed us”).

²⁶³ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* I.13-14.

Another example of a direct connection between “us” and Christ occurs in baptism episode in stanza L: “He raised us up by cleansing us” (*Nos abluendo sustulit*, v. 44). Again, the link between “us” and Christ is the result of a direct action of a subject on an object. The verb *sustulit* describes how Christ “raised us up” (*Nos...sustulit*, v. 44). This connection becomes even stronger if we factor in the gerund *abluendo*, which also takes *nos* as its object (“by cleansing us,” *nos abluendo*, v. 44). In effect, Christ performs two acts on “us”: raising and cleansing. At the same time, the act of cleansing creates an overlap between Christ and “us.” Often used of baptism in ecclesiastical Latin,²⁶⁴ the verb *abluo* in this context suggests that *nos* are baptized just as Christ is baptized.²⁶⁵

Both cases represent an attempt to inscribe the experience of those singing within the mythical realm of Christ’s life and thus within the wider expanse of salvation history, and they do so without relying on the alphabetical form as the mode of connection. Nonetheless, the abecedarian form plays an important role within this scheme because of enactment. By proceeding through the stanzas, those singing engage with the completeness of the alphabet, and this serves as an access point through which they can perceive that absolution and redemption are available to them as part of the completeness of salvation history.

Christological Instruction

In promoting a connection between myth and experience, the hymn provides an opportunity for instruction. The dynamics of enactment encourage those singing the

²⁶⁴ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *abluo* I.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Mk 10.38-39.

hymn to adopt Sedulius' version of the mythical narrative into their world view. Paying attention to the narrative trajectory, we can observe how Sedulius crafts this version of Christ's life in order to instruct believers in light of contemporary Christological debates. Of the twenty-three stanzas in the hymn, eleven are spent on the early years of Christ's life, seven are spent on the miracles, and five are spent on the end of his earthly life. In addition, the longest episodes occur in the section on Christ's early years, while the shortest episodes occur in the section on his later years. For instance, the incarnation episode spans three full stanzas for a total of twelve lines (vv. 5-16), but the crucifixion episode gets only two lines (vv. 79-80). Moreover, elaborateness within the sections places the greatest emphasis on Christ's early years, followed by the miracles, with his later years receiving the least emphasis. As we have seen above, the incarnation, nativity, and post-nativity episodes are tied together through an intricate system of responsions, and the miracle section is governed by a series of alternations between fluid and corporeal miracles. The episodes in the final section, however, are tied together only by narrative progression connecting a series of antitheses. In addition, as we have seen, the sections dealing with the early years and the miracles are linked by an elaborate transition of stanzas L and M, but one line must suffice for the transition between the miracles and the later years (v. 72).

The prominence given to Christ's early years in the hymn reflects Sedulius' concern over the issue of Christ's humanity versus his divinity. In the wake of Trinitarian struggles over the relationship between God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the nature of Christ's person came under increased scrutiny by theologians in the fourth and fifth centuries. They were interested in understanding how Christ's status as the

divine Word squared with his human limitations and suffering. The incarnation was a particular point of concern since competing Christologies needed to address how Word and flesh came together in that moment.²⁶⁶ In his study of the *Paschale Carmen*, Carl Springer suggests that Sedulius' treatment of Christ, and the incarnation in particular, responded to issues raised in the Nestorian controversy, and he notes that Sedulius' depictions were certainly understood that way in the sixth century by Cassiodorus.²⁶⁷ While I agree with Springer that Sedulius shows a clear concern for Christological issues, it does not necessarily follow that he intended to engage directly with the points of view that emerged out of the Nestorian controversy. The Nestorian crisis had a much greater impact in the Byzantine and Syriac East than in the Latin West,²⁶⁸ and therefore it is speculative to assume that Sedulius as a Western poet would have been familiar with the specific issues at stake there, even if one common subscription to his works states that he "composed his books in Achaia."²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ See J.A. McGuckin, "Christology," in *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* (Louisville, London, 2004), pp. 60-64, esp. p. 63.

²⁶⁷ Springer, *Gospel as Epic*, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-44, esp. p. 42. In order to support this conclusion, Springer points to language in the epic where he detects an awareness of Mary as *Theotokos* ("God bearer"), which was a title contested by Nestorius. Specifically Springer looks at the phrase *paritura parentem* ("a virgin is about to give birth to her own father," PC II.40), which he suggests is reminiscent of the term *Deipara*, the Latin equivalent of *Theotokos*. However, *paritura parentem* is much closer to the phrase *auctorem paritura suum*, used by Claudian also for Mary in his *Carmina Minora* 32 (XCV).10. This is not to suggest that Sedulius borrowed the phrase from Claudian so much as it shows that such a concept was current much earlier than the Nestorian controversy. Cf. Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-244 who explores the possible Nestorian connection at greater length, though his argument concentrates more on Christological issues in general, rather than anti-Nestorian sentiment in particular.

²⁶⁸ On the impact of the Nestorian controversy, see B.E. Daley, "Christ and Christologies," in Harvey and Hunter (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 886-905, esp. pp. 895-897; and S. Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy* (Oxford, 2004), esp. pp. 4-11.

²⁶⁹ "*In Achaia libros suos scripsit*": Text quoted in Springer, *Gospel as Epic*, *op. cit.*, p. 23 based on J. Huemer, *De Sedulii poetae vita et scriptis commentatio* (Vienna, 1878), pp. 21-22. Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 1439-140 effectively refutes the idea that Sedulius spent any time in Greece.

A more likely explanation of Christological elements in Sedulius' poetry is that he was familiar with the contours of Western Christological debates that developed out of the Arian controversy. In the mid-fourth century, Trinitarian disputes raged on between pro-Nicene factions, who supported the doctrine established at Nicaea (325) that the Son was of the same substance (*substantia* or *ousia*) as the Father, and Homoian factions, who asserted that the Son was only "like" (*homoios*) the Father.²⁷⁰ This notion of "likeness" placed the Son in an inferior position relative to the divinity of the Father, and therefore its opponents countered by emphasizing the divine essence of the Son. The debate was particularly heated in Milan in the 370s and 380s, where Ambrose produced several anti-Homoian treatises, arguing for the unity of the Father and the Son, while distinguishing between their persons.²⁷¹ Though heavily influenced by Ambrose's Trinitarian vision, Augustine focused the debate more on the person of Christ. Throughout his works, he maintained the distinction of the Godhead between the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while also asserting the indivisibility of their acts through their shared divinity,²⁷² and at the same time, he emphasized the humanity of the Son from a soteriological perspective, since the Son's status as a man is linked with salvation for humanity.²⁷³

Turning our attention back to Hymn II, we can see that Sedulius' descriptions of Christ's early years bear a number of similarities to Augustine's Christological

²⁷⁰ See L. Ayers, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 138-139. Hilary of Poitiers was among the earliest proponents of the pro-Nicene position in the west from 350s-360s.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 260-267.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 364-383, esp. pp. 372-374.

²⁷³ See Drobner, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-63.

conceptions Augustine, especially in regard to the incarnation and nativity.²⁷⁴ For instance, Augustine explores the relationship between the incarnation and the Trinity in a sermon for Christmas (*Serm.* 186.1):²⁷⁵

It is not this visible sun (*sol iste visibilis*), but its invisible creator (*Creator ipsius invisibilis*), who has consecrated this day, when the virgin mother gave birth from her fertile and unimpaired womb (*visceribus fecundis et genitalibus integris*) to the one who became visible for us (*pro nobis visibilem factum*), by whom in his invisibility she herself was created (*a quo invisibili et ipsa creata est*); a virgin in conceiving, a virgin in giving birth, a virgin when with child, a virgin on being delivered, a virgin for ever (*virgo perpetua*). ... That is how he made her, who was himself made from her (*Talem fecit illam, qui est factus ex illa*). He already was (*erat*), you see, before he was made (*fieret*); and being almighty, he was able to be made (*fieri potuit*), while remaining what he already was. He made a mother for himself (*Fecit sibi matrem*), while he was still with the Father; and when he was made from his mother (*cum fieret ex matre*), he remained in the Father. How could he cease to be God on beginning to be man (*Quomodo Deus esse desisteret, cum homo esse coepit*), when he enabled his mother not to cease being a virgin when she gave birth?

Hence that the “Word became flesh” (Jn 1.14), does not mean that the Word passed into flesh by perishing, but that flesh was attached to the Word to prevent flesh itself from perishing (*sed caro ad Verbum, ne ipsa periret, accessit*); with the result that just as man is soul and flesh, so Christ would be God and man (*sic esset Christus Deus et homo*). The same one God who is man, the same one man who is God; not by a compounding of nature, but by unity of person (*unitate personae*)...And thus humanity was indeed added to the divinity of the Son (*Ac sic et Filii divinitati est addita humanitas*); and yet this did not result in a quaternity or foursome of persons, but the Trinity or threesome remains (*sed permanet Trinitas*).

In this excerpt, Augustine presents a balance between Christ’s humanity and divinity (*Filii divinitati est addita humanitas*), where Christ’s divinity comes from his relationship with the Father and his infinite existence, while his humanity comes from his human birth

²⁷⁴ I suspect that evidence from the *Paschale Carmen* would support this hypothesis as well, but that matter is outside the scope of the argument here.

²⁷⁵ Translation is that of E. Hill, *op. cit.*, III/6, p. 24. Text is that of H. Drobner, *op. cit.*, p. 124. On the date of this sermon, see E. Hill, *op. cit.*, III/6, p. 26 n.1. A date of 411 or 412 is suggested, though 400 is given as the *terminus post quem*.

into the flesh. Ultimately, Augustine relates this Christological exposition back to the question of the Trinity (*sed permanet Trinitas*), and Sedulius' treatment of the incarnation in Hymn II makes sense within this framework as well.

The two works also share certain emphases. The excerpt from the sermon opens with an opposition between the invisible creator and the visible product of virgin birth, which is similar to the opposition we observed in the hymn between the "closed" language of the incarnation scene and the "open" language of the nativity scene.²⁷⁶ Augustine then concentrates on Mary's perpetual virginity (*virgo perpetua, genitalibus integris*).²⁷⁷ Likewise, the hymn draws attention to Mary's integrity (*Intacta nesciens uirum*, v. 15). The sermon continues by drawing out the paradox involved in the Son creating Mary and also being created from her (*Talem fecit illam, qui est factus ex illa*),²⁷⁸ a paradox also evident in the hymn through the cycle of creator → created → creator treated above. Furthermore, Augustine takes a soteriological perspective in his interpretation of John 1.14: "the flesh was attached to the Word to prevent flesh itself from perishing" (*sed caro ad Verbum, ne ipsa periret, accessit*), and Sedulius suggests a similar interpretation of the incarnation, "so that freeing the flesh by flesh/ He would not lose what he had brought into being" (*Vt carne carnem liberans/ Non perderet quod condidit*, vv. 7-8).

²⁷⁶ In another sermon, Augustine uses "closed" language closer to that used by Sedulius (*Serm.* 215.4): "as a tiny baby he should when born come out of a closed womb in the same flesh as that in which he as a grown man risen from the dead he would come in through closed doors" (*in ea carne natus, ut per clausa viscera parvus exiret, in qua resuscitatus per clausa ostia magnus intraret*). Translation is that of E. Hill, *op. cit.*, III/6, p. 162; text is PL 38 col. 1074.

²⁷⁷ A popular idea in Augustine's sermons; on this point, see Drobner, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

²⁷⁸ On the juxtaposition of creator and created in Augustine's Christmas sermons, see, e.g., *Serm.* 186.3, 187.1, 188.2, 189.3.

Augustine also shows great interest in the person of Christ as it relates to the nativity,²⁷⁹ as we can see from another of his Christmas sermons (*Serm.* 190.4):²⁸⁰

He lies in a manger (*in praesepe iacet*), but he holds the whole world in his hands (*sed mundum continet*); he sucks his mother's breasts (*ubera sugit*), but feeds the angels (*sed angelos pascit*); he is swaddled in rags (*pannis involvitur*), but clothes us in immortality (*sed immortalitate nos vestit*); he is suckled (*lactatur*), but also worshiped (*sed adoratur*); he could find no room in the inn, but makes a temple for himself in the hearts of believers. It was in order, you see, that weakness might become strong, that strength became weak. Let us therefore wonder at than make light of his birth in the flesh (*miremur, quam contemnamus eius etiam carnalem nativitatem*), and there recognize the lowliness on our behalf of such loftiness (*ibi agnoscamus tantae propter nos celsitudinis humilitatem*). From there let us kindle charity in ourselves, in order to attain his eternity (*ad eius aeternitatem*).

In this excerpt as well, Augustine addresses the paradox of Christ's humanity and divinity, but he uses a series of antitheses to underscore the point.²⁸¹ Images of the Son as a baby, lying in a manger (*in praesepe iacet*), suckling at his mother's breasts (*ubera sugit; lactatur*), swaddled in rags (*pannis involvitur*) reflect Christ's humanity (*carnalem nativitatem; humilitatem*). By contrast, images of the Son enveloping the world (*mundum continet*), feeding the angels (*angelos pascit*), and clothing believers in immortality (*immortalitate nos vestit*) emphasize Christ's divinity (*celsitudinis; aeternitatem*). In the hymn, Sedulius draws out similar Christological themes within the nativity and post-nativity episodes discussed above. In particular, we saw how Sedulius emphasizes the paradox of Christ's humanity and divinity by playing on the root "to nourish," where Christ both receives nourishment (*pastus est*, v. 23) and also gives nourishment (*pastor*, v. 28).

²⁷⁹ Other examples include Aug. *Serm.* 123.3, 187.1, 184.3, 188.2, 190.4, 196.3, 293.5.

²⁸⁰ Translation is that of E. Hill, *op. cit.*, III/6, p. 40. Text is that of H. Drobner, *op. cit.*, p. 190. On the date of this sermon, see E. Hill, *op. cit.*, III/6, p. 40 n1, who suggests a date around 410.

²⁸¹ A similar series of juxtapositions describing the nativity occurs in Petrus Chrysologus, *Serm.* 140 ter. 3.

While Sedulius' treatments of the incarnation and nativity fit within the Augustinian model showing a balance between Christ's divinity and humanity, his depiction of the post-nativity gives greater attention to the notion of Christ's divinity, particularly within the Magi scene. Where Matthew's Gospel has the Magi acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and king of the Jews, Sedulius has them acknowledge him as God (*Deum fatentur*, v. 36). Moreover, he describes their quest for the Messiah using Nicene language: "They seek light from light" (*Lumen requirunt lumine*, v. 35). The use of *lumen* together with *lumine* recalls the expression from the Nicene Creed: "Light from light," (*lumen de lumine*), which occurs within a series of expressions asserting that the Father and the Son share the same substance.²⁸² Within the hymn, the phrase gives rise to a double meaning: that the wise men seek the light (*Christ*) by the light of the star (*stellam*, v. 34), and that the wise men seek the light (*Christ*) who is of the same substance as the light (*God the Father*).

Sedulius also frames the miracles performed by Christ in terms that emphasize Christ's divinity. For him, miracles constitute proof (*Miraculis dedit fidem*, v. 45) of Christ's divine status, which he implies in the following verse: "That he himself as God has God as his father" (*Habere se Deum patrem*, vv. 45-46).²⁸³ This statement is constructed so that the function of *Deum* is ambiguous since "God" can be understood in apposition both to *se* and to *patrem*. Sedulius exploits the ambiguity as a way to assert a

²⁸² Cf. e.g., Ambrose, *de Fide* 1.18 (118); Augustine, *de Fide et Symbolo* 4.6; *de Trinitate* II.i.2, VI.1.2, VI.ii.3, VII.i.2, VII.ii.4.

²⁸³ The phrase *miraculis dedit fidem* is borrowed from Ambrose, Hymn III.25-26: "To which Jesus gave faith through celestial miracles" (*Cui fidem caelestibus/ Iesus dedit miraculis*). As discussed above in the section on Hymn III, Ambrose intended the celestial miracles as proof for the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity.

pro-Nicene position that the Father and the Son are both God and therefore share the same substance.

Furthermore, Sedulius' interest in the divinity of Christ helps to explain why the end of Christ's life receives less attention in the hymn. From very early on in the Arian controversy, the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross were used as evidence against the divinity of the Son and therefore against the pro-Nicene position that the Father and the Son shared the same substance.²⁸⁴ Even in Augustine's time, the crucifixion was used as evidence against the unity of the Godhead on the grounds that the Son suffered but the Father did not.²⁸⁵ Augustine counters this position by asserting the inseparability of operation within the Godhead: "The Father indeed suffered not, but the Son, yet the suffering of the Son was the work of the Father and the Son."²⁸⁶ Perhaps in condensing the passion and crucifixion into a single stanza (V, vv. 77-80), then, Sedulius intended to limit the focus on Christ's humanity and thereby minimize the chance of misinterpretation on the issue of the Godhead.

The Christological position that Sedulius takes in the hymn is not intended to provoke theological debate, but instead to instruct participants. In this respect, the mediation of the alphabet is significant because it encourages participants to become invested in the myth and thus accept the world view that pertains to it. As we have seen, though, the hymn transmits a certain version of that myth, one that includes both his humanity and divinity, but emphasizes his divinity. Thus, when participants sing the

²⁸⁴ See R. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 109-116.

²⁸⁵ See Ayers, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

²⁸⁶ *Serm.* 52.8 as quoted in Ayers, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

hymn, they engage with the completeness of the alphabet, which in turn allows them to feel as though they can engage with the completeness of Christ's life and salvation history, and in doing so, they absorb Christological doctrine that supports Christ's divinity and the unity of the Godhead.

Alignment Adapted

When Hymn II was excerpted for liturgical use, *A Solis Ortus Cardine* (stanzas A-G) was incorporated into the liturgy for the Christmas or Epiphany seasons, and *Hostis Herodes* (stanzas HILN) was used during the Epiphany season.²⁸⁷ These modifications of the original were perhaps driven by demands for shorter, more metrically regular hymns,²⁸⁸ but they also reveal a desire to change the structures of alignment and enactment to fit a ritual context. As we have seen, in its original form, the hymn relied on the abecedarian progression to align myth with experience. But in its adapted forms, alignment becomes reoriented around temporal structures, similar to what we observed above in Ambrose's Hymn III.

A Solis Ortus Cardine includes the same three trajectories treated above, but it dispenses with any connection to the idea of completeness. On the alphabetical trajectory, this version only includes stanzas A-G. On the narrative trajectory, it includes the opening stanza and the episodes of the incarnation and the nativity. As far as the phenomenological trajectory goes, it includes only the first *canamus* (v. 3). The

²⁸⁷ Springer, *MSS of Sedulius*, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14. Concerning *A Solis Ortus Cardine*, Mearns, *op. cit.*, s.v., *A Solis Ortus Cardine*, p. 1 and Gneuss, *Hymnar und Hymnen*, *op. cit.*, p. 62 place it within the Epiphany liturgy.

²⁸⁸ On the possible reasons behind adaptations of hymns in the New Hymnal, see Milfull, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

disruption of the original structures of alignment is even more dramatic for the Epiphany hymn. This version does not retain any sense of the abecedarian form, since it takes stanzas H, I, L, and N out of their original context without including stanzas K and M. It also does not preserve a sense of narrative progression, since it takes only two of the three scenes from the post-nativity “episode,” Herod’s anger and the visit of the Magi, and then combines these with Jesus’ baptism and the miracle at Cana. Moreover, the markers for the phenomenological trajectory are reduced to a single use of *nos* occurring within the baptism episode (*Nos abluendo sustulit*, v. 44).

Neither adaptation aims at communicating completeness, but rather at selecting verses that most closely match the liturgical context. In the case of *A Solis Ortus Cardine*, the mythical events of the incarnation and nativity match the liturgical moment celebrating Christ’s birth at Christmas, and they can also be understood to match the first manifestation of Christ at his birth, which was celebrated at Epiphany.²⁸⁹ Likewise, in the case of *Hostis Herodes*, the mythical events of Herod’s wrath, the adoration of the Magi, the baptism of Jesus, and the miracle at Cana were selected to complement the Epiphany liturgy. By the fourth century in the West, the festival of Epiphany celebrated Christ’s nativity, especially the visit of the Magi, as well as his baptism and his first miracle at Cana, all of which were understood as “manifestations” or *epiphaniae* of Christ,²⁹⁰ and these events continued to be associated with Epiphany through the medieval period.²⁹¹ Stanzas K and M are left out of the Epiphany hymn because they do not match the

²⁸⁹ On the celebration of Epiphany in the fourth century and beyond, see above, nn. 46 and 47.

²⁹⁰ T. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (New York, 1986), pp. 141-147.

²⁹¹ S. Borgehammar, “A Monastic Conception of the Liturgical Year,” in *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, 2nd Ed., ed. by T. Heffernan and E. Miller (Kalamazoo, 2005), pp. 13-40, esp. pp. 27-28.

liturgical moment. Stanza K depicts the weeping of the mothers at the massacre of the innocents, which was associated with another feast day for the Holy Innocents.²⁹² Stanza M, on the other hand, refers to two generic miracles, and perhaps this lack of specificity meant that it was not effective at creating a ritual alignment.

Both adaptations reflect the desire to create an alignment between myth and experience that is based around the liturgical celebration. Whereas the original structures of enactment relied on those singing the hymn to become enveloped the completeness of the alphabet as a medium for interacting with the completeness of salvation history, the adapted structures of enactment rely on the symbolic value of ritual performance. This mechanism allows those participating in the Christmas or Epiphany liturgy to gain a sense that the ritual elements that they are actually perceiving and experiencing somehow open up access to the mythical events of the incarnation and the nativity or the wrath of Herod, the adoration of the Magi, Christ's baptism, and the miracle at Cana.

Successfully generating a sense of enactment is important because it serves as a conduit for instruction. And yet, the adapted versions of the hymn contain fewer doctrinal elements than the original hymn because of how they are abbreviated. Within the scenes of Christ's incarnation and nativity, the Christmas hymn preserves the notion of a balance between Christ's divinity and humanity, discussed above, but it does not preserve Sedulius' emphasis on Christ's divinity and the unity of the Godhead that emerges in later episodes of the original Hymn II. Similarly, the Epiphany hymn retains some of the emphasis on Christ's divinity but does not give a sense of his humanity. What is more,

²⁹² See, e.g., the contents of sacramentaries as listed in Vogel, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-107, which include a feast for the Holy Innocents. In some MSS, stanza K was included in the liturgy for that feast. See Mearns, *op. cit.*, s.v., *Katerva matrum personat*, p. 48.

those who adapted this hymn chose to exclude stanza M, even though it contains the idea that “[Christ] as God has God as his Father” (*Habere se Deum patrem*, v. 46), supporting the unity of the Godhead.

This willingness to leave out doctrinal elements in preference for episodes that match the liturgy suggests that those who adapted the original hymn for liturgical use were more interested in the hymn as a vehicle for generating enactment than as a vehicle for conveying doctrine. In the case of the Christmas and Epiphany adaptations, generating an enactment of specific events in Christ’s life may have been seen as a way to promote investment in salvation history as a whole. Perhaps this was thought to be a sufficient instructional outcome in itself, regardless of specific doctrinal points.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE TREE IN FORTUNATUS' *CARMEN* II.2

Venantius Fortunatus' *Carmen* II.2 allows us to expand the model presented thus far by considering a different mode of alignment, namely the object of a relic, rather than a liturgical moment. Fortunatus came to Poitiers just when Radegund, former queen and founder of the Convent of the Holy Cross, began her quest for relics,²⁹³ and he was involved at every stage in the process of acquiring them.²⁹⁴ He composed three poems to be sent east with the embassy in support of Radegund's petition (*Carm.* VIII.1, *App.* 1, and *App.* 3). Once the request was granted, Fortunatus wrote at least two hymns that were performed to celebrate the arrival of the relics into Poitiers, including this one.²⁹⁵ He also sent a poem of gratitude to the imperial couple (*App.* 2).

In *Carmen* II.2, often referred to as "*Pange, lingua, gloriosi*" Fortunatus uses a complex system of typologies to link the events of salvation history to the cross. This was the focal point of the original performance context, since the relics being celebrated in the ceremony were believed to be from the True Cross on which Christ was crucified.²⁹⁶ In

²⁹³ On Radegund's "relic exploits," see I. Moreira, "Provisatrix optima: St. Radegund of Poitiers' Relic Petitions to the East," *Journal of Medieval History* 19 (1993), pp. 285-305; and J. Fontaine, "Hagiographie et politique de Sulpice Sévère à Venance Fortunat," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France* 62 (1976), pp. 113-140, esp. pp.135-136.

²⁹⁴ On Fortunatus' career and involvement with the relics quest, see J. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 4-34, esp. pp. 30-31.

²⁹⁵ *Carmen* II.6 was also performed in celebration of the relics. Many also include *Carm.* II.1 (*Crux benedicta nitet*) as a third hymn associated with celebration. On singing as part of the relic ceremony, see Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* IX.40; Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis* 16.

²⁹⁶ For a history of the practice of venerating the cross, see P. Regan, "Veneration of the Cross," in *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year*, ed. by M. Johnson (Collegeville, 2000), pp. 143-153.

doing so, Fortunatus intended to create an alignment between the narrative of salvation history and the experience of those in the procession though the object of the relic itself. The language of the hymn connects this alignment with the enactment of the crucifixion as a new paradise, which makes salvation available to believers.

Objectifying Alignment

Fortunatus lays out the structures of alignment in the first stanza, but instead of a temporal framework, he uses a material framework (vv. 1-3):²⁹⁷

Pange, lingua, gloriosi proelium certaminis
et super crucis tropaeo dic triumphum nobilem,
qualiter redemptor orbis immolatus vicerit.

Tongue, sing of the battle of the glorious contest
and tell of the noble triumph concerning the trophy of the cross,
how the redeemer of the world conquered by being sacrificed.

The imperatives *pange* and *dic* (“sing of,” v. 1; “tell of,” v. 2) point to the phenomenological element by signaling the ritual context experienced by those performing the hymn. As we saw above in relation to Sedulius’ Hymn II, verbs such as *cano* and *dico* indicate speech that is marked within a ritual or ritualizing context.²⁹⁸ As a variation on the verb *cano*, *pango* works as a verb of ritual configuration. Like *cano*, it evokes a realm beyond itself. At its core, the verb means “to fix” or “to bind,” as through a contract,²⁹⁹ and the use of *pango* here suggests a binding together of human and divine through utterance. By opening the hymn this way, Fortunatus reveals his intention to

²⁹⁷ Text of Fortunatus is that of F. Leo, *Venantii Fortunati Opera Poetica*, MGH IV.1 (Berlin, 1881). Translations are my own.

²⁹⁸ Habinek, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-74. See discussion above, introduction, pp. 22-23.

²⁹⁹ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *pango* II. C.

bring together the two realms using the utterance that follows. The verb *dico* contributes to this dynamic by claiming a sense of authority for utterance,³⁰⁰ perhaps one that is sanctioned by the connection with the sacred. Behind both imperatives, we can see the presence of those performing who act as utterers of the ritual speech. In fact, Fortunatus underscores this role by addressing them metonymically as a collective “tongue” (*lingua*, v. 1).

The mythical element appears in the statement, “how the redeemer of the world conquered by being sacrificed” (*qualiter redemptor orbis immolatus vicerit*, v. 3). The participle *immolatus* points to the event of Christ’s crucifixion, which Fortunatus refers to elsewhere in the hymn using similar language: “The lamb to be sacrificed is raised on the trunk of the cross” (*agnus in crucis levatur immolandus stipite*, v. 21).³⁰¹ The expression “redeemer of the world” (*redemptor orbis*) evokes the Pauline idea that Christ’s crucifixion brought redemption for the sins of humanity.³⁰²

The phenomenological and mythical elements become aligned through the medium of the cross (*crucis*, v. 2), which pertains to both. The cross is present in experience of performers through the relic, which they themselves can see. The cross is also present in the mythical realm because it is the instrument on which Christ is sacrificed. The alignment through the medium of the cross is also evident in the placement of *crucis* in verse 2, in between the phenomenological element in line 1 (*pange lingua*) and the mythical element in line 3 (*redemptor orbis immolatus vicerit*). This use

³⁰⁰ See Habinek, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 and 70.

³⁰¹ Cf. 1 Cor 5.7: “For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed” (*etenim pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus*).

³⁰² Eph 1.7; Heb 9.11-10.18, esp. 9.15.

of a relic as means for connecting with the sacred forces us to revise R.W. Southern's conception of how relics functioned as "channels": "Ordinary men could see them and handle them, yet they belonged not to this world but to eternity."³⁰³ Rather, relics existed both in lived experience and in the realm of myth, and their intermediary position aligning the two allowed them to serve as "channels through which supernatural power was available for the needs of ordinary life."

The alignment through the relic is reinforced through the use of militaristic language connecting the three elements. On the mythical side, the verb *vicerit* ("he conquered," v. 3) frames the crucifixion as a military victory, and this idea is supported by the expressions "noble triumph" (*triumphum nobilem*, v. 2) and "battle of the glorious contest" (*gloriosi proelium certaminis*, v. 1), which rename the mythical event of the crucifixion. This battle language implies the presence of an opponent, and indeed we find *hostis* ("enemy") mentioned in verse 9. I will explore the identity of this enemy further below. Nonetheless, we can understand that Christ assumes the role of victor, and the enemy assumes the role of the conquered.

On the phenomenological side, the tie with military victory lies in the performance context of the hymn as a part of the *adventus* ceremony for the relics,³⁰⁴ which was styled after the imperial *adventus* ceremony as a triumphant return from battle.³⁰⁵ In their treatment of visual and textual material dealing with relics, Kenneth G.

³⁰³ R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, (London, 1990 [1970]), p. 31.

³⁰⁴ See George, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39, who connects *Carmen* II.6 with the *adventus* ceremony, given its use of military imagery throughout.

³⁰⁵ S. MacCormack, "Change and Continuity in Late Antiquity: The Ceremony of *Adventus*," *Historia* 21 (1972), pp. 721-752, esp. pp. 746-748, discusses how the *adventus* ceremony was adapted in the Christian period, including for the presentation of relics.

Holum and Gary Vikan identify three stages in an *adventus* for relics: first, upon the arrival of the relics, people rushed to meet them outside the city; second, the relics were conveyed, perhaps on a wagon, in a solemn procession to the church, accompanied by songs; and finally, they were formally deposited in the church and a mass followed.³⁰⁶ *Carmen* II.2 seems to fit within the second stage consisting of the procession, given that its meter in trochaic septenarii was associated with Roman military marching songs.³⁰⁷

The cross fits within this martial framework as a “trophy” (*crucis trophaeo*, v. 2),³⁰⁸ a term that calls attention to its properties as an object as well as a symbol. Trophies were spoils of war consisting of physical objects taken from the enemy, and at the same time they were signs of victory.³⁰⁹ This duality drives the mechanism of alignment. Within the ritual context surrounding the hymn, the cross was present as a physical object in the form of the relic, and, for Fortunatus at least, it also evoked the mythical realm, as a sign of Christ’s victory over sin and death. Moreover, the nature of the relic as a sign should be understood not as mimetic, but as anamnetic.³¹⁰ That is, the relic is not meant to represent or point away toward an event in the mythical realm; instead, the visible, material object is meant to enact myth within the lived experience of those participating in the ritual. Further below, I explore how Fortunatus envisions the relic of the cross as a

³⁰⁶ K.G. Holum and G. Vikan, “The Trier Ivory, ‘Adventus’ Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979), pp. 113-133. See also Y. Hen, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111.

³⁰⁷ On the association with military marching songs, see J. Szövérfy, “Venantius Fortunatus and the Earliest Hymns to the Holy Cross,” *Classical Folia* 20 (1966), p. 110.

³⁰⁸ Fortunatus discusses the meaning of the cross as trophy in his exposition of symbols (*Carm.* XI [23]).

³⁰⁹ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v., *tropaeum* I and II.B.

³¹⁰ See above, introduction p. 19 n. 81.

vehicle for enacting the crucifixion, but first it is important to consider how he describes the mythical realm so as to enhance the mechanism of alignment.

The Tale of Victory

In the following stanzas, Fortunatus gives a fuller picture of the mythical element of the alignment, beginning with a treatment of creation and the fall of humanity (vv. 4-6):

De parentis protoplasti fraude factor condolens,
quando pomi noxialis morte morsu conruit,
ipse lignum tunc notavit, damna ligni ut solveret.

The maker saddened by the deception of the first-formed parent,
when he rushed headlong in death because of biting the injurious apple,
he himself marked out a tree at that point so as to remove the harm of a tree.

The creation narrative is evident in the adjective *protoplastus* (“first-formed,” v. 4), which recalls the formation of Adam from clay (Gen 2.7), and also in the idea of this first man as a “parent” (*parens*, v. 4), echoing Genesis 1.26-28, where God creates man and woman in his own image and then commands them to procreate and fill the earth. Moreover, the title “maker” (*factor*, v. 4) evokes God’s role in creation, perhaps drawn from language from the Nicene Creed (“maker of heaven and earth,” *factorem caeli et terrae*).³¹¹ The insertion of *fraus* (“deception,” v. 4) between *protoplastus* and *factor* interrupts the creation story and points toward the fall of Adam and Eve as described in Genesis 3.1-7. There the serpent is depicted as a crafty creature who tricks Adam and Eve into eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which was forbidden by God. The next

³¹¹ Forms of the verb *facio* also feature prominently throughout the Vulgate edition of Genesis 1: e.g., *fiat lux et facta est lux* (Gen 1.3); *factumque est vespere et mane dies unus* (Gen 1.5); *et fecit Deus firmamentum* (Gen 1.7); *faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram* (Gen 1.26).

verse of the hymn neatly encapsulates the incident with the phrase “biting of the injurious apple” (*pomi noxialis... morsu*, v. 5). Fortunatus then names this injury as the “harm of a tree” (*damna ligni*, v. 6), which the maker himself (*ipse*, v. 6) “removes” (*solveret*, v. 6). Thus, within these verses, we see a continuous mythical narrative based on Genesis, but one that involves two sides, in fact, the two sides of battle. On one side, there is creator, and on the other, there is injury and harm, which is associated with the tree. Each follows its own narrative trajectory, but they come together at the event of the crucifixion, which is understood as the moment of victory.

The mythical trajectory of the creator continues in vv. 10-15:

Quando venit ergo sacri plenitudo temporis, 10
missus est ab arce patris natus, orbis conditor,
atque ventre virginali carne factus prodiit.

Vagit infans inter arta conditus praesepia,
 membra pannis involuta virgo mater adligat
 et pedes manusque, crura stricta pingit fascia. 15

Therefore when the fulfillment of sacred time came, 10
the Son, founder of the world, was sent from the citadel of the Father,
and he made in the flesh proceeded from the virginal womb.

The infant cries aloud, being enclosed in the narrow manger,
the virgin mother binds together his limbs wrapped up with swaddling clothes
both his feet and hands, and she paints his tightly bound legs with a strip of cloth.

As in Sedulius' Hymn II, treated above, Fortunatus uses the paradox of creator versus created to frame the narrative of the incarnation (v. 12) and nativity (vv. 13-15). The incarnation is encapsulated in the phrase "having been made in the flesh" (*carne factus*, v. 12),³¹² where the participle *factus* corresponds to the agent *factor* (v. 4) from the creation episode. The nativity episode begins with the phrase as "the infant enclosed in

³¹² Cf. Jn 1.14: “And the Word was made flesh” (*Et Verbum caro factum est*).

the narrow manger” (*infans inter arta conditus praeseptis*, v. 13), and there too the participle *conditus* answers the phrase “founder of the world” (*orbis conditor*, v. 11), which again calls to mind God’s role in creation.

Fortunatus also colors the nativity scene with militaristic imagery. There he has Mary “paint [Christ’s] tightly bound legs with a long ribbon of cloth” (*crura stricta pingit fascia*, v. 15). In addition to their use for wrapping infants,³¹³ *fasciae* were used by soldiers and gladiators to wrap their legs before putting on greaves.³¹⁴ The poetic use of the verb *pingo* (“to paint”) to indicate binding occurs in a similar context in Ovid *Amores* III.2.31-32: “Such are the legs of Diana painted as she is girded up, when she herself fiercer pursues fierce wild beasts” (*talia pinguntur succinctae crura Dianae, / cum sequitur fortes fortior ipsa feras*). Here Ovid describes Diana ready for the hunt (*succinctae Dianae*, v. 31), with her legs “painted” with greaves. By using this image, Fortunatus takes advantage of the dual meaning of *fascia* to suggest that in swaddling the infant Christ, Mary is preparing him for battle.

What is more, if “hands and feet” are parallel with legs (*pedes manusque crura*, v. 15), then the scene can also be interpreted as a foreshadowing of burial. Juvenius offers a comparable image in his account of the raising of Lazarus (*Evang. Libr. IV* 4.394-396):³¹⁵

Nec mora conexis manibus pedibusque repente
Procedit tumulo, uultum cui linea texta
Et totum gracilis conectit fascia corpus.

³¹³ *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae (TLL)*, (Leipzig, 1900-), s.v., *fascia* I.A.1.a.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, s.v., *fascia* I.A.1.b.

³¹⁵ Text is that of J. Huemer, *Evangelorum Libri Quattuor*, CSEL 24 (Vienna, 1891). Translation is my own.

And without delay he [Lazarus] proceeded from the tomb straightaway,
though his hands and feet were bound together, whose face is covered with linen
and whose entire body was bound with a thin strip of cloth.

In this passage, Juvenius describes how Lazarus emerged from his tomb in the state in which he was buried.³¹⁶ Lazarus' body is wrapped with a single thin strip of cloth (*totum gracilis conectit fascia corpus*, v. 396), and in particular, his hands and feet are bound together (*conexis manibus pedibusque* (v. 394) in a manner similar to how Christ's limbs are bound together in the hymn. Further support for this interpretation can be found in the participle *conditus* (v. 13), since *condo* can also mean "to bury."³¹⁷

The preparation of Christ's body for both battle and burial are linked together through their relationship with the crucifixion. Burial would come as a result of his death on the cross, and, as we saw above, the first stanza equates the sacrifice of Christ with military victory (*immolatus vicerit*, v. 3). Thus, we can see a narrative trajectory pertaining to Christ that begins with his role as creator, which then is answered by his role as created in the incarnation and nativity, which in turn looks toward his crucifixion, where he emerges as the triumphant "redeemer of the world" (*redemptor orbis*, v. 3).

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The mythical element of the tree has its own trajectory parallel to that of Christ, which also looks toward the crucifixion. We can observe this by looking at the description of the fall, quoted again from above, as set alongside restoration (vv. 4-9):

³¹⁶ Juvenius' treatment is modeled on Jn 11.44: "The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in cloth" (*et statim prodiit qui fuerat mortuus ligatus pedes et manus institis et facies illius sudario erat ligata*).

³¹⁷ Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v., *condo* II.B.2 indicates that this verb can describe burials in sarcophagi and tumuli as well as in the earth itself.

De parentis protoplasti fraude factor condolens,
 quando pomi noxialis morte morsu conruit, 5
 ipse lignum tunc notavit, damna ligni, ut solveret.

Hoc opus nostrae salutis ordo depoposcerat,
 multiformis perditoris arte ut artem falleret
 et medellam ferret inde, hostis unde laeserat.

The maker aggrieved at the deception of the first-formed parent,
 when he rushed headlong in death because of biting the injurious apple, 5
 he himself marked out a tree at that point so as to remove the harm of a tree.

The order of our salvation had demanded this work,
 in order to cheat the cunning of the many-shaped traitor by cunning
 and to introduce a remedy where the enemy had given injury.

Within these stanzas, Fortunatus sets up a typological relationship between the Tree of Knowledge and the cross,³¹⁸ where the Tree of Knowledge is “marked out” (*notavit*) as the type that looks toward fulfillment in the cross as the anti-type.³¹⁹ The adverb *tunc* (“at that point,” v. 6) entails that both the type and anti-type come into existence at the same moment with the fall. Thus, the correspondence between the trees cuts across the narrative sequence to link the fall directly with the crucifixion.

In his study of biblical typology, Jean Daniélou identifies two kinds of typology that originate in the NT and are taken up by Patristic writers: 1) the eschatological typology of Paradise, which is evident particularly in the Gospels and the Apocalypse of John; 2) the Adamic typology, which is developed in Paul’s Epistles, Romans in particular.³²⁰ The paradisiacal typology represents a continuity with OT predictions of the

³¹⁸ For the typological connection between the Tree of Knowledge and the cross, see, e.g., Irenaeus, *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching* 32-33; Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus* I.13; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* XIII.31; Ambrose, *Expositio in Lucam* IV.7; Sedulius, Hymn I.61-62.

³¹⁹ On typology, see L. Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, translated by D.H. Madvig (Grand Rapids, 1982 [1939]), pp. 17-18; also, E. Auerbach, “Figura,” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis, 1984 [1954]), pp. 28-30.

eschaton as a new Paradise viewed through a Christological lens, where the coming of Christ is seen as the realization of Paradise.³²¹ The Adamic typology, however, rests on a disjuncture between Adam and Christ, where, as Daniélou succinctly puts it, “Christ both accomplishes and restores what had been done by Adam.”³²² According to Paul, Adam’s sin is the cause of death for humanity, whereas Christ’s crucifixion brings salvation for all.³²³ In the hymn, Fortunatus adapts this latter strand of typology, but instead of concentrating on the disjuncture between Adam and Christ, he shifts the focus to the two trees.

The Adamic tree is associated with harm (*damna ligni*), and this harm is related to the fruit of the tree, which is named as an “injurious apple” (*pomi noxialis*, v. 5). The pun *morte morsu* (v. 5) connects the consumption of the fruit (*pomi noxialis morsu*) with death (*morte*), in keeping with the Pauline association between Adam and death. Nonetheless, the tree is not depicted as the agent of death; rather, the “enemy” is the one who brings harm (*hostis... laeserat*, v. 9). This enemy seems to be the “many-formed traitor” (*multiformis perditoris*, v. 8), whose “skill” (*artem*, v. 8) brought about the deception of Adam (*de parentis protoplasti fraude*, v. 4), namely the devil,³²⁴ and in turn, death is the injury that the devil brings.³²⁵ The tree fits into this paradigm as “the place

³²⁰ J. Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, translated by W. Hibberd (Westminster, Maryland, 1960 [1950]), pp. 11-22. Rom 5.12 calls Adam a “type (*typos*) of the one to come.”

³²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-29.

³²² Daniélou, *op. cit.*, pp. 30.

³²³ Rom 5.12-21; 1 Cor 15.21-22.

³²⁴ For the devil as the enemy, see Mt 13.39. For the identification of the serpent with the devil, see Rev 12.7-9.

³²⁵ Cf. 1 Cor 15.26, which casts death as the enemy.

from which the enemy had given injury” (*hostis unde laeserat*, v. 9). The Tree of Knowledge is the source of the apple that the serpent uses to trick Adam and thereby bring about death.

Fortunatus presents the cross as the typological counterpart to the Tree of Knowledge, which takes part in “removing the harm of the tree” (*damna ligni ut solveret*, v. 6). This act is envisioned as a two-part process: first comes a reversal of the fall and then a cure for its effects. The cross is involved at both stages, but, just as the Tree of Knowledge is not the direct agent of harm, neither is the cross the direct agent of restoration.

Restoration is presented as a reversal of the fall based on the conception that both are acts of deceit (*fraude*, v. 4; *falleret*, v. 8), but with the role of the devil inverted. Whereas the serpent was the deceiver at the fall (Gen 3.1-6), here the “many-formed traitor” (*multiformis perditoris*, v. 8) becomes the deceived. In the restoration, the role of the deceiver is assumed by “the order of our salvation” (*nostrae salutis ordo*, v. 7), or salvation history, an idea which I explore below. The original deceit is counteracted like for like, “cunning” for “cunning” (*arte ut artem*, v. 8). The proximity of the ablative *arte* (v. 8) to the genitive *multiformis perditoris* suggests that they are to be taken together, but this expectation is broken when the restorative message demands that *multiformis perditoris* be dependent instead on the second *ars* (artem) as the object of *falleret* (v. 8). Perhaps this shift in modification is meant to engage the participants in the process of deception and restoration as they form and reform their expectations of the meaning of the verse.

The cross fits in this framework as the *ars* used to deceive the devil in return. In the narrative of the fall, the devil's trick consists of fooling Adam into thinking that the tree is "good for food" (Gen 3.6), when instead the food is harmful (*pomi noxialis*, v. 5), and inversely, the restorative trick involves letting the devil think the tree is harmful, when instead it creates the typological necessity for salvation. As mentioned above, Fortunatus indicates that the typological relationship between the two trees comes into existence "at the very moment" (*tunc*, v. 6) when the apple is bitten (*quando pomi noxialis morte morsu conruit*, v. 5), but there is a delay between the necessity for salvation and the salvation event at the crucifixion. In this delay lies the *ars* of salvation history.

Fortunatus also associates the restoration with "healing" (*medellam*, v. 9). In doing so, he adapts the *Christus medicus* motif, which presents Christ as a doctor whose medicine cures the sins of the world,³²⁶ but here, instead of Christ, the *ordo salutis* applies the medicine. It is intended to heal the wound inflicted by the enemy (*hostis ... laeserat*, v. 9). As we saw above, Fortunatus equates the harm of the enemy with death, and by implication, healing means curing death, or in other words, healing means eternal life. This notion of replacing death with eternal life fits with the overarching Pauline typology that connects Adam with death and Christ with life. Within this framework, the cross is the source from which healing comes (*medellam ferret inde*, v. 9). Its restorative properties are exactly the inverse of the harmful properties of the Tree of Knowledge. In

³²⁶ Based on Mt 9.12 and Lk 5.31. For an overview of the use of this motif in literature and art, see D. Knipp, *Christus Medicus in der frühchristlichen Sarkophagskulptur : ikonographische Studien der Sepulchralkunst des späten vierten Jahrhunderts* (Leiden, New York, 1998), esp. pp. 1-22.

choosing the term *medella*, perhaps Fortunatus intends a pun on *medulla*, which would point to the marrow of a tree as the ultimate origin of the remedy.

Thus, the typological relationship between the Tree of Knowledge and the cross entails that each serves as a source, the former for harm and the latter for healing. The correlative construction *inde...unde* (“it brought healing from the very place where the enemy had harmed,” *medellam ferret inde, hostis unde laeserat*, v. 9) suggests that both harm and healing share a single source. F.J.E. Raby interprets this as literally as the same place: “The Tree of the Garden had miraculously been preserved, and from its wood, by the poetic justice of God, was formed the Cross.”³²⁷ While it is possible that Fortunatus thought the cross was made out of the wood of the Tree of Knowledge, this is not necessarily the case. As Erich Auerbach notes in his discussion of figural typologies, “Often vague similarities in the structure of events or in their attendant circumstances suffice to make the *figura* recognizable.”³²⁸ In this case, the two share the same material, namely wood (*lignum*, v. 6).

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The two parallel mythical strands of Christ and the tree come together at crucifixion (vv. 16-28):

Lustra sex qui iam peracta tempus inplens corporis,
se volente natus ad hoc, passioni deditus
agnus in crucis levatur immolandus stipite.

³²⁷ F.J.E. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry* (Oxford, 1927), p. 88 cites as his source a treatment of thirteenth-century visual material (Émile Mâle, *L'art religieux du XIIIe siècle en France*, 1899). A.S. Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns*, (Hildesheim, 1966 [1922]), *ad loc.*, p. 168 makes a similar assertion, citing “a legend...[which] told how that the cross came from the tree in the Garden of Eden, a shoot of which was brought out by Adam and planted by Seth....”

³²⁸ Auerbach, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

After he fulfilled his humanly time, already thirty years having passed,
the Son born willingly for this purpose, given over to suffering,
as a lamb he was raised onto the trunk of the cross to be sacrificed.

Here Christ is referred to as *natus* (v. 17), a name that simultaneously evokes his role as God the Son and also his human birth from the Virgin Mary. This role is characterized by a series of passive verbs: he is handed over (*deditus*, v. 17), lifted (*levatur*, v. 18), and pierced (*perforatur*, v. 20). Each reinforces the idea of Christ as a “lamb to be sacrificed” (*agnus...immolandus*, v. 18) through suffering (*passioni*, v. 17).³²⁹ Yet, this picture of Christ’s suffering becomes inverted through his own choice to undergo it (*se volente*, v. 17). This inversion of the passion mirrors the inversion from harm to healing, discussed above in relation to the Tree of Knowledge and the cross. This similarity suggests that the harm Christ suffers brings healing. Moreover, with healing comes victory. The connection between sacrifice and victory is underscored by the use of the participle *immolandus* (v. 18), recalling the form of the same verb that appears in the first stanza. There a similar inversion occurs, which equates “being sacrificed” (*immolatus*, v. 3) with “being victorious” (*vicerit*, v. 3).

The tree fits within this context as the place of sacrifice, since Christ is lifted up “on the trunk of the cross” (*in crucis...stipite*, v. 18). The noun *stipite* (“trunk,” v. 18) calls to mind an image of the cross as a tree, which fulfills the typological necessity emerging from Tree of Knowledge. Thus, within the restorative typology, “the trunk of the cross” is the source for healing, and its curative powers come from its relationship with Christ and its role in the crucifixion. Furthermore, *stipes* also evokes the image of a trophy for military triumph. Going back to the Greeks, trophies were made from tree

³²⁹ See above, n. 301.

trunks, which were affixed with spoils taken from the enemy.³³⁰ Recalling the earlier description of the cross as a “trophy” (*crucis tropaeo*, v. 2), the cross works as the “trunk” on which Christ is affixed as the spoils of victory.³³¹ This fits with the idea of inversion, where Christ is both the victor and the sign of enemy defeat.

In bringing together Christ and the tree, Fortunatus creates a unified mythical framework within the hymn, which he refers to as “the order of our salvation” (*nostrae salutis ordo*, v. 7). It begins with creation, followed by the fall of humanity, which triggers the necessity for salvation; after time passes, which Fortunatus refers to as the “fulfillment of sacred time” (*sacri plenitudo temporis*, v. 10), God becomes incarnate, and his nativity foreshadows his death, which represents the hope of salvation; and finally, after more time passes, which Fortunatus understands as “[Christ] fulfilling the time of his body, thirty years” (*lustra sex...peracta tempus implens corporis*, v. 16), salvation comes with the crucifixion.

All along, Fortunatus crafts this mythical trajectory so as to maximize the potential for alignment with the lived experience of those participating in the ritual. He encourages a connection with the performance context of the *adventus* procession by incorporating military imagery throughout. We can see this in the images of the nativity as preparation for battle, the idea of the devil as an enemy, and the cross as a trophy for displaying Christ as the spoils of war. In addition, he promotes alignment by focusing on the tree as a central component of salvation history. The images of the Tree of Knowledge and the cross as “wood” (*lignum...ligni*, v. 6), along with the cross as a

³³⁰ H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.), *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*, Band 12/ 1 Tam-Vel (Stuttgart, Weimar, 2002), s.v. *Tropaion*. See also Lewis and Short, op. cit., s.v., *tropaeum* I.

³³¹ The term *stipes* also appears at v. 27.

“trunk” (*stipite*, v. 18) draw attention to the materiality of the wood, which was present in the ritual context in the object of the relic. Still extant at the Convent of the Holy Cross in Poitiers, the relic of the True Cross is in the shape of a double cross, made of pieces of wood believed to have come from the very cross on which Christ was crucified.³³²

Enacting Sacrificial Triumph

Fortunatus uses alignment as a way to promote the enactment of salvation history, encouraging believers to feel that the effects of salvation become available to them through the relic ceremony. One way he attempts to do this is by giving agency to salvation history itself. We observed above how Fortunatus makes “the order of our salvation” (*nostrae salutis ordo*, v. 7) into the subject of *falleret* (“it deceives,” v. 8) and *ferret* (“it brings,” v. 9), in addition to *depoposcerat* (“it had demanded,” v. 10). If he had envisioned God as the one who is deceiving, healing, or demanding, then the hymn would be operating within the mythical level, similar to how the mythical element has worked in the other hymns treated in this study so far. Instead, Fortunatus steps outside the mythical framework and treats the mythical element as a whole. This self-referential aspect activates a meta-level of myth, which exists above myth and describes its workings. At the meta-level, salvation history takes on an agency that reaches within the realm of myth and has tangible effects. It governs the workings of myth through an overarching necessity, indicated in the verb *depoposcerat*; salvation history demands that the crucifixion answer the fall, and so it ensures that this necessity is fulfilled by acting

³³² W.M. Conway, “St. Radegund’s Reliquary at Poitiers,” *The Antiquaries Journal* 3 (1923), pp. 1-12. A picture of the relic of the True Cross is most recently available on the cover of J. Pucci’s recent collection of Fortunatus’ poetry, *Poems to Friends* (Indianapolis, Cambridge, 2010).

within the realm of myth “to deceive the trick of the many formed traitor” and “bring healing.”

This meta-conception of the *ordo salutis* as agent has implications for enactment. It encourages participants to believe that the *ordo* can likewise have effects on them. The implication is that if the necessity of salvation history can affect the realm of myth, then it can also affect the phenomenological realm. Fortunatus signals the potential of salvation history to influence lived experience by modifying *ordo salutis* with *nostrae*. Rather than an abstract notion of salvation, which remains confined to the realm of myth, he indicates that salvation belongs to “us,” pointing to the first-person experience of those uttering the hymn. The idea is that the necessity of salvation history also reaches into the phenomenological strand using the connection created by the relic, and as a result, salvation becomes enacted within lived experience.

In addition to the first-person plural pronoun *nostrae*, forms of the demonstrative pronoun *hic* contribute to the sense that there is an interface between myth and experience. In verse 7, Fortunatus describes the typological relationship between the Tree of Life and the cross as “this work” (*hoc opus*). The use of *hic* in this context suggests that this typology comes into the frame of reference of the utterers, namely those singing the hymn. Likewise, in verse 17, the crucifixion is referred to as “this purpose” (*ad hoc*). Thus, the two elements of myth described as “these” are the same two elements that we saw come together for the purpose of alignment. The presence of the demonstrative encourages believers to feel that these mythical elements are within their realm of experience.

Fortunatus explores the idea of enactment further in verses 19-21, which also treat the crucifixion:

Hic acetum fel harundo sputa clavi lancea,
mite corpus perforator, sanguis, unda profluit,
terra pontus astra mundus quo lavantur flumine.

Here the vinegar, bile, reed, spit, nails, lance,
his gentle body is pierced through, blood, water flow forth,
the earth, sea, stars, world are washed clean by this stream.

The items that Fortunatus names in verse 19 represent the crucifixion in terms of the apparatus of the passion as mentioned in the Gospel narratives.³³³ The motif is a common one,³³⁴ but Fortunatus selects these particular items in order to depict the crucifixion as scene of contamination. The liquids vinegar, bile, and spit create an image of grime on Christ's body, and the reed, nails, and lance name instruments that would cause bleeding and thereby contribute to filth. As we have seen above in regards to other hymns, enactment is imagined as a change of state. Here, the transformation is from contamination to purification: "the earth, sea, stars, and world are washed clean by this stream" (*terra pontus astra mundus quo lavantur flumine*, v. 21). This reversal is further emphasized by a pun on *mundus*, which can also work as an adjective meaning "clean."³³⁵ We can recognize this purification as enactment because it fits within the paradigm of harm healing, which we observed above in relation to the Tree of Knowledge and the cross, but here transformation is applied to a realm beyond the mythical. The crucifixion brings healing in the form of purification to the cosmological

³³³ Vinegar appears at Mt 27.48, Lk 23.36, Jn 19.29, Mk 15.36; bile at Mt 27.34, Mk 15.23; reed at Mt 27.29-31, Mk 15.19; spit at Mt 27.30, Mk 15.19; nails at Jn 20.25; lance at Jn 19.34; blood also at Jn 19.34.

³³⁴ Cf. depictions of the apparatus of the passion at Augustine, *Sermones* 254.86-87; Fortunatus, *Vita Sancti Martini* 207; Gregory of Tours, *Gloria Martyrum* 6.

³³⁵ Cf. Prudentius, *Cathemerinon* XI. 64, discussed above, p. 63.

realm, named as “earth, sea, stars, and world.” Moreover, the demonstrative *hic* (“here,” v. 19) suggests that the effects of enactment can be felt within the frame of reference of those singing the hymn as well.

Within this vision of the crucifixion, the agent of cleansing is a stream (*flumine*), which consists of the blood and water that flow forth from Christ’s body (*mite corpus perforatur, sanguis, unda profluit*, v. 20). This image extends the idea of enactment to the phenomenological realm through its connection with the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. The combination of blood and water at the crucifixion recalls John 19.34,³³⁶ a verse often interpreted in light of baptism.³³⁷ Fortunatus himself connects this image with baptism in his exposition of the symbols associated with the crucifixion: “[Christ] was pierced with the lance so that with water [and] blood flowing from the blow to his side, he might show forth either baptism or the mystery of martyrdom” (*lancea percutitur, ut per plagam lateris aqua fluente vel sanguine baptismum vel mysterium martyrii promulgaret, Carm. XI.1 [22]*).³³⁸ In addition, the hymn’s inclusion of Christ’s body alongside the blood and water calls to mind the sacrament of the eucharist.

By depicting enactment with sacramental language, Fortunatus likens the power of the relics to that of the sacraments. From early on, salvific properties were attributed to the sacraments because of their own process of enactment, referred to as *anamnesis*.³³⁹ According to Gregory Dix, the eucharist was understood as the “re-calling” of the passion

³³⁶ Jn 19.34: “One of the soldiers pierced [Jesus’] side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out” (*sed unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua*).

³³⁷ On the connection between Jn 19.34, baptism, and purification from sins, see, e.g., Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 15; Ambrose, *De Patriarchiis* 4.24; Leo Magnus, *Tractatus* 34.141.

³³⁸ Text is that of F. Leo, *op. cit.*, p. 255, ll. 29-30. Translation is my own.

³³⁹ On *anamnesis*, see above, introduction, p. 19.

and the resurrection, which was believed “[to bestow] on the communicants those effects of redemption—immortality, eternal life, forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the power of the devil, and so on—which we usually attribute more directly to the sacrifice of Christ.”³⁴⁰ He treats baptism in similar terms.³⁴¹ Robert Taft expands this idea so that the *anamnesis* of the paschal mystery also “renders present” salvation from an eschatological perspective.³⁴² In bringing together the enactment of the crucifixion with baptism and the eucharist in *Carmen* II.2, Fortunatus offers the relic as a new sacrament that likewise has the power to make salvation present.

Enacting Paradise

Following the scene of the crucifixion, Fortunatus extends the *ordo salutis* to include a new Paradise and thereby a new means of making salvation accessible to believers (vv. 22-27):

Crux fidelis, inter omnes arbor una nobilis
(nulla talem silva profert flore fronde germine),
dulce lignum, dulce clavo dulce pondus sustinens!

Flecte ramos, arbor alta, tensa laxa viscera, 25
et rigor lentescat ille quem dedit nativitas,
ut superni membra regis mite tendas stipite.

Faithful cross, singular noble tree among all the rest
(no grove offers forth such a tree measured by flower, leaf, shoot),
sweet wood, supporting the sweet weight with sweet nail!

³⁴⁰ Dix, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 339-340.

³⁴² Taft, *Beyond East and West*, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-186. He also expands the *anamnesis* of the paschal mystery outside sacramental contexts to any ritual celebration.

Bend your branches, tall tree, loosen your taut marrow, 25
and let that rigidity grow soft which birth gave,
so that you may extend the limbs of the supernal king with your gentle trunk.

These stanzas envision the cross as a living tree. The word *arbor* appears twice in apposition to the cross (*crux fidelis*, v. 22), which is depicted as a “noble tree” (*arbor . . . nobilis*, v. 22) and also as a “tall tree” (*arbor alta*, v. 25). In addition, the attributes of a tree are applied to the cross: “flower,” (*flore*, v. 23), “leaf,” (*fronde*, v. 23), “shoot,” (*germine*, v. 23), and “branches,” (*ramos*, v. 25). This imagery evokes the Tree of Life, which appears in the depiction of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2.9 and also in the renewal of creation envisioned in Revelation 22.2.³⁴³ The connection between the cross and the Tree of Life is in line with the paradisiacal strand of typology identified by Daniélou, mentioned above. This typological framework sees Christ as a continuation of paradise as presented at creation; when paradise was lost with the fall, Christ restored paradise through salvation.³⁴⁴ As we saw above in relation to the Adamic typology of the fall, Fortunatus adapts the framework to concentrate on a tree. Just as the fall is represented through its connection with the Tree of Knowledge, so too is the new paradise represented through its connection with the Tree of Life. The emphasis on the image of a growing tree reaches toward the experience of the relic in a visual way. Pictures of the relic, supposedly in its original presentation, show pieces of wood set into an enameled panel, which is decorated with a swirling floral motif complete with fronds,

³⁴³ On the connection between the cross and the Tree of Life, see Caesarius Areletensis, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, *ad loc.*, Rev 2.7 and 22.2; Eusebius Gallicanus, *Hom.* XVI.5; Chromatius Aquilensis, *Sermones* 43.4; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations* 29.20. See also G.Q. Reijnders, *The Terminology of the Holy Cross in Early Christian Literature* (Nijmegen, 1965), pp. 165-166.

³⁴⁴ Daniélou, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-29. See discussion above in relation to Adamic typology, pp. 140-141.

leaves, and flowers against a dark blue background; a green border surrounds the relic cavity as well as around the edge of the panel, adding to the impression of growth.³⁴⁵

Fortunatus also promotes alignment and enactment by describing the cross in terms similar to Christ himself. Christ has a “soft body” at the crucifixion (*mite corpus*, v. 20), and the tree has a “soft trunk” (*mite...stipite*, v. 27), harking back to the idea of *stipes* as a trophy celebrating military victory.³⁴⁶ Likewise, Christ is the “sweet weight” (*dulce pondus*, v. 24), and the cross is the “sweet wood” (*dulce lignum*, v. 27). Both of these properties—softness and sweetness—are portrayed as the realization of salvation, which comes into lived experience through the mechanism of enactment.

In relation to softness, enactment is imagined as the transformation from rigidity (“taut marrow,” *tensa viscera*, v. 25; “rigidity,” *rigor*, v. 26) to pliability (“bend,” *flecte*, v. 25; “loosen,” *laxa*, v. 25; “grow soft,” *lentescat*, v. 26). The original rigidity is conceived of as an outcome of birth (“the rigidity which the nativity gave,” *rigor...quem dedit nativitas*, v. 26). Commentators have explained the use of *nativitas* in this context as referring to “the natural origin of the wood which determines its qualities,”³⁴⁷ and certainly we can understand the trunk of a tree as something hard rather than soft. Nonetheless, a fuller meaning emerges if we consider *nativitas* in terms of Christ’s nativity, depicted in verses 13-15. As we saw above, the tightness of the infant’s bindings in that scene (*crura stricta pingit fascia*, v. 15) implied preparation for battle as well as burial. Here, pliability indicates the release of tightness in both senses. On the one hand,

³⁴⁵ See above n. 332.

³⁴⁶ On *stipes* as trophy, see above pp. 145-146.

³⁴⁷ Szövérfy, “Venantius Fortunatus,” *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*, p. 115.

undoing the *fascia* of battle means that the battle is over and victory is won, while on the other hand undoing the *fascia* of burial means that the resurrection has occurred. What is more, if we take *nativitas* as birth in a phenomenological sense as birth for those participating in the ritual, then the rigidity of birth would refer to original sin under Adam, which within the Pauline framework brought death for humanity. Interpreted in this way, the exhortation to undo the tightness of the nativity (*flecte ramos...tensa laxa viscera/ et rigor lentescat*, vv. 25-26) is thus an exhortation for believers to experience enactment through their contact with the relic and its connection with Christ. If successful, enactment would allow believers to perceive that they are released from the bonds of original sin and that eternal life is available to them.

Fortunatus envisions the effects of successful enactment in the following verse, still addressed to the tree: “may you extend the limbs of the supernal king with your gentle trunk” (*ut superni membra regis mite tendas stipite*, v. 27).³⁴⁸ The extension of Christ’s limbs (*membra*) is a reversal of the binding of the infant’s limbs in the nativity scene (*membra*, v. 14). A similar image in Fortunatus’ *Carmen* II.3 allows us to interpret the significance of this gesture: “[Christ, who is] extended on these branches, expanding his arms with shoots/ as a weight hanging from the cross he himself steadies the Church” (*tensus in his ramis, cum plantis brachia pandens,/ ecclesiam stabilit pendulus ipse cruce*, *Carm.* II.3.6-7). Here as in *Carmen* II.2, Fortunatus presents the cross as a tree with branches (*ramis*) and shoots (*plantis*), and he depicts Christ as a weight hanging from the cross (*pendulus ipse cruce*; cf. *pondus*, *Carm.* II.2.24). He also gives a sense that Christ willingly hangs from the cross, since Christ actively expands his arms, which then

³⁴⁸ Reijners, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-130 treats the motif of *expandere/ extendere manus* as applied to the crucifixion.

become shoots of the tree (*cum plantis brachia pandens*). Ultimately, Fortunatus links the extension of Christ's limbs with the stability of the Church (*ecclesiam stabilit*). This interpretation can apply to *Carmen* II.2 as well, if we understand the phrase "limbs of the supernal king" *superni membra regis* as a symbol for the Church. The term *membra* is used several times in Paul's Epistles within the metaphor of the Church as the body of Christ, where individual believers are the limbs (*membra*) of that body.³⁴⁹ Understood in light of Paul, verse 27 frames the effects of enactment in collective terms. By linking it with the extension of Christ's limbs, Fortunatus hopes that the membership of the Church will experience the life-giving properties of the tree.

The hymn emphasizes the sweetness of the new paradise by incorporating the adjective *dulce* three times in the same verse: "sweet tree, sustaining the sweet weight with sweet nail" (*dulce lignum, dulce clavo dulce pondus sustinens*, v. 24).³⁵⁰ The three uses of *dulce* describe three different elements of the crucifixion, each of which connects with the phenomenological realm. The "sweet wood" (*dulce lignum*) refers to the cross itself. Again as before, the focus on the cross as tree and its materiality as wood (*lignum*, v. 24) reaches toward the experience of those participating in the ritual, who would perceive the wood in the object of the relic.

The "sweet nail" (*dulce clavo*) points to the nails driven through Christ's hands and feet to attach his body to the cross. As mentioned above, Fortunatus uses Christ's limbs as a symbol for the Church, and therefore in recalling how his limbs were affixed

³⁴⁹ For example, 1 Cor 12.27: *vos autem estis corpus Christi et membra de membro* ("Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it"). See also 1 Cor 12.12-26; Rom 12.4-5; Eph 5.30.

³⁵⁰ Classical Latin would expect the form *dulci* to modify the ablative *clavo*, but Fortunatus prefers this alternate ending in order to heighten the emphasis on sweetness through exact repetition.

to the cross, he evokes an image of the Church cleaved to the Tree of Life. What is more, *clavus* can also refer to the purple band of cloth affixed to a toga or tunic to show senatorial or equestrian rank.³⁵¹ We may see a connection with the performance context if we imagine that purple fabrics were incorporated into the processional ceremony for the relic. *Carmen* II.6 includes a similar picture of the cross as a “tree decorated with kingly purple” (*arbor...ornata regis purpura*, vv. 17-18). Though perhaps anachronistic, the twelfth-century illustrated Scylitzes Chronicle (Folio 172v) shows the *adventus* of an icon on a wagon shrouded with purple cloth.³⁵²

Finally, the “sweet weight” (*dulce pondus*) refers to Christ since the cross held up the weight of his body, but the term *pondus* also calls to mind the context of financial transactions, where the weight (*pondus*) balanced the scale against the price paid. Here, the financial language creates a connection with the phenomenological realm through the image of the scale.³⁵³ Christ’s act of sacrifice within the mythical realm works as a counterbalance against the sins of humanity on the phenomenological side.

The significance of sweetness can be understood in terms of sensory experience, both as smell and taste. Fortunatus primes us to understand this sweetness in terms of

³⁵¹ TLL, *op. cit.*, s.v., *clavus* 4, which indicates that by this period the *clavus* marked the *rector provinciae*. What is more, *clavus* can also mean the act of commanding a ship (TLL, *clavus* 2), and it may be that Fortunatus also intends to anticipate the sailing metaphor that is coming below (*nauta*, v. 29).

³⁵² See J. Kayser, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Erklärung der ältesten Kirchenhymnen*, 2nd ed. (Paderborn, 1881), *ad loc.*, p. 407. On the other hand, A.S. Walpole, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*, p. 176 insists that *purpura* refers to “the blood which consecrated the tree as a throne,” based on comparanda from Paulinus of Nola, *Carm.* XXVII.89 and Sedulius, *Pasch. Carm.* V.287, but I do not see that literal and metaphorical readings must be mutually exclusive here.

³⁵³ Fortunatus uses financial language to compare the crucifixion to the original sin at *Carm.* II.6.21-24 and at *Carm.* XI.1 (26), both of which explicitly name the scale (*statera*).

smell by referring to the flowers of the paradisiacal tree (*flore*, v. 23).³⁵⁴ We can connect the sweet fragrance of flowers with the practice of anointing relics with perfume.³⁵⁵ In that case, the smell serves as a bridge between the phenomenological and mythical realms. The hymn encourages those participating in the ritual to associate their sensory experience of smelling the relics with the smell of paradise. This use of smell to promote a connection between human and divine fits with Susan Harvey's conception of "God's perfume".³⁵⁶

Whatever was near to God, whatever was sent or given by God—these were known by their wondrous smells, exquisite fragrances that bestowed life upon all they touched. From God had come such a breath of life. Adam had breathed it. In the early Christian understanding, its scent tinged the created order, renewed each time God caused the separation of earth and heaven to be breached. The stench of mortality, of sin, of decadence or suffering filled the air as humanity inhabited life apart from God. Yet that stench could be penetrated and overpowered by the scent of life that wafted from heaven, or poured forth from God's mouth.

This allows us to interpret the sweetness of the tree, weight, and nail as the scent of life, which goes along with the image of the cross as the Tree of Life.³⁵⁷ Successful enactment, then, would entail that believers would feel as if eternal life was available to them through their sensory experience of sweetness.

³⁵⁴ Cf. *Carm.* II.6.25: "You [tree] pour forth with the scent of spices from your bark" (*fundis aroma cortice*, v. 25).

³⁵⁵ See M. Roch, *L'intelligence d'un sens: Odeurs miraculeuses et odorat sans l'Occident du haut Moyen Âge (Ve-VIIIe siècles)* (Turnhout, 2009), esp. pp. 273, 369-370.

³⁵⁶ S.A. Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2006), p. 54, within the section entitled, "God's Perfume: Imagined Glory and the Scent of Life," pp. 46-56.

³⁵⁷ Cf. *Carm.* II.2.9-12, where Fortunatus ascribes life-giving properties to the smell of the tree: "O sweet and noble tree...because of whose new smell dead corpses rise/ and those who lack life return to daylight" (*o dulce et nobile lignum...cuius odore novo defuncta cadavera surgunt/ et redeunt vitae qui carvere diem*).

Regarding taste, the sweetness of the new paradise stands in contrast with the bitterness of the crucifixion, evident in the inclusion of vinegar and bile within the apparatus of the passion (*acetum fel*, v. 19). In his exposition of Christian symbols, Fortunatus equates the literal bitterness of the bile with the metaphorical bitterness of the apple at the fall: “truly he drinks bile so that he might cut away the bitterness of the sham apple and too much sourness” (*felle vero potatur ut amaritudinem praevaricati pomi et nimis acidi amputaret*, *Carm.* XI.1[22]). There too, he links the sweetness of the apple with Christ (*Carm.* XI.1 [27]):

ideo crucifigatur, quia mortui eramus per pomum et arborem, ut denuo
crux et Christus, id est arbor et pomum, per ipsam similitudinem nos a
morte liberaret pomum dulce cum arbore!

[Christ] is crucified because we were dead through the apple and the tree, so that all over again the cross and Christ, that is the tree and the apple, might free us from death through this correspondence. Sweet apple along with the tree!

In this excerpt, Fortunatus draws attention to a correspondence (*ipsam similitudinem*) between the cross and Christ on the one hand and the tree and the apple on the other hand. Christ as the apple is sweet (*pomum dulce*) because of his role in “freeing us from death” (*nos a morte liberaret*). Thus, the sweet taste of the apple represents the sweetness of salvation. Applying this to the hymn, we can understand that the sweetness attributed to the tree, weight, and nail likewise points to their role in salvation, as an antidote to the bitterness of the crucifixion endured by Christ as well as the bitterness of death brought by the fall.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁸ Cf. Fortunatus, *Carm.* II.3.3-4: “And what the savage serpent infected with his bilious poison, the blood of Christ washes in this sweet liquor” (*quodque ferox serpens infecit felle veneni, Christi sanguis in hac dulce liquore lavat*).

The Doorway to Salvation

Fortunatus concludes the hymn with two complex and interwoven metaphors, which are both linked with salvation (vv. 28-30):

Sola digna tu fuisti ferre pretium saeculi
atque portum praeparare nauta mundo naufrago,
quem sacer cruor perunxit fusus agni corpora.

You alone were worthy to bear the price of the world
and as a sailor to prepare a port for the ship-wrecked world,
which was saturated with the holy gore poured out from the body of the lamb.

The idea of the tree bearing the price of the world (*ferre pretium saeculi*, v. 28) frames salvation in financial terms similar to what we observed above in the term *pondus* (v. 24). Then, this relationship between the tree and the world is reframed in a sailing metaphor, reminiscent of the story of Noah and the ark from Genesis 6.7-9.29. The cross is depicted as a sailor (*nauta*, v. 29),³⁵⁹ while the world (*mundo*, v. 29) serves as the ship. The ship is described as already wrecked (*naufrago*, v. 29), presumably by the fall. Within this scheme, the port (*portum*, v. 29) represents a safe haven, where the wreckage could be repaired.

The second metaphor recalls the story of Passover from Exodus 12.3-23. There, the Israelites smeared lamb's blood on their doorframes so that the Lord would "pass over" their houses and spare them from the plague. In light of this narrative, we can understand the lamb as a representation of Christ, who, as we have seen, is referred to in

³⁵⁹ Szövérfy, "Venantius Fortunatus," *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*, p. 115 understands Christ as the sailor, but given that *nauta* (v.29) is in the nominative and the infinitive *praeparare* (v. 29) is dependent on the construction *digna fuisti* of the line before, it is clear that the cross must carry over as the subject in apposition to *nauta*. Cf. Fortunatus, *Carm.* II.4.25: *velis das navita portum* ("[Cross] you as a sailor give a harbor to the sails").

verse 18 as a lamb to be sacrificed (*agnus immolandus*).³⁶⁰ The complexity of the metaphor lies in unpacking the antecedent of *quem* (v. 30), since Fortunatus leaves open the possibility that it may refer to any of the masculine nouns in the verse prior (*portus*; *nauta*; *mundus*), depending on the reference point you start from. From the perspective of the Exodus narrative, it makes sense to take *quem* in reference to a doorframe, and we can see this possibility if we interpret *portus* (“port”) as a pun on *porta* (“doorframe”). If, however, we think of the metaphor from the perspective of the crucifixion, with Christ as the lamb, then *quem* would refer to the cross as the place where he was sacrificed, and its antecedent would be *nauta* (v. 29), which represents the cross within the sailing metaphor. Finally, if we consider the metaphor from within the syntax of the hymn, *quem* should refer to *mundo naufrago*, which is the masculine noun immediately prior. From this perspective, the blood of the lamb is poured forth on the shipwrecked world.

These two metaphors reprise the sacramental imagery that we saw above in the crucifixion scene. There we observed how the stream of blood and water was the agent for cleansing the world (*mundus quo lavantur flumine*, v. 21), reminiscent of the sacrament of baptism. Likewise here, water is present in the waves navigated by the sailor and blood is present in the “gore” of the lamb (*cruor*, v. 30), whose sacramental properties are reinforced by the adjective *sacer* (“holy” v. 30). In addition, the Church Fathers saw the narrative of Noah and the flood as a type for baptism in line with the paradisiacal typology.³⁶¹ The body of the lamb (*agni corpore*, v. 30) adds another sacramental element, which pertains to the eucharist.

³⁶⁰ For Christ as paschal lamb, see esp. 1 Cor 5.7; also Jn 1.29, 1.36; Lk 22.1-7; 1 Pt 1.19. One can also see a resonance with the slaughtered lamb of Rev 5.6-12.

³⁶¹ Daniélou, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-102.

This imagery of baptism and the eucharist helps us to interpret the final image. The lamb's blood poured out over the shipwrecked world suggests purification from sins that would lead to salvation. Moreover, it reinforces the idea of the relic having sacramental properties. We see the presence of the relic in the phrase "you alone are worthy" (*sola digna*, v. 28), where the feminine refers both to the cross (*crux*, v. 22) and the tree (*arbor*, vv. 22 and 25), and it is connected with the other sacramental elements through the images of the sailor and the doorframe.

These metaphors also serve as useful tools of instruction because they reveal the inner workings of alignment and enactment. Each of the three strands of the alignment is visible. The mythical strand consists of Christ, the lamb (*agni*, v. 30), and the port (*portum*, v. 29), but the overlap between these three is not exact. Similar to the technique we saw above in Ambrose's Hymn III, Fortunatus elides event with effect. The event of sacrifice, represented by Christ and the lamb, is equated with the port, which symbolizes salvation as the intended effect of sacrifice. Next, the liturgical strand corresponding to the relic is evident in the relationship between the cross, the doorframe, and the sailor. Each is instrumental in bringing about salvation, but again Fortunatus mixes the elements of the metaphors to upset an exact correspondence. The cross as the place of sacrifice is a good match for the doorframe as the place for signal to be spared, and both are made of wood, evoking the materiality of the relic. But, the sailor as the guide to the port of salvation would seem to fit better with Christ, and therefore by incorporating it within this triad, Fortunatus transfers some of the qualities of Christ to the cross. Finally, the metaphors evoke the phenomenological element by bringing together the world, the ship, and the doorframe. The world as a ship headed for salvation is perhaps a reference to a

church, since the nave of a church was styled after a ship. The doorframe fits within this scheme because, like the ship, it is made of wood. As with the other two strands, this correspondence is intentionally mixed, in this case suggesting that the qualities of the wood become transferred to people.

Taken together, these metaphorical interminglings produce a series of stages that represent the process of enactment in action: by experiencing the relic, the people become imbued with the qualities of the wood; by virtue of its connection with the crucifixion, the relic assumes the qualities of Christ as guide to salvation; and ultimately, Christ becomes elided with salvation. Each stage is blended with the stage after it, as if the process is driving forward, leading believers from their experience of the relic to salvation itself. Ultimately, then, enactment is both a tool of instruction and its goal. Educating believers about the process of enactment brings greater likelihood of success. Since successful enactment enables believers to feel that salvation is available to them, increasing the likelihood of successful enactment means increasing the experience of salvation.

CONCLUSION: ENACTING INSTRUCTION, INSTRUCTING ENACTMENT

In light of these findings, we are in a better position to interpret Ambrose's amazement at the power of his hymns to enchant the population.³⁶² Indeed, we have observed the mechanisms through which hymns influence and instruct a wider audience within both ritual and ritualizing contexts. We have seen how Ambrose also uses this mechanism to transmit complex Mariological and ecclesiological ideas; how Prudentius uses it to replace traditional cultic practices with an understanding of salvation history; how Sedulius uses it to convey a complex understanding of the Godhead; and finally how Fortunatus adapts the same structures to communicate an understanding of salvation and the sacraments and link them with enactment. These ideas were designed to shape the world view of those performing or encountering the hymns so that they would accept salvation history as ontological reality and understand the events of their earthly life as part of that larger narrative. This system of instruction also had ethical implications. Understanding the world in terms of salvation history meant acting in ways that would ensure salvation, such as giving up former cult practices.

But Ambrose colors this process with a negative undertone when he suggests that “the people have been caught under the spell of [his] hymns” (*meorum carminibus deceptum populum*, *Epist.* 75A [*Contra Auxentium*], 34). Perhaps the idea that the people were “bewitched” or even “deceived” (*deceptum*) points to an “irrationality” on their

³⁶² For information on the text, see introduction above, p. 1 n. 1.

part, for lack of a better term. By this, I mean that although people learned doctrine through hymns, they did not learn the rationale behind the doctrine. Instead, the hymns presented a complex and profound theology in a distilled form that the average believer could remember and easily reproduce.³⁶³

The negative undertone of *deceptum* also implies a danger of misuse. After all, heretics could use hymns too in order to marshal support for their views.³⁶⁴ Dangers existed even within the orthodox tradition. Through the medium of hymns, a simple misinterpretation of a doctrinal issue could be amplified and spread widely and quickly. This danger might explain why the use of extra-biblical hymns was banned in the East by the Council of Laodicea in 364 and in the West at Council of Braga in 563.³⁶⁵ The decision at Braga was overturned shortly thereafter at the Council of Tours in 567 and again at the Council of Toledo in 633,³⁶⁶ suggesting that potential of extra-biblical hymns to influence believers was a point of controversy in the late sixth and early seventh centuries.³⁶⁷

And yet, Ambrose's use of *deceptum* can also be understood in a positive light. Horace uses a form of the same verb *decipio* to envision Prometheus' and Tantalus'

³⁶³ Similar arguments are made regarding creeds and their instructive purposes. See, e.g., Young, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

³⁶⁴ Cf. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* VI.8, where he describes all-night competitive hymn singing between neo-Arians and pro-Nicene supporters in Constantinople during the reign of Arcadius and Honorius.

³⁶⁵ Council of Laodicea, Canon XV, though this ban did not stop Ephrem the Syrian from writing extra-biblical hymns in the second half of the fourth century; Council of Braga, Canon XII.

³⁶⁶ Council of Tours, Canon XXIII; Fourth Council of Toledo, Canon XIII. See also J. Fontaine, "Un débat sur les Hymnes en 633 au IVème concile de Tolède," *Helmántica* 50 (1999), pp. 383-402.

³⁶⁷ This issue is discussed by R. Messenger, *The Medieval Latin Hymn* (Washington, D.C., 1953), pp. 10-11.

responses to song: “In fact both Prometheus and the parent of Pelops/ are beguiled of their sufferings because of the sweet sound” (*Quin et Prometheus et Pelopis parens/ dulci laborum decipitur sono, Carm. II.13. 37-38*). Horace imagines a scene where the power of the song is so great that it enraptures two figures enduring the most extreme forms of torture; song removes them from their experience of suffering and brings them to a place of pleasure and sweetness. We can see a similar meaning behind Ambrose’s statement. In describing the people as “beguiled” by hymns, perhaps Ambrose means that hymns allow them to forget their everyday lived experience and enter a realm of sweetness through the process of enactment.³⁶⁸

In fact, one could argue that successful enactment was the ultimate aim of instruction in early Christian Latin hymns. As we saw in Fortunatus’ *Carmen II.2*, enactment is both a tool and goal of instruction. If successful, enactment enables believers to experience salvation, and therefore instructing enactment means instructing salvation. Similarly, in Prudentius’ *Cathemerinon XI*, the emphasis on the process of transformation also encouraged successful enactment. It trained believers in how they will feel if enactment is successful, as in the case of nature and the pagans, and it also trained them in how they will feel if enactment is unsuccessful, as in the case of the Jews. Moreover, we observed in the adaptations of Sedulius’ Hymn II that producing enactment through alignment was more important than instruction in Christological doctrine. Taken together these observations suggest that although the mechanisms of alignment and enactment could be deployed to teach doctrine, their primary function was to enhance the experience of myth and enable believers to feel that the sacred was palpable. For

³⁶⁸ Cf. Augustine’s description of his experience of Ambrose’s hymns at *Confessions* X.33.49-50.

believers, the experience of the sacred brought its own reward; feeling as though one's experience is permeated by salvation history is the experience of salvation.

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The model of alignment and enactment offered here requires further development. A next step would be to expand the body of evidence to include other types of hymns. Most immediately, hymns of the sanctoral cycle need to be addressed. They too should have a temporal aspect to their alignment, but the narrative of saint's life should create a secondary mechanism of alignment, similar to what we saw above with the cosmological strand in *Cathemerinon* XI. Such a study including hymns for saints' days along with hymns for the daily offices and the liturgical year would be appropriate as a monograph, which would be the first treatment of early Christian Latin hymns as a unified genre.

I anticipate that this model will also have applications for hymns in the Byzantine and Syriac traditions. It would be particularly interesting to see how the phenomenological element would need to be adjusted to account for the authorial presence Derek Krueger has noticed in the hymns of Romanos Melodos.³⁶⁹ There is also the potential to apply this model outside Christian contexts by modifying the mythical element of the alignment. Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, for instance, invites such investigation. Its original performance context was within the public ritual of the Saecular Games, and given the importance of time in the name of the games, I imagine that the composition would rely on a framework of temporal alignment. By bringing together the

³⁶⁹ D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia, 2004), pp. 159-188.

myth of Rome with the experience of those at the games, Horace participated in conveying a new Augustan world view.

Moreover, the mechanisms of enactment visible in early Christian Latin hymns have implications within the larger study of the phenomenology of religion.³⁷⁰ There is great potential for connecting this model with other approaches that investigate the human experience of the sacred, especially within the Christian tradition. François Cassingena-Trévedy investigates the fourth- and fifth-century liturgy as a spiritual mosaic meant to engage all the dimensions of a person, in particular “*l’homme intérieur*.”³⁷¹ Susan Harvey explores the olfactory imagination as a vehicle for experiencing the divine, a function that she too links with instruction.³⁷² Georgia Frank posits a “visual access to the divine” sought after by pilgrims and experienced vicariously by those who read their tales.³⁷³ David Chidester connects visual and aural modes as interdependent ways of experiencing the divine.³⁷⁴ The sanctification of time should be included among these as another vehicle for transcending the distance between the human and the sacred.

A second book-length project would take a wider view of a particular time period and explore how the sanctification of time engaged with other avenues for creating enactment within both liturgical and paraliturgical contexts. Late Antique Gaul lends itself to such investigation because, in addition to having one of best surviving traditions

³⁷⁰ S. Twiss and W. Conser (eds.), *Experience of the Sacred: Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion* (Hanover, 1992), pp. 1-76 gives a helpful overview of the developments in the phenomenology of religion through the twentieth century.

³⁷¹ F. Cassingena-Trévedy, *Les Pères de l’Église et la liturgie* (Paris, 2009), esp. p. 27 and pp. 243-331.

³⁷² S. Harvey, *op. cit.*

³⁷³ G. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2000), esp. pp. 14-16.

³⁷⁴ D. Chidester, *Word and Light: Seeing Hearing and Religious Discourse* (Urbana, Chicago, 1992).

of hymns, it also offers a generous store of textual and material evidence to give a fuller picture of the secular and religious context. In particular, I am interested to see how pilgrimage, relics, icons, and architecture worked as spatial, material, and visual means for opening up communication between myth and experience, especially in conjunction with ritual. In light of Thomas Habinek's and Clifford Ando's studies that relate ritual to power within the Roman sphere,³⁷⁵ I also hope to consider how the structures of enactment relate to institutional systems of power, both religious and secular.

³⁷⁵ Habinek, *op. cit.*; C. Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley, 2008).

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