

**‘A tour of the other world’**  
**A contribution to the textual and literary criticism of the**  
**‘Six Books Apocalypse of the Virgin’\***

[‘Un viaje por el otro mundo’. Contribución a la crítica textual y literaria  
del ‘Apocalipsis de los Seis Libros de la Virgen’]

**Emmanouela GRYPEOU – Juan Pedro MONFERRER-SALA**

University of Cambridge – University of Cordova

eg299@cam.ac.uk – ff1mosaj@uco.es

**Resumen:** En este trabajo ofrecemos la edición y traducción del ‘Apocalipsis de los Seis Libros de la Virgen’ contenido en el Vat. ar. 698 (s. XIV), completados con su análisis textual y literario y comparados con el ms. Bonn or. 29 y las versiones siríacas, griega y etiópica de la obra. Nuestro propósito es ofrecer, a la luz de esta traducción árabe, nuevos datos que contribuyan a un conocimiento más profundo tanto de la tradición textual como del rico catálogo de los *topoi* de esta obra apócrifa.

**Abstract:** In this article we give the edition and the translation of the ‘Six Books Apocalypse of the Virgin’ contained in MS Vat. Ar. 698 (14th c.). Both the edition and the translation have been completed with a textual and literary criticism in comparison with MS Bonn or. 29, and with Syriac, Greek and Ethiopic versions as well. Our aim is to provide more information for contributing to a deeper knowledge of both the textual tradition and the rich catalogue of the *topoi* in this apocryphal work in light of this Arabic translation.

**Palabras Clave:** Apócrifos. Nuevo Testamento. Apocalipsis de la Virgen. Crítica textual. Crítica literaria.

**Key Words:** Apocrypha. New Testament. Virgin’s Apocalypse. Textual criticism. Literary criticism.



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### Introduction

The body of literature that is known as the ‘Apocalypses of Mary’ demonstrates a considerable degree of variety and dissemination. As R. Bauckham, in a brief, quite recent brief study of this literature, has rightly observed: “they are above the most neglected apocalypses” in spite of their influence and popularity.<sup>1</sup> The texts that circulate in Late Antiquity and in Middle Ages under the name of the Virgin Mary describe primarily a tour of the Virgin Mary through the hell and occasionally through heaven and paradise. At times they also include a visit to God’s throne. Their popularity is closely connected to the role and growing importance of Mary in Late Antiquity and for Eastern Christianity. It is characteristic that while Mary is shown the punishments of hell, she then intercedes for the sinners and pleads her son for mercy. The intermediary, compassionate role of the Virgin Mary is accentuated in these writings. As it will be shown below these apocalypses might belong to one the earliest textual pieces of evidence of this popular portrayal of Mary.

As it is well known, Apocalypses of Mary circulated in several languages. R. Bauckham distinguishes four types, which belong roughly to different linguistic families. The first type refers to the Greek apocalypse of Mary, which focuses on the description of hell and which has been hugely popular and influential in Byzantium since the early Middle Ages. The second type is the Ethiopic apocalypse, which survives only in Ethiopic and deals more or less with the same themes. The third one is dubbed the *Obsequies* apocalypse and is related to the *Transitus Mariae* literature, while the fourth one belongs also to the *Transitus Mariae* literary corpus and it is known as the ‘Six Books Apocalypse’, because it was included in the last part of the five or six books of a *Transitus Mariae* text, called usually the ‘Six Books Apocryphon’. This last category is the focus of the present article.

Although it is important to analyse this text in the context of the apocalyptic literature of a similar eschatological focus,<sup>2</sup> it should be kept in mind that these

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<sup>1</sup> R. BAUCKHAM, “The Four Apocalypses of the Virgin Mary”, in IDEM, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, «Supplements to Novum Testamentum» 93 (Leiden: Brill 1998), p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> See on some interesting considerations of this genre in early Christian apocrypha, F. Crawford BURKITT, *Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, «The Schweich Lectures» (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), pp. 44-50.

texts are included in *Transitus Mariae* texts, even if they have almost the form of an appendix. As such, they have received little scholarly attention. Consequently, the literary context of this apocalypse refers to a textual tradition that concentrates on the events around the dormition and the assumption of the Virgin Mary.<sup>3</sup>

The Six Books are transmitted in Syriac, Arabic and Ethiopic. It is called the 'Six Books', because of the division of the narrative in six books, although in some version we have a division in five books (see below). The fifth book contains the beginning of the apocalypse of Mary, which narrates the visit to Paradise, while the sixth book brings the apocalypse into conclusion with the description of the visit to the hell. This division into six books is considered to be very early, and it can be practically found in all the manuscripts, and certainly in all those manuscripts, which contain the complete text. Alternatively, the text is also known as 'Pseudo-James', due to its pseudepigraphical attribution to James, the bishop of Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

The Six Books are known mainly from two different editions by A. Smith Lewis and by W. Wright, which are respectively based on two different manuscripts.<sup>5</sup> Smith Lewis's text preserves the longer version, which describes a more extensive cosmic tour. The Syriac text that we have in its present form has influenced the Arabic and the Ethiopic versions. The Syriac, which is the earliest version, does not present, however, the immediate *Vorlage* for the Arabic and the Ethiopic translation. The various linguistic and textual variants demonstrate that there have been different versions circulating in antiquity, which attest to a lasting popularity of the text. Furthermore, the various versions of the Six Books narrative may indicate that they do not derive from a certain '*Urtext*'. St. Shoemaker, even

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<sup>3</sup> On a survey of history and texts of the *Dormitio* and *Transitus* tradition, see José María BOVER, *La Asunción de María. Estudio teológico histórico sobre la Asunción corporal de la Virgen a los cielos*, en colaboración con José Antonio de Aldama y Francisco de P. Sola, «Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos» (Madrid: Editorial Católica, S.A., 1947), pp. 97-196 and 304-391. See also St. J. SHOEMAKER, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* «Oxford Early Christian Studies» (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. pp. 33ff.

<sup>4</sup> See S. Cl. MIMOUNI, *Dormition et assumption d Marie: histoire des traditions anciennes* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1994), p. 93.

<sup>5</sup> See Anton BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluß der christlich-palästinensischen Texte* (Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Webers, 1922, reed. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), pp. 98-99.

suggests that: “it would seem more likely that we are dealing with a relatively free tradition that had not crystallized yet into one particular form or another.”<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the Syriac manuscripts that are published by Wright and Smith Lewis, there exist also numerous fragments,<sup>7</sup> some of which have been used by A. Smith Lewis for the reconstruction of the longer and more complete Syriac version.<sup>8</sup> Characteristically, the earliest manuscript evidence was found in an Arabic palimpsest from the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century. The Syriac manuscript is dated on palaeographic grounds to the 5<sup>th</sup> century approximately.<sup>9</sup> It is characteristic that this Syriac manuscript contains as well the *Protevangelium Jacobi* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. The inclusion of the *Protevangelium Jacobi*, which is also pseudepigraphically attributed to James is conclusive for the development of a scriptural tradition dedicated to the life-cycle of the Virgin Mary.

The preface to the Six Books narrates the legendary discovery of the book. According to this story, the book was discovered in Ephesus, in the house of St. John, who handed it over with certain instructions to a group of pious men, who went there, looking for it. Most scholars admit certain veracity in some of the details that are imparted in the preface. According to the preface, James, bishop of Jerusalem, wrote with his own hands in this volume that in the year 345 of the era of the Seleucides (that is 33 or 34 CE), our Holy Mother departed from this world. Even if the attribution to James reflects pseudepigraphical topoi that are employed in order to convey apostolic authority and ancient authenticity to the writing, the Jerusalemite origin may contain some grain of truth.

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<sup>6</sup> St. SHOEMAKER, *Ancient traditions*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ignatius Aphram I BARSOUM, *The Scattered Pearls: A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, translated and edited by Matti Moosa, with a Foreword by Cyril Aphrem Karim (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003, 2nd rev. ed.), pp. 51-52.

<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive list of the manuscripts see S. Cl. MIMOUNI, *Dormition et assumption*, p. 91, note 64.

<sup>9</sup> MIMOUNI maintains that the oldest manuscript is preserved in the British Library in London and it is dated to the second half of the sixth century (*Dormition et assumption*, p. 91f.), while SHOEMAKER thinks that: “Age of manuscripts secures a date of the early fifth century at the absolute latest, but a number of features identify a likely origin by the second half of the fourth century if not even earlier” (*Ancient Traditions*, p. 4). R. BAUCKHAM thinks that the apocalypse “in its present form probably dates from the fifth century” (“The Four Apocalypses of the Virgin Mary”, in IDEM, *The Fate of The Dead*, p. 347).

The preface reveals further that the book was translated from Greek into Syriac in Ephesus. The existence of a Greek original, which is today lost, is accepted by most scholars. St. Shoemaker even declares that: "The explicit identification of a Greek source for these traditions more or less obviates the question of their original language."<sup>10</sup> However, the preface adds that the text was extant in the three main languages of the Roman Empire in general and of Christianity in particular, namely Hebrew, Latin and Greek. This motif stresses the importance and popularity of the writing, even if its historicity is questionable. However, it complicates the issue of the actual original language of the text.

Regarding the textual history of early Christian literature in general, Hebrew and Latin can be easily ruled out as potential candidates. St. Shoemaker observes, though, quite rightly, that a translation into Syriac would have made more sense from a Hebrew original than from a Greek text. Accordingly, he maintains that: "the privileging of Greek as the source from which one would translate if given a choice also says something about the linguistic milieu in which these traditions first came to light."<sup>11</sup> To this day, however, a comprehensive philological study of the Six Books, which could have shed more light on the actual linguistic background of the Syriac text, is lacking. Accordingly, Syriac as the original language of the composition remains an option, even if not the most probable one. It should be noted, that while there are several writings in Syriac literature regarding the end of the world, afterlife and the Last Judgment, original heavenly tours are quite rare.<sup>12</sup> We find, however, numerous Syriac translations of

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<sup>10</sup> *Ancient Traditions*, p. 54. On these grounds, St. SHOEMAKER argues, further, that "since these traditions are extant in the 5th cent. Syriac translations that were made from an earlier Greek version, we can be relatively safe in identifying the *terminus ante quem* in the early 5th cent." (*Ancient Traditions*, p. 57).

<sup>11</sup> *Ancient Traditions*, p. 55 and further: "the transmission of these traditions in different versions and languages presents a substantial number of variants that are best explained by a Greek original lying behind the various extant versions".

<sup>12</sup> See I. ORTIZ DE URBINA, "Le paradis eschatologique d'après saint Ephrem", *OCP* 21 (1955), pp. 467-472; G. WIDEGREN, "The Fate of the Soul after Death", *Orientalia Suecana* 9 (1960), pp. 102-106; P. FEGHALI, "La descente aux enfers dans la tradition syriaque", *ParOr* XV (1988-89), pp. 127-141; J. TEIXIDOR, "Muerte, Cielo y Seol en San Efrén", *OCP* 27 (1961), pp. 82-114.

apocalyptic works of an eschatological focus from other languages, most usually Greek.<sup>13</sup>

The probability of a Greek original version gave cause to various speculations on textual interdependences. Major commonalities have been observed, in particular, with a *Dormitio* text, known as *The Account of St. John the Theologian of the Dormition of the Holy Mother of God*.<sup>14</sup> It was suggested that the Six Books were a free translation of this pseudepigraphical *Dormition* story, with the addition of certain narrative elements, which would have been peculiar to Syriac lore and literature.<sup>15</sup> Further, it was observed that Pseudo-John presented a summarizing version of a lost Greek text, which served as the *Vorlage* for the Syriac Six Books.<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that while the Syriac *Dormitio* is attributed to James, the Arabic *Dormitio* is attributed to John. This pseudepigraphical detail might indeed indicate that the Arabic version is based on a lost Syriac translation of the Greek *Dormitio* by Pseudo-John.<sup>17</sup> The Syriac Six Books tradition, as it is transmitted to us, would have attributed the text to James, in order to adapt it to the already existing and widely popular pseudo-James writings dealing with Mary's life, as noted above. Another hypothesis maintains that, the Greek *Dormitio* of Pseudo-John would be a summary of an older text which would be represented by the Syriac *Dormitio* stories (the Five and the Six books).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See A. DESREUMAUX, "La Place des Textes Apocryphes dans la Littérature Syriaque", *ParOr* 20 (1995), pp. 61-72.

<sup>14</sup> The text exists in more than 100 Greek manuscripts, while we have additionally are also Latin, Georgian, Church Slavonic and Arabic versions. It is dated in the late fifth or early sixth century. According to St. SHOEMAKER: "In terms of its contents this early Greek version is very close to the Six Books traditions, but its narrative is significantly condensed" (*Ancient traditions*, p. 51).

<sup>15</sup> See M. JUGIE, *La Mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte-Vierge. Étude historico-doctrinale*, «Studi e Testi» 114 (Vatican City: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), p. 121.

<sup>16</sup> See M. VAN ESBROECK, "Les texts littéraires sur l'Assomption avant le Xe siècle", in Fr. BOVON (ed.), *Les actes apocryphes des apôtres*, «Publications de la Faculté de Théologie de l'Université de Genève» 4 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), pp. 265-285, esp. p. 273. MIMOUNI thinks, however, that "... il n'est pas du tout évident que le Pseudo-Jean soit le document ayant servi de canevas au Pseudo-Jacques. Aussi est-il préférable de considérer ces deux textes indépendamment l'un de l'autre mais sans oublier, bien entendu, qu'ils entretiennent certains rapports de dépendance" (*Dormition et Assomption*, p. 95).

<sup>17</sup> See S. Cl. MIMOUNI, *Dormition et Assomption*, p. 215.

<sup>18</sup> See S. Cl. MIMOUNI, *Dormition et Assomption*, p. 103. As Mimouni further adds: "Si l'on considère que la *Dormitio* arabe est une traduction de la *Dormitio* syriaque, il n'est pas impossible

The literary relationship to this Greek *Dormition* story is a possibility that we should keep in mind. The Dormition story by St. John the Theologian contains a passage towards the conclusion of the writing, which indicates an apocalyptic outlook that might have been developed further in other, possibly later versions. It reads as follows: “the Holy Mother of God looked up, and saw in Him a glory which it is impossible for the mouth of man to speak of, or to perceive. And the Lord remained beside her, saying: Behold, from now on your venerable body will be transferred to paradise, and your holy soul to the heavens, to the treasures of my Father in exceeding brightness, where there is peace and joy of the holy angels,— and other things beyond.”<sup>19</sup> As we can observe, the paradise, which is reserved for the body of the Virgin and the heavens, ‘the treasures of the Father’, where the soul will ultimately go, are not identical places. In the Six Books apocalypse that will follow in our analysis here, Mary is taken by the Lord from Paradise to the ‘upper heavens’ of ‘luminous things’.<sup>20</sup>

There exist further indications that the apocalyptic parts belonged to the earliest versions of the *Transitio* or *Dormitio Mariae* texts. In the Latin *Transitus* tradition, we find also an apocalypse as an integral part. M. Clayton notes that: “in the Latin texts, apart from the isolated exceptions, the apocalypse element has become detached from the apocryphon”.<sup>21</sup> Characteristically, a short apocalyptic passage can be found in a manuscript of the Latin *Transitus* [W (CANT 114), Paris BN lat. 3550], which is, however, hardly legible, so we cannot tell if it is related to the apocalyptic part of the in the Six Books. Mimouni notes, though, that this Latin

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qu’elle ait été réactualisée à partir de la Dormitio grecque du Pseudo-Jean. Ainsi pourraient s’expliquer les différences entre l’arabe et le syriaque et les rapprochements entre l’arabe et le grec.” (*Dormition et Assomption*, p. 215).

<sup>19</sup> “καὶ ἀναβλέψασα ἡ ἅγια τοῦ θεοῦ μήτηρ ἴδεν δόξαν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἣν στόμα ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἐξὸν λαλῆσαι ἢ καταλαβεῖν. ὁ δὲ Κύριος πρὸς αὐτὴν ἔμεινεν λέγων· ἰδοὺ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἔσται τὸ τίμιον σου σῶμα μετατιθέμενον ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ ἡ δὲ ἅγια σου ψυχὴ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἐν τοῖς θησαυροῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐν ὑπερχούσῃ φανότητι, ἔνθα εἰρήνη καὶ εὐφροσύνη ἁγίων ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐπέκεινα” in: Konstantine VON TISCHENDORF, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (Lipsiae: Mendelssohn 1876), pp. 107-108.

<sup>20</sup> See E. COTHENET, “Traditions bibliques et apocalyptiques dans les recits anciens de la dormition”, in IDEM ET AL., *Marie dans les récits apocryphes chrétiens*, Tome I. «Bulletin de la Société Française d’Études Mariales» (Paris: Mediaspaul, 2004), pp. 155-175.

<sup>21</sup> See M. CLAYTON, “The Transitus Mariae: The Tradition and its Origins”, *Apocrypha* 10 (1999), pp. 74-98, esp. p. 92.

text is the translation from a Greek original text that has not been preserved. It is possible, thus, that there was an ancient Greek *Transitus* tradition which incorporated an apocalyptic part.<sup>22</sup> Considering that the Syriac manuscripts of the Six Books attest to the earliest texts of the entire *Transitus Mariae* tradition, the apocalyptic parts must be quite old and this would place the apocalypses among the earliest Christian writings of this kind.

As noted above though, in spite of the fact that the Syriac versions are the oldest known texts, they do not preserve the original version. Accordingly, it is not clear if the concluding apocalyptic part forms part of the original work or if they are a later attachment. According to R. Bauckham though, the apocalypses were known only as parts of the *Transitus Mariae* and he stresses that: ‘they originated as such and never existed as independent works’.<sup>23</sup> Following this assumption, the origin and dating of the apocalyptic parts would depend on the origin and the dating of the entire work.

The development of the legendary traditions (or mere references in different legendary cycles)<sup>24</sup> and homiletic materials<sup>25</sup> around the death and transition of the Virgin Mary is associated with the development of the veneration of the Virgin Mary and with her growing importance for popular piety.<sup>26</sup> As it is well known, the

<sup>22</sup> S. Cl. MIMOUNI, “Les Apocalypses de la Vierge. Etat de la Question”, *Apocrypha* 4 (1993), pp. 101-112, esp. p. 109.

<sup>23</sup> *The Fate of the Dead*, p. 360.

<sup>24</sup> See for instance an Arabic text (16th c. AD) rendered from a Syriac Vorlage, W. Scott WATSON, “A Syriac-Arabic Narrative of Miracles of Jesus”, *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 16:1 (1899), p. 42, line 16, or the fragment from a ‘sermon’ in Coptic, W.E. CRUM, *Theological texts from Coptic papyri*, with an appendix upon the Arabic and Coptic versions of the Life of Pachomius, «Anécdota Oxoniensia» Semitic Series– Part XII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 17-18.

<sup>25</sup> See James W. Pollock, “Two Christian Arabic Manuscripts in the Bryn Mawr Library”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110:2 (1990), p. 331; and Mark SHERIDAN, “A homily on the death of the Virgin Mary attributed to Evodius of Rome”, in Mat IMMERZEEL & Jacques VAN DER VLIET (eds.), *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August – 2 September 2000* (Leuven – Paris – Dudley, Ma: Peeters, 2004), I, pp. 393-405.

<sup>26</sup> See St. BENKO, *The Virgin Goddess. Studies on Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology*, «Studies in the History of Religions» 59 (Leiden: Brill, 1993); A. CAMERON, “The early cult of the Virgin”, M. VASSILAKI (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Milan: Skira, 2000), pp. 3-15; A. CAMERON, “The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Religious Development and Myth-Making”, in R. N. SWANSON (ed.), *The Church and Mary*, «Studies in Church History»



Council of Ephesus has recognized Mary as *Theotokos* in 431. Legendary stories that are dedicated to Mary's life-cycle, such as the *Protevangelium Jacobi* appear already in the late second century, long before the establishment of church feasts and buildings in Virgin Mary's honour. E. Cothenet argues that the dissemination of stories around Mary's dormition, such as the one found in Pseudo-St. John the Theologian, which stresses that Mary's body has been transferred to Paradise, has prevented a development of cult of Mary's relics, similar to the one we can observe with the relics of the martyrs from the 4th century on.<sup>27</sup>

The cult around Virgin Mary becomes prominent in the fifth century, although there are indications that it was quite strong already in the late fourth century. Shoemaker points out that: "The earliest narratives of the Virgin's *Dormitio* also date to the later fourth century at the latest, bearing witness to a fully developed Marian piety already by this time."<sup>28</sup>

Considering the milieu of origin, Jerusalem is mentioned as the place where the Six Books were composed, according to the preface to the Six Books<sup>29</sup> Palestine would have been indeed a possible place of provenance, although Egypt, where the veneration of Mary was particularly important from an early period should be taken into consideration as well.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, the preface attests perhaps also to the popularity of those writing in Asia Minor, where the book was supposed to be translated.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, a monophysite milieu of origin in Justinian's era has also

39 (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 1-21. Chr. MAUNDER (ed.), *The Origins of the Cult of Mary* (New York: Continuum Press, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Traditions bibliques, p. 157; cf. P. BROWN, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, «The Haskell Lectures on History of Religions», N.S. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> St. SHOEMAKER, "Epiphanius of Salamis, the Kollyridians, and the Early Dormition Narratives: The Cult of Virgin in the Fourth Century", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16:3 (2008), pp. 369-399; p. 375. Shoemaker even argues quite boldly that Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, was acquainted with the Six Books apocryphon which must have circulated in Palestine 'already by the middle of the fourth century' ("Epiphanius of Salamis", see esp. p. 384). This assumption brings the composition of the Six Books to a quite early dating.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. St. SHOEMAKER, *Ancient Traditions*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> See G. GIAMBERARDINI, *Il culto mariano in Egitto*, «Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Analecta» 6 (Jerusalem: Fransiscan Printing Press, 1975), esp. vol. I, pp. 95ff.

<sup>31</sup> Although Ephesus is associated with Mary's death and tomb, this tradition is quite late and it is only attested after the ninth century, see St. SHOEMAKER, *Ancient Traditions*, p. 75.

been suggested.<sup>32</sup> Other scholars have postulated a Jewish-Christian provenance due to the relationship of the text to other apocalyptic works of a possible Jewish-Christian origin that were dedicated to the apostles, such as the Apocalypses of Peter and of Paul. This theory would allow a dating as early as the beginning of the third century.<sup>33</sup>

The close resemblance with heavenly tours noted by R. Bauckham, since it is found in writings such as the Testament of Levi, 2 Enoch and 3 Baruch points to a literary dependence on Jewish apocalyptic tours of heavens. In a way, according to Bauckham the development of a cosmic tour attached to the *Transitus Mariae* may be explained as ‘analogous to the translation of Enoch and Elijah’, who also experienced a cosmic tour. Accordingly, the apocalypses that were attributed to Enoch and to Elijah served if not as a model, at least as an inspiration for the Apocalypse of Mary.

R. Bauckham argues for an early date of the Six Books apocalypse mainly on the basis of its description of hell and paradise. According to our text, the dead are believed to be in an intermediary state before entering the already prepared paradise or hell on Judgment Day.<sup>34</sup> This notion reflects older eschatological beliefs, which were replaced later by ideas of paradise and hell as already inhabited by the righteous ones and the sinners respectively. Bauckham admits, however, that this tradition lived on parallel to the later notions of paradise and hell in non-apocalyptic literature until the fifth century. As Shoemaker observes: “this idea persists in Byzantine theological literature, where it is in fact the predominant view. In the light of the persistence of this belief, we cannot eliminate the possibility that these ideas have influenced the Six Books Apocalypse at a later time”.<sup>35</sup>

The following analysis of an early Arabic version intends to help to illuminate questions of provenance and dating as well as of the religious historical background of the Six Books apocalypse.

<sup>32</sup> S. Cl. MIMOUNI, *Dormition et assumption*, p. 100.

<sup>33</sup> See E. COTHENET, “Marie dans les récits apocryphes de l’Assomption”, in H. DU MANOIR, *Maria: études sur la Sainte Vierge*, 6 vols (Paris: Beauchesne, 1961), pp. 122ff. Cf. S. C. MIMOUNI, “La tradition littéraire syriaque de l’histoire de la dormition et de l’assomption de Marie”, *ParOr XV* (1998-99), pp. 143-168; see esp. pp. 152-153.

<sup>34</sup> R. BAUCKHAM, “Early Jewish Visions of Hell”, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 41 (1990), pp. 355-385, see esp. pp. 361ff.

<sup>35</sup> *Ancient traditions*, p. 56.

### 1. Edition and translation of the “Six Books Apocalypse of the Virgin” (ApVir[ar]) according to the Vat. Ar. 698

As noted above, the ‘Six Books Apocalypse of the Virgin’ appears at the end of the ‘Assumption of Mary’. The text survives in different MSS, both in Syriac<sup>36</sup> and in Ethiopic,<sup>37</sup> but also in Arabic. Bauckham, whom is debt an excellent first approach to the textual relations between the various texts, used editions based on several MSS for both the Syriac and Ethiopic texts, whereas he restricted the Arabic tradition to a late MS copied in Egypt in 1801.<sup>38</sup>

However, we have also other Arabic MSS with interesting variants regarding Enger’s text.<sup>39</sup> This is the case of an earlier MS from the Vatican Library known as Vat. Ar. 698, dated in 1371,<sup>40</sup> which is the *Transitus* attributed to St John the Theologian and is also akin to the Syriac version.

The text of the ‘Apocalypse of the Virgin’ included in the aforementioned Arabic MS runs as follows:<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> William WRIGHT, “The Departure of my Lady Mary from the World”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 6 (1865), pp. 417-488, and 7 (1865), pp. 110-160; Ernest A. Wallis BUDGE, *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ with the Jews of Tiberias made to mock at*, «Luzac’s Semitic Text and Translation Series» 4-5 (London: Luzac, 1899), which an incomplete text; Agnes Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae*, with texts from the Septuagint, The Corân, The Peshitta, and from Syriac Hymn in a Syro-Arabic Palimpsest of the Fifth and Other Centuries, with an Appendix of Palestinian Syriac Texts from the Taylor-Schechter Collection «Studia Sinaitica» XI (London – Cambridge: C. J. Clay and Sons – Cambridge University Press, 1902).

<sup>37</sup> *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. And Latin translation by M. CHAÎNE, «CSCO» 39-40, *Scriptores Aethiopici* 22-23 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1955 = Rome: de Luigi, 1909), pp. 45-48 (Ethiopic) and pp. 39-41 (Latin).

<sup>38</sup> M. ENGER, *Aḥbār Yūḥannā al-Sillīḥ fī naqlat Umm al-Masīḥ, id est Ioannis Apostoli de Transitu Beatae Mariae Virginis Liber* (Eberfeld: Friedrichs, 1854), pp. 2-107.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Michel VAN ESBROECK, “Les textes littéraires sur l’Assomption avant le X<sup>ème</sup> siècle”, in F. BOVON *et alii* (eds.), *Les Actes Apocryphorum des Apôtres* (Genève, 1981), p. 269; G. GEERARD (ed.), *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), pp. 89-90.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Georg GRAF, *GCAL*, I, p. 251.

<sup>41</sup> An edition of the whole text of the ‘Transitus’ is included in Pilar GONZÁLEZ CASADO’s unpublished Ph.D.: *Las relaciones lingüísticas entre el siríaco y el árabe en textos religiosos árabes cristianos*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Departamento de Estudios Hebreos y Arameos, Universidad Complutense, 2000), I, pp. 336-373; Spanish translation in II, pp. 528-561 and in P. GONZÁLEZ CASADO, *La dormición de la Virgen. Cinco relatos árabes* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2002), pp. 172-210. In the present edition of the ‘Six Books Apocalypse of the Virgin’ fragment we have

81<sup>7</sup>/ السفر الرابع فأما السيِّدة مرمرم لما وضعت إلى الفردوس أتاها السيِّد مع جماعة السمايين لأنَّ الفردوس أساسه في الأرض حائطه إلى السماء وتخرج منه أربعة أثمار جيحان سيحان ودجلة والفرات ولما كان الطوفان على الأرض لم يذكره الربّ بطلع إلى الفردوس المقدّس فقال السيِّد لمرمرم المباركة انهضى وأنظري /81<sup>8</sup>/ السبح الذي صرّتي إليه فقامت ونظرت إلى سبح عظيم لا تستطيع أعين أحد من البشر النظر إليه وإذا أخنوخ وموسى وإيليا وجميع الأنبياء والأباء والرسل المختارين قد أتوا وسجدوا يدي الربّ وقدّام السيِّدة واعتزلوا فقال الربّ لها انظري الخيرات الذي وعدت بها الصالحين ورفعت عينها ونظرت مضلّات الصالحين من نور وهي بمية حسنة ونظرت مجالس الشهداء وأكلتهم من نور وهي قيام أحسن ما يكون ونظرت إلى الأشجار الحسنة طيبة الرائحة تفوح منها روائح زكية لا توصف وتناول السيِّد من تلك الأثمار وناول السيِّدة لكي تأكل من أثمار الفردوس الفاخرة وقال لها اصعدي حتّى تنظري السموات العالية وطلعت ونظرت إلى السماء الأوّل والثانية والثالثة وإذا في الثالثة بيت المقدّس السمايَّة فوق هذه الأرضيَّة فرأت شيئاً عجيباً وسبّحت الله الخالق على ما صنعه في العلو من الأشياء /82<sup>9</sup>/ النورانيَّة التي لا تحد لها صفة وما صنعه في السفلى من الأشياء الحسنة الثقيلة المحدودة لصفة ومكان كلِّما عمل بحكمة متقنة وأمر السيِّد الشمس فقامت في باب السماء ورأسها الآخر في قبة الفردوس والسيِّد جالس على مركبة النور فوق الشمس ونظرت إلى خزائن من نور فيها الجليد والتلج والبرد والمطر والنداء والبرق والرعد وأشياء ذلك ونظرت إلى المواضع البهيَّة النورانيَّة لكي يقفون فيها الناس يصلون ونظرت إلى أجناد الملائكة مبسوطين الأجنحة وأبصارهم شاخصة إلى فوق لا يطلون من التسبيح وهم قائلين قدّوس

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amended some mistakes found in the aforementioned edition. For the 'linguistic register' exhibited in this fragment, see Joshua BLAU, GCA.

قدّوس قدّوس الربّ الصباووت ونظرت إلى إثني عشر حائط من نور وفيها إثني عشر باب عليها أسماء التلاميذ وعلى كلّ باب حافظاً له وهم يسبّحون ونظرت باب كبير لبيت المقدّس السماويّة عليها أسماء الصالحين إبراهيم وإسحق ويعقوب وموسى وداود وجميع الأباء من آدم إلى داود /82<sup>v</sup>/ ودخلت الباب الأوّل فسجدت لها الملائكة وأعطوها الطوبا ودخلت الباب الثاني فلقتها صلوات الشاروييم ودخلت الباب الثالث فلقتها صلوات السارافيم ودخلت الباب الرابع فسجدت لها ربوات الملائكة ودخلت الباب الخامس فسبّح قدّامها الرعد والبرق ودخلت الباب السادس فصاحت الملائكة قدّامها قدّوس قدّوس قدّوس الربّ الصباووت السلام والنعمة لك الربّ معك مباركة أنت في النساء ومبارك المولود منك فدخلت الباب السابع فسجدت قدّامها النار فدخلت الباب الثامن فسجدت قدّامها المطر والنداء ودخلت الباب التاسع فسجدت لها جبرائيل وميكائيل ودخلت الباب العاشر فسجدت لها كلّ الأنوار من الكواكب الشمس والقمر وغير ذلك ودخلت الباب الحادي عشر فسجدت لها وسبّح أرواح التلاميذ والأباء والأنبياء والحباء والصالحين ودخلت الباب الثاني عشر فنظرت المولود منها /83<sup>f</sup>/ في حلّة المجد على كرسيّ النور فسجدت السيّدة لعظمه قدرته الآب والابن والروح القدس ولما نظرت بيت المقدّس العليا فمن الهيبة والوقار والنور تاه عقلها فأخذ السيّد بيدها وأورها السرائر الخفيّة ودخائر الكنيسة المقدّسة المنسوبة وأشياء لا تستطيع الأبصار النظر إليها ولا الآذان السماع لها ولا الألسن النطق بخبرها ولا تخطر على قلب بشر الذي هو معدّ للمؤمنين المحبّين في اليوم الآخر يورثهم إياه بالفرح ويتنعموا متلذّدين فيه أبدا لا زوال له عنهم ثمّ أنّه مضى بها إلى منتهر الخلائق وقال لها ها هنا مسكن أحنوخ حيث يصلّي السفر الخامس ثمّ أنّ السيّدة رفعت نظرها فأبصرت عالم عظيمه (*sic!*) مضين ومظلات ليس لها عدد ومن المظلة والمظلة بخور مرتفع وأبواق تصرخ فيها وجماعة قيام بين تلك المظلات يبصرون تلك

النعيم ويسبّحون فقالت السيّدة ربّي وإلاهي من هم هؤلاء الوقوف فقال لها هذه مظاهرات الأبرار والصالحين وهو (*sic!*) وقوف بينها /83<sup>v</sup>/ وهذا النور لكرامتهم عندي وفي اليوم الآخر يبصرون تحقيق الحسنات والخيرات وهم بما متلذّدون بفرح أعظم من هذا إذا رجعت أرواحهم إلى الجسادهم دائم بلا زوال وإذا موضع مظلم جدّا ودخان كثير يصعد منه وتخرج له رائحة زفرة مثل الكبريت وأعظم ونار عظيمة تلهب وحلق كثير قيام مقابلة وهم سيكون ويصيحون فقالت السيّدة ربّي وإلاهي ما هؤلاء القيام في ظلمة النار الملتهبة فقال هذا موضع سقع جهنّم يفتح وهي تعدّ للخطأة وهم قيام عندها إلى اليوم الآخر إذا رجعت أرواحهم إلى أجسادهم يتألّمون بما بحزن شديداً بجسرات مولة محرقة وندامة على ما فاتهم وفكر دائم مثل الدود الذي لا يموت محترقين دائماً لا زوال له عنهم حيث خالفوا وصاياهم وكفروا بناسوتي تمونوا بلاهوتي فأما السيّدة لما سمعت سبح الصالحين فرحت جدّا ولما رأت ما يعدّ للخطأة فحزنت جدّا وطلبت إلى السيّد أن يرحم الخطأة /84<sup>f</sup>/ ويخفّف عنهم لأن طبيعة الإنسان ضعيفة فوعدها بذلك ثمّ أخذ بيدها وردّها إلى الفردوس مع جميع القديسين الصالحين المباركين إلى اليوم الآخر

## TRANSLATION

/81<sup>f</sup>/ *Book fourth*

«As regards the Lady St Mary, when she was placed in Paradise, the Lord came to her with the crowd of the heavenly beings, because the Paradise has its foundations in the earth and its walls heads for heaven. Four rivers run from it: the Gihon, the Pishon, the Tigris and the Euphrates.<sup>42</sup> When the flood occurred on the earth the Lord did not remember to take [them] up to the holy Paradise. And the Lord said to the Blessed St Mary:

— “Rise and see /81<sup>v</sup>/ the glory up to which you have arrived”.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Gn 2:10-14.

She rose and saw such a great glory that no human eyes can look at it. Enoch, Moses, Elijah and all the prophets, the patriarchs and the chosen apostles came and prostrated before the Lord and the Lady and they left. The Lord said her:

— “See the good things that were promised to the just”.

She raised her eyes and looked on mansions of light of the just. They were shining and beautiful. She saw the banqueting halls of the martyrs and their crowns of light, of which there is no better execution. She saw the lovely and aromatic trees which wafted pure and indescribable perfumes from them. The Lord took those fruits and offered them to the Lady for she eats the delicious fruits of the Paradise.<sup>43</sup> And He said her:

— “Ascend for you see the upper heavens”.

She ascended and saw the first heaven, the second and the third. The heavenly Jerusalem was in the third, over this ground.<sup>44</sup> She saw a wonderful thing and she glorified God the Creator for the luminous things He have made on the high /82<sup>7</sup>, which cannot be described, and for the good and significant things He did underneath, which cannot be described. All was done by His perfect wisdom. The Lord ordered the sun to rise. And the sun rose through heaven’s door, whereas its upper part<sup>45</sup> was in the dome of the Paradise,<sup>46</sup> and the Lord sat in a chariot of light over the sun. She saw the storehouses of light in which the ice, the snow, the cold, the rain, the dew, the lightning, the thunder and similar things were. She saw beautiful and bright places for the people to pray standing up there. She saw the armies of the angels – with their extended wings and with their eyes fixed on the high – who do not cease of glorifying saying:

— “Holy, holy, holy the Lord Sebaoth!”<sup>47</sup>

She saw twelve walls of light with twelve gates with the names of the disciples on them; and every gate has a guardian, and they glorify.<sup>48</sup> She saw a big gate of the heavenly Jerusalem in which the names of the just were [engraved]:

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Gn 2:9; Ez 47:12; Rev 2:7; 22:14.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Rev 21.

<sup>45</sup> Lit. “its other head”.

<sup>46</sup> On *qubbat al-firdaws*, see Juan Pedro MONFERRER-SALA, “Sacred readings, lexicographic soundings. Cosmology, men, asses and gods in the Semitic Orient”, in J.P. MONFERRER-SALA & Ángel URBÁN (eds.), *Sacred text. Explorations in lexicography*, forthcoming.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Is 6:3.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ap 21:12.

Abraham,<sup>49</sup> Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and all the patriarchs from Adam up to Moses. /82<sup>v</sup>/ She entered the first gate and the angels prostrated before her and gave her the beatitude. She entered the second gate and cherubs' prayers received her. She entered the third gate and seraphs' prayers received her. She entered the fourth gate and the archangels kneeled before her. She entered the fifth gate and the thunder and the lightning glorified before her. She entered the sixth gate and the angels cried before her:

— “Holy, holy, holy the Lord Sebaoth!<sup>50</sup> Peace and grace for you, the Lord is with you!”<sup>51</sup> Blessed are you among women, and blessed who is born of you!”<sup>52</sup>

She entered the seventh gate and the fire prostrated before her. She entered the eighth gate and the rain and the dew kneeled before her. She entered the ninth gate and Gabriel and Michael worshipped her. She entered the tenth gate and all the lights of the stars, the sun, the moon and the rest kneeled before her. She entered the eleventh gate and the spirits of the disciples, the patriarchs, the prophets, the good and the just prostrated before her and glorified her. She entered the twelfth gate and saw the one who was born of her in the robe of the glory on a throne of light /83<sup>f</sup>/. The Lady prostrated herself because the excellence of the power of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When she saw the upper Jerusalem, and the respect, the dignity and the light her mind became disturbed. The Lord took her hand and showed her the hidden mysteries and the treasure of the holy church, and things which eye had not seen nor ear heard and what had not entered into the heart of man, which are prepared for the beloved believers in the last day. They will inherit them with joy and enjoy them forever without losing them. Then, he went with her to the reserved [place] of the creatures and said to her:

— “Here is Enoch's dwelling, where he prays”.

#### *Book fifth*

The Lady lifted up her eyes and saw a great and bright world with innumerable tabernacles. Between one tabernacle and another, the incense was rising and the

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<sup>49</sup> For the Syriac form of the name Abraham in Syriac texts, see F. C. BURKITT, *The Syriac Forms of the New Testament Proper Names*, «Proceedings of the British Academy» V (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Is 6:3.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Lk 1:28.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Lk 1:42.



trumpets were sounding there, and a multitude standing between those tabernacles looked at that delight and they glorified God. And the Lady said:

— “My Lord, my God! who are those standing?”.

And He answered her:

— “These are the tabernacles of the pious and the just that are standing between them /83<sup>v</sup>/, and this light is for their honour on my side. In the last day, they will see the truth of the good acts and of the gifts, and they will enjoy them with happiness greater than this when their spirits return to their bodies forever”.

There was a very dark place, and a great smoke was going up from it, and a stinking smell, like the sulphur or stronger gave off, and a great fire was blazing. Many creatures were standing opposite [her] while they were crying and shouting. The Lady said:

— “My Lord, my God!, what are these standing in the darkness of the blazing fire?”.

And He answered:

— “This is a place of the Gehenna which smokes and is prepared for the sinners. They will stay in it until the last day, when their spirits return to their bodies. They writhe with a hard pain, with bereaved and burning groans, and they regret forever about they have not done thinking [about them], like the worms which do not die never get burned.<sup>53</sup> They were opponents to His commandments, denied my humanity and blasphemed against my divinity”.

When the Lady heard the glory of the just she was very glad. However, when she saw what was prepared for the sinners she was very sad and she besought the Lord to have mercy upon the sinners /84<sup>f</sup>/ and to relieve them, because the human nature is weak. And He promised her that. Then, He took her hand and send her back to the Paradise with all the just and blessed saints until the last day».

## 2. Textual analysis

The version of the ‘Six Books Apocalypse of Mary’ contained in MS Vat. Ar. 698 does not belong to the same textual family as the text included in MS Bonn or. 29,<sup>54</sup> as it is deduced from some interesting variants regarding Enger’s text. Since

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Mk 9:48; Is 51:8

<sup>54</sup> The same is true for the Ethiopic version, although it is relatively close to the Vatican Arabic 698, cf. R. BAUCKHAM, *Fate of the Dead*, p. 347.

Wright's remark was very much to the point that Bonn or. 29 is akin to the Syriac version, this is quite the same for the case of Vat. Ar. 698. According to Wright's own words:

The Arabic translation, on the other hand, presents so few differences, and of such a character, that we can have no hesitation in pronouncing it to have been made from a later redaction of the Syriac than ours. The frequent amplifications, the occasional abridgements, and, above all, the gross exaggerations, clearly betray the hand of the modern embellisher.<sup>55</sup>

Vat. Ar. 698 mainly exhibits two types of variants which we have classified below under two labels: a) variants, and b) omissions, both with regard to the Syriac text. Obviously, the minor variants offer no special interest for our study. However, major variants and omissions are relevant to establish not only the textual differences between Vat. Ar. 698 and Bonn or 29, but above all to specify the filiation with the Syriac text. Below, we are providing the aforementioned two groups of variants, focusing our comparative analysis on the last two.

A) VARIANTS WITH REGARD TO THE SYRIAC TEXT<sup>56</sup>

Bonn or. 29	Page	Vatican Arabic MS 698	Fol.	n°
فقال السيّد للسيّدة انظري إلى الخيرات التي أعددتها للصالحين ووعدتهم بها	88	فقال الربّ لها انظري الخيرات الذي وعدت بها الصالحين	81 <sup>v</sup>	1

<sup>55</sup> W. WRIGHT, "The Departure...", *Journal of Sacred Literature* 6 (1865), p. 417.

<sup>56</sup> Variants, like for instance *الصالحين والحياء والأنبياء والآباء والتلاميذ وأرواح التلاميذ والآباء والأنبياء والأخيار والصالحين* (Vat. ar. 698, fol. 82<sup>v</sup>), against *الصالحين* (Bonn or. 29, p. 92); *فمنظرت المولود منها في حلة المجد على كرسي النور* (Vat. ar. 698, fols. 82<sup>v</sup>-83<sup>r</sup>), against *قبة الفردوس* (Bonn or. 29, p. 92) or *فمنظرت المولود منها في جملة النور جالس على كرسي من نور* (Vat. ar. 698, fol. 83<sup>r</sup>) against *وسط الفردوس* (Bonn or. 29, p. 90) are not considered, since they are not attested in the Syriac text. Other instances not considered, such as *فسجدت السيّدة لعظمه قدرته* (Vat. ar. 698, fol. 83r), against *فسجدت لعظمه الآب والابن والروح القدس* (Bonn or. 29, p. 92), are due to the fact that the Arabic versions are different from the Syriac text.

ويفوح منها روائح	88	تفوح منها روائح زكية	81 <sup>v</sup>	2
فيها إثني عشر باب منها حافظ	90	وفيها إثني عشر باب عليها أسماء التلاميذ وعلى كل باب حافظا له وهم يسبحون	82 <sup>r</sup>	3
إبراهيم وإسحق ويعقوب وداود	90	إبراهيم وإسحق ويعقوب وموسى وداود	82 <sup>r</sup>	4
فسجد لها جبرائيل وميكائيل وسائر الملائكة	92	فسجد لها جبرائيل وميكائيل	82 <sup>v</sup>	5
هاهنا مسكن أخنوخ حيث يصلّي إلى دهر الدهرين آمين	92	هاهنا مسكن أخنوخ حيث يصلّي	83 <sup>r</sup>	6
فقالَت السيِّدة ربِّي وسيِّدي من هم أولائك الوقوف	94	فقالَت السيِّدة ربِّي وإلهي من هم هؤلاء الوقوف	83 <sup>r</sup>	7
وفي اليوم الآخر يتلذذون بما بفرح أفضل من هذا	94	وفي اليوم الآخر يبصرون تحقيق الحسنات والخيرات وهم بما متلذذون بفرح أعظم من هذا	83 <sup>v</sup>	8
وإذا سقع آخر مظلم جدًا	94	وإذا موضع مظلم جدًا	83 <sup>v</sup>	9
ونارا تلتهب فيه	94	ونار عظيمة تلهب	83 <sup>v</sup>	10

1) فقال الربّ لها انظري الخيرات الذي وعدت بها الصالحين (1) (“the Lord said her: «See the good things that I promised to the just»”),<sup>57</sup> which has been amplified by MS Bonn or. 29 in the redundant sentence فقال السيد للسيدة انظري إلى الخيرات التي أعددتها للصالحين ووعدتهم بها (2) (“Our Lord said to her: «To show thee the glory of my Father’s house, I am come to thee»”),<sup>58</sup> which is slightly amplified into فقال الربّ لها انظري إلى الخيرات التي أعددتها للصالحين ووعدتهم بها (3) (“and our Lord Jesus said to her: «To show thee the glory of my Father’s house I am come to thee”) in Wright’s text.<sup>59</sup>

2) وفيها اثني عشر باب عليها أسماء التلاميذ وعلى كل باب حافظا له وهم يسيحون (3) (“which wafted pure fragrances from them”),<sup>60</sup> which has been abbreviated in MS Bonn or. 29 into وفيها اثني عشر باب عليها أسماء التلاميذ وعلى كل باب حافظا له وهم يسيحون (4) (“and how sweet is their fragrance”),<sup>61</sup> which is amplified in Wright’s text like وفيها اثني عشر باب عليها أسماء التلاميذ وعلى كل باب حافظا له وهم يسيحون (5) (“and a sweet fragrance was wafted from branch to branch”).<sup>62</sup>

3) وفيها اثني عشر باب عليها أسماء التلاميذ وعلى كل باب حافظا له وهم يسيحون (3) (“... and there twelve gates, with the names of the disciples on them; and every gate has a guardian, and they glorify”),<sup>63</sup> abbreviated in MS Bonn or. 29 into وفيها اثني عشر باب عليها أسماء التلاميذ وعلى كل باب حافظا له وهم يسيحون (4) (“... and there twelve gates with a guardian in every one of them”), is the translation of Syriac وفيها اثني عشر باب عليها أسماء التلاميذ وعلى كل باب حافظا له وهم يسيحون (5) (“... and twelve gates,

<sup>57</sup> So in the Ethiopic version, cf. *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. and Latin translation by M. CHAÎNE, p. 45 (Ethiopic) p. 39 (Latin).

<sup>58</sup> A. Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae*, p. qz (Syriac) and 64 (English).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-h (Syriac) and 156 (English).

<sup>60</sup> The same in the Ethiopic version, cf. *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. and Latin translation by M. CHAÎNE, p. 45 (Ethiopic) p. 39 (Latin).

<sup>61</sup> A. Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae*, pp. qz (Syriac) and 65 (English).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-h (Syriac) and 156 (English).

<sup>63</sup> The same text in the Ethiopic version, cf. *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. and Latin translation by M. CHAÎNE, p. 46 (Ethiopic) p. 40 (Latin).



amen”),<sup>69</sup> represents a simplified and non-redundant syntactic rendition of Syriac ܡܢ ܗܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ [...] ܘܗܝܘܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ (“here is the place where Enoch dwells [...], and this is the place in which he prays”).<sup>70</sup>

7) فقالت السيِّدة ربِّي وإلهي من هم هؤلاء الوقوف (7) (“My Lord, my God! who are those standing?”)<sup>71</sup> does not fit exactly the Syriac ܡܢ ܗܝܘܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ (“my Lord, my master, what are these?”),<sup>72</sup> since Arabic *ilāhī* (“my God”) is a theological interpretation of Syriac *rabbūlī* (“my master”). MS Bonn or. 29 renders ܡܢ ܗܝܘܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ (“My Lord, my master!, who are those standing?”), where the text has combined the two religious technical terms *rabb* and *sayyid*. As is known, the meaning of both terms in Arabic is the same, “lord; master”. However, in Christian Arabic literature *rabb* – mostly, although not always, use to refer ‘God the Father’ – renders Syriac *moryā*,<sup>73</sup> whereas *sayyid* translates both *rabb* and *moryā* for alluding Christ (cf. Jn 13:13). It seems that the author of the version included in MS Vat. ar. 698 has used *ilāhī* in order to avoid the repetition of the word *sayyid*: *fa-qālat al-Sayyidah Rabbī wa Ilāhī* (Vat. ar 698) instead of *fa-qālat al-Sayyidah Rabbī wa-Sayyidī* (Bonn or. 29).

8) وفي اليوم الآخر يبصرون تحقيق الحسنات والخيرات وهم بما متلذذون بفرح أعظم من هذا (8) (“in the last day, they will see the truth of the good acts and of the gifts, and they will enjoy them with happiness greater than this”) represents a rewriting of Syriac ܘܦܝ ܝܘܡܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܡܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ (“and from a distance they behold their happiness, until the day of the resurrection”).<sup>74</sup> The

<sup>69</sup> The same reading in the Ethiopic version, cf. *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. and Latin translation by M. CHAÏNE, p. 47 (Ethiopic) p. 40 (Latin).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-ḥ (Syriac) and 158 (English).

<sup>71</sup> The same in the Ethiopic version, cf. *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. and Latin translation by M. CHAÏNE, p. 47 (Ethiopic) p. 41 (Latin).

<sup>72</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-ḥ (Syriac) and 158 (English). Cf. A. Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae*, pp. qy’ (Syriac) and 66 (English): ܡܢ ܗܝܘܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ (“my Master, what are these?”).

<sup>73</sup> See Juan Pedro MONFERRER-SALA, “A Nestorian Arabic Pentateuch used in Western Islamic Lands”, in David THOMAS (ed.), *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, «The History of Christian-Muslim Relations» 6 (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 367-368.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-ḥ (Syriac) and 158 (English). Cf. A. Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus*

scribe of MS Bonn or. 29, on the other hand, has added some changes with regard MS Vat. ar. 698: وفي اليوم الأخير يحققوا لحت في الخيرات ويتلذذون بما بفرح أفضل من هذا.

9) وإذا موضع مظلم جدًا (“there was a very dark place”)<sup>75</sup> is a *reductio* of Syriac ܡܘܨܥܐ ܕܡܘܨܥܐ ܕܡܘܨܥܐ ܕܡܘܨܥܐ (“and again (my Lady) Mary saw a (another) place which was very dark”).<sup>76</sup> However, MS Bonn or. 29 gathers وإذا سقع آخر مظلم جدًا (“there was another part which was very dark”), where *mawṭī* (“place”) has been interpreted like *suq* (“part; region”). Obviously, the syntagm *suq* ‘*aḥar* is not an adaptation of *mawṭī*, but the translation of Syriac *atrō ḥrinō* (“another place”).

10) وناار عظمة تلهب (“and a great fire was blazing”),<sup>77</sup> which slightly differs from the sentence وناارا تلتهب فيه (“and a fire was blazing in it”) attested by MS Bonn or. 92, represents an abbreviated translation of Syriac ܘܢܐܪܐ ܥܘܒܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܥܐ ܕܡܘܨܥܐ (“and a strong fire was blazing in it”).<sup>78</sup>

B) OMISSIONS

Bonn or. 29	page	Vatican Arabic MS 698	fol.	n°
omit.	90	(ونظرت) إلى المواضع البهيبة النورانية لكي يقفون فيها الناس يصلون	82 <sup>f</sup>	1

*Mariae*, pp. qy (Syriac) and 66 (English): ܘܢܐܪܐ ܥܘܒܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܥܐ ܕܡܘܨܥܐ (“but they see them from afar and rejoice; until the day of the resurrection”).

<sup>75</sup> The same reading in the Ethiopic version, cf. *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. and Latin translation by M. CHAÎNE, p. 47 (Ethiopic) p. 41 (Latin).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-h (Syriac) and 158 (English). Cf. A. Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae*, pp. qy (Syriac) and 66 (English).

<sup>77</sup> So in the Ethiopic version, cf. *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. and Latin translation by M. CHAÎNE, p. 47 (Ethiopic) p. 41 (Latin).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-h (Syriac) and 158 (English). Cf. A. Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae*, pp. qy (Syriac) and 66 (English).

<i>omit.</i>	90	وأبصارهم شاخصة إلى فوق لا يبتلون من التسييح	82 <sup>f</sup>	2
حتى لم تحدّ شيء مما رأّت على حقيقته	92	<i>omit.</i>	83 <sup>f</sup>	3

The three above omissions are also of great significance in order to corroborate our previous impressions: firstly, the version included in MS Vat. ar. 698 is closer to the Syriac text than MS Bonn or. 29; and secondly, the text contained in MS Bonn or. 29 does not represent a later redaction of the Syriac text according to Wright's opinion, but an impoverished and corrupted copy-version of a text which belongs to the same textual tradition of MS Vat. ar 698.

1) The sentence ونظرت إلى المواضع البهيّة النوراتيّة لكي يقفون فيها الناس يصلون ("And she saw beautiful and bright places for the people pray standing up there"), absent in MS Bonn or. 29, is an adaptation of Syriac ܘܫܘܬܐ ܠܘܚܘܬܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ ܘܡܘܠܘܬܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ ("and she saw the place in which Elijah stod and prayed"),<sup>79</sup> slightly amplified in Wright's text as ܘܫܘܬܐ ܠܘܚܘܬܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ ܘܡܘܠܘܬܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ ("And she saw the place in which Elijah the prophet used to dwell and pray").<sup>80</sup>

2) There is another coincidence between MS Vat. ar. 698 and the Syriac text, since the sentence حتى لم تحدّ شيء مما رأّت على حقيقته ("because she did not take in nothing of what she really saw") documented in MS Bonn or. 29 is not attested both in Vat. ar. 698 nor in the Syriac text.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> A. Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae*, pp. qh (Syriac) and 65 (English).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, "The Departure...", *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-d (Syriac) and 157 (English).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, "The Departure...", *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-w (Syriac) and 158 (English).



3) However, MS Vat. ar. 698 gathers *وأبصارهم شاخصة إلى فوق لا ييطلون من* (and with their eyes fixed on the high)<sup>82</sup> being an *amplificatio* which is omitted both in MS Bonn or. 29 and in the Syriac text as well.<sup>83</sup>

\* \* \*

Everything seems to point that MS Bonn or. 29 belongs to a different textual family in the light of the translation techniques followed by the scribe, like for instance the *amplificatio* of syntagms (ns. 1, 2, 4) or the use of the *lectio longior* (n. 3) as an alternative of the reading offered by MS Vat. Ar. 698. Four examples are given below:

Bonn or. 29	page	Vatican Arabic MS 698	fol.	n°
أنا السيد يسوع المسيح ومعه جماعة السماويين	88	أناها السيد مع جماعة السمائين	81 <sup>r</sup>	1
وإذا أخنوخ وإيلياس وموسى وجميع الأنبياء والآباء وسائر الرسل والمختارين	88	وإذا أخنوخ وموسى وإيليا وجميع الأنبياء والآباء والرسل المختارين	81 <sup>v</sup>	2
مثل الدود الذي لا ينام فلا يموت متألمين محترقين دائما لا زوال له عنهم بالعدل	94	مثل الدود الذي لا يموت محترقين دائما لا زوال له عنهم	83 <sup>v</sup>	3
وردّها إلى الفردوس المنير	94	وردّها إلى الفردوس	84 <sup>r</sup>	4

<sup>82</sup> The same reading is gathered by the Ethiopic version, cf. *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. and Latin translation by M. CHAÏNE, p. 46 (Ethiopic) p. 40 (Latin).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, "The Departure...", *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-w (Syriac) and 157 (English).

All in all, the *amplificatio* can be merely stylistic, like for instance in the example n° 1. On the other hand, reductions are also present in MS Bonn or. 29, as it occurs in example 2, in which the concept *al-firdaws al-muqaddas* (“the holy paradise”) has been reduced into *firdaws*.

Bonn or. 29	page	Vatican Arabic MS 698	fol.	n°
أربعة أثمار وهم سيحان وجيحان والدجلة والفرات	88	أربعة أثمار جيحان وسيحان ودجلة والفرات	81 <sup>f</sup>	1
لم يتزل الربّ الماء يصعد إلى الفردوس	88	لم يذكره الربّ بطلع إلى الفردوس المقدّس	81 <sup>f</sup>	2

We should conclude, then, that the different Christian linguistic traditions which gather ‘The Six Books Apocalypse of the Virgin’ are relatively close to each other, although they offer interesting textual variants and variations in the versions of the with amplifications, reductions, amalgamations, combinations, etc.<sup>84</sup>, as well as several kinds of ‘loan-translation’ techniques,<sup>85</sup> which led us to consider them like versions belonging to the same textual tradition, but being textual members of different manuscript traditions which spread through the Christian Orient from the Early Middle Ages onwards.

### 3. Literary analysis of the apocalyptic *topoi*

Since Apocalyptic literature is rather interested in the end of the human history, the reference to the paradise like God’s kingdom, as well as the place in which the history will end, plays a determining factor in this kind of apocryphal literature in which a mythical language is used for expressing ideas and describing situations.

<sup>84</sup> See Richard BAUCKHAM, “The Four Apocalypses of the Virgin Mary”, in IDEM, *The Fate of the Dead*, pp. 347-360.

<sup>85</sup> See J.P. MONFERRER-SALA, “Modalidades de ‘traducción préstamo’ en un texto árabe cristiano con Vorlage siríaca: ApVir(ar) 4-5 [= ApVir(sir) 5-6]”, *Estudios de dialectología norteafricana y andalusí*, forthcoming. On the label “loan-translation”, see Joshua Blau, GCA, I, p. 54 § 1.9; cf. IDEM, *A Handbook of Early Middle Arabic*, «The Max Schloessinger Memorial Foundation» (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 2002), p. 19 § 7.

In this framework, and throughout the several textual literary forms which were transmitted since Late Antiquity,<sup>86</sup> the hermeneutical task of interpreting figures, symbols, concepts, etc. in apocalyptic literature should be not confined to a single literary tradition.<sup>87</sup>

1. "Paradise", فرديوس (Syr. ܦܪܕܝܫ < Gr. παράδεισος), is a singular noun formed artificially from the irregular plural فراديس, taken from Greek παράδεισος, which is the transliteration of the Persian *pāiri daēza* ("palisade; park; garden").<sup>88</sup> The paradise, a region on a high mountain according to some traditions (1En 24-25; cf. Ez 28), in Christian literature is a symbol to refer God's chamber, God's temple or God's kingdom which was created by him. So, the symbol of paradise and/or heaven are considered to be the place of God's presence, the place of the eternal life and the place in which the salvation is prepared by God (cf. Ps 89:3; Is 34:5). In fact, in the Syriac text, the paradise is called by Jesus "my Father's house" (ܘܒܝܬ ܘܥܝܢܐ ܘܥܝܢܐ). This is the reason why some figures like Virgin Mary are taken into heaven or paradise in the apocryphal apocalyptic literature, as it occurred with Elijah in the Old Testament (2 Ki 2:11; Qoh 48:9.12). On Paradise's walls, cf. 2En 65:10; 2En 30; Rev 21:12. The description of Paradise's walls that 'head for heaven' is close to 2En 42:3 that thinks of the Paradise as on earth but 'open as far as the third heaven'. The 'four rivers of Paradise' are, of course, biblically inspired<sup>89</sup> and even if not elaborated on here,<sup>90</sup> constitute a topos in apocalyptic literature in the

<sup>86</sup> On this issue, see R. A. KRAFT, "The Multifarious Jewish Heritage of Early Christianity", in Jacob NEUSNER (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), III, p. 174-199.

<sup>87</sup> See on this John Joseph COLLINS (ed.), *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, in *Semeia* 14 (1979).

<sup>88</sup> I. CORNELIUS, "Paradise Motifs in the "Eschatology" of the Minor Prophets and the Iconography of the Ancient Near East. The Concepts of Fertility, Water, Trees and "Tierfrieden" and Gen 2-3<sup>1</sup>", *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 14 (1988), p. 42.

<sup>89</sup> Like, for instance, in 'The Mysteries of St John', in *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, edited, with English translations by E.A. Wallis BUDGE, with fifty-eight plates (London: British Museum, 1913), pp. 66 (Coptic) and 248 (English).

<sup>90</sup> See for instance Ephrem's interpretation of Paradise and its four rivers in Andrew PALMER, "Paradise Restored", OC 87 (2003), pp. 1-46.

description of Paradise, cf. 2En 8; 1En 17-18; ApPaul 23. They are also mentioned in the Qur’ān, cf. 47:15.<sup>91</sup>

2. “the Lord came to her with the crowd of heavenly beings”, *أتاها السيد مع جماعة السمائين*, is a well known iconographic symbol in the OT for representing the power of God, cf. StJEv XXXVIII: βάλετε θυμίαμα, ὅτι Χριστὸς ἔρχεται μετὰ στρατιᾶς ἀγγέλων. Καὶ ἰδοὺ παραγίνεται Χριστὸς καθήμενος ἐπὶ θρόνου Χερουβίμ. Καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἐπὶ Χερουβίμ ἐπίβηκώς ἐν δυνάμει πολλῇ. Καὶ ἰδοὺ φωτοφανίας πρόδος φοιτῶσα ἐπὶ τὴν ἁγίαν παρθένον διὰ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ μονογενοῦς αὐτῆς Υἱοῦ, καὶ προσπεσοῦσαι προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ πᾶσαι αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν (“Cast incense, because Christ is coming with a host of angels; and, behold, Christ is at hand, sitting on a throne of cherubim. And while we were all praying, there appeared innumerable multitudes of angels, and the Lord mounted upon cherubim in great power; and, behold, a stream of light coming to the holy virgin, because of the presence of her only-begotten Son, and all the powers of the heavens fell down and adored Him”). This motif refers to the apocalyptic coming of the ‘Son of Man’,<sup>92</sup> as in Mt 25:31; cf. Mk 13:26. On the other hand, the syntagm “Crowd of heavenly beings”, *جماعة السمائين*, should be identified with Syriac *ܡܚܒܝܬܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܝܢ* (“the chariots of the spirits”, i.e. the chariots of the angels).<sup>93</sup> Like in the ancient Near East, the angels acted as mediators between God and men in apocryphal literature, but also as protectors of those who travel. Angels are also called “spirits” in 1En 15:8: cf. ↓22. This *topos* is presumably founded upon that of *המרכבה הרוחניים* (1 Chro 28:18) or upon *מרכבות יהוה* (3En 24:1-23), being *merkabāh* a war-chariot especially. Cf. ↓14.

3. “And (she) saw such a great glory that no human eyes can look at it”, *ونظرت إلى سبح عظيم لا تستطيع أعين أحد من البشر النظر إليه*, is the typical form for

<sup>91</sup> See H. MAGUIRE, “Paradise Withdrawn”, in A.R. LITTLEWOOD et al. (eds), *Byzantine Garden Culture* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), pp. 22-36, esp. pp. 25-26.; M. BARASCH, “Apocalyptic Space”, in A. J. BAUMGARTEN (ed.), *Apocalyptic Time* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 306-325, esp. pp. 307-308; J. DANIELOU, “Terre et paradis chez les pères de l’église”, *Eranos-Jahrbücher* 22 (1953), pp. 433-471, esp. pp. 435-436.

<sup>92</sup> On this semitism, see the Geza VERMES, “The use of *בר נשא* in Jewish Aramaic”, in Matthew BLACK, *An Aramaic approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, 3rd ed.), pp. 310-331 (‘appendix E’).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. ‘The Mysteries of St John’ in *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, ed. E.A. Wallis Budge, p. 248.

describing the vision of God in Jewish, Christian and Muslim apocalyptic and eschatological texts,<sup>94</sup> although in this context is applied to the place, the paradise. We should note that the term used in Arabic to refer “glory” is *subḥ*, a loanword from Syriac *šūbhō*, which also entered into Islam. Both *subḥ* and *šūbhō* are no other than the Greek liturgical term δόξα.<sup>95</sup>

4. “When the flood occurred on the earth”, *ولما كان الطوفان على الأرض*, has a source-reference in the deluge’s sections of 1En 10:2ff. and 54:7-9 (cf. Gn 7:17-8:14) in which the story of the fallen angels is narrated.

5. “Enoch, Moses, Elijah”, *أخنوخ وموسى وإيليا*, represent an interesting noun triad with an evident eschatological value. Thus, whereas the former (2 Ki 2:11; Qoh 48:9.12; see above § 1) and the last (Gn 5:24; Qoh 44:16; 49:14; Lk 3:37; SibOr 2:187-189) names represent two important eschatological figures who were kept by God into heaven, the second figure, Moses, is the only one who has seen and talked to God face to face (Gn 3:4-4:23; cf. 1En 14:21; 39:14) and ascended unto heaven (3En 15B:2; AscJes 6:11-12). A text known as *Assumption of Moses* is mentioned in several Jewish and early Christian sources and is often identified today with the extant *Testament of Moses*.<sup>96</sup> However, Wright’s Syriac text, which has added a fourth name: *ܘܥܢܘܚ ܘܡܘܨܝ ܘܝܠܝܐ ܘܫܝܡܘܢ ܥܦܝܬܐܝܢ* (“and Elias the prophet came to our Lord and to my Lady Mary, and Enoch and Moses and Simon Cephas”),<sup>97</sup> does not seem to be the *Vorlage* of the Arabic translation. On the other hand, Lewis’ text gathers *ܘܥܢܘܚ ܘܡܘܨܝ ܘܝܠܝܐ ܘܫܝܡܘܢ ܥܦܝܬܐܝܢ* (“And Enoch came forth; and Elijah came, and John, and Peter,<sup>98</sup> and they worshipped before

<sup>94</sup> I. CERNUS, “Visions of God in Merkabah Mysticism”, *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 13 (1982), pp. 123-146; Ch. ROWLAND, “The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature”, *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 10 (1979), pp. 137-154; IBN ḤABĪB, *Kitāb waṣf al-firdaws*, introducción, traducción y estudio J. P. MONFERRER SALA (Granada: Departamento de Estudios Semíticos, 1997), pp. 123-129.

<sup>95</sup> Anton BAUMSTARK, “Jüdischer und christlicher Gebetstypus im Koran”, *Der Islam* 16 (1927), pp. 235-241; cf. J. BARTH, “Studien zur Kritik und Exegese des Qorāns”, *Der Islam* 6 (1916), p. 147.

<sup>96</sup> See J. PRIEST, “Testament of Moses”, OTP, I, p. 925.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-h (Syriac) and 156 (English).

<sup>98</sup> For the Syriac form of the name Abraham in Syriac texts, see F. C. BURKITT, *The Syriac Forms of the New Testament Proper Names*, p. 5, n. 1

Christ and before his mother”),<sup>99</sup> which can be a direct reference for the Arabic text which the Arabic translator has rendered into *وإذا أحنوخ وموسى وإيليا وجميع الأنبياء والآباء والرسل المختارين قد أتوا* (“Enoch, Moses, Elijah and all the prophets, the patriarchs and the chosen apostles”). It seems clear that Simon Cephas and the “chosen Apostles” (in Lewis’ text “John and Peter”) play the role of the new covenant against the other three, who represent the old alliance. Otherwise, Mary’s welcoming by the prophets or saints in paradise seems to be a substitutive representation of angel’s welcome, cf. 2En 42 where the angels rejoice when the righteous enter paradise. This motif of the welcoming of righteous dead by the patriarchs or saints in paradise appears also in later Byzantine apocalyptic literature, like, for example, in the ‘Life of Basil the Younger’ (BHG 264).<sup>100</sup> The presence of the patriarchs (OT apocrypha) or the saints (NT apocrypha) in Paradise before the resurrection is the result of the development of the doctrine regarding the retribution, in order to establish different categories of the dead and their fate in afterlife. Cf. ↓11.

6. “mansions of light of the just”, *مضلات الصالحين من نور*, is a *topos* in apocalyptic literature (1En 39:4-7; 2En 61:2) where Enoch dwelled after he was taken unto heaven from the earth. Cf. ↓35. This apocalyptic *topos* is also found in the New Testament: *ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου μοναὶ πολλαί εἰσιν*, “in my Father’s house are many rooms” (Jn 14:2). The dwelling of the blessed ones is suggested in the OT: Wisdom 5:15-16; 6:17-21. The survival of the spirit of the righteous in an agreeable place is a *topos* from the Greek world.<sup>101</sup>

7. “banqueting halls of the martyrs and their crowns of light”, *مجالس الشهداء*, refers to the reward of the just in Paradise and it consists of two parts: the first sentence alludes to the place in which the just will partake of the celestial banquet after the resurrection, a *topos* which occurs in apocryphal texts

<sup>99</sup> A. Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae*, p. qyb (Syriac) and 67 (English).

<sup>100</sup> See A.N. VESELOVSKIJ, “Razyskanija v oblasti russkogo dukhovnogo stikha”, *Sbornik Otdelenija russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskij akademii nauk* 46 (1889-90), suppl.: pp. 3-89; 53 (1891-92), suppl.: pp. 3-174.

<sup>101</sup> E. RHODE, *Psyche. Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen*, 2 tomes in 1 vol. (Tübingen) Darmstadt, <sup>2</sup>1961, repr. ed. of 1898), I, p. 314-316, II, pp. 127-130 and 204-213.

and in the *targûmîm* as well<sup>102</sup> [e.g. the *topos* refers to the eschatological messianic banquet as in 3En 48A10; cf. 1En 62.13 – perhaps the tradition goes back to Is 25:6-9, where the Lord prepares a feast for the righteous and can be found again in the NT: Lk 13:29 (feast in the kingdom of God); cf. Mt 8:11]. The second coordinate sentence, on its part, includes the syntagm “martyrs’ crowns” (cf. QuesEzra 6), which is really a *topos* from Rev 2:10 γίνου πιστός ἄχρι θανάτου, καὶ δώσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς, which was widely spread through the different *corpora* of martyrs texts, cf. Latin *corona martyrii*; cf. also TLev 8:2; AscJes 7:22; 8:26; 11:40.<sup>103</sup>

8. “the lovely and aromatic trees”, الأشجار الحسنة طيبة الرائحة, in plural, refers to the sentence of Gn 2:9: “every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (כל- עץ נחמד למראה וטוב למאכל) (כל- עץ נחמד למראה וטוב למאכל), but at the same time the sentence represents a rewriting of the symbol of the “Tree of Life” (עץ החיים); LXX τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς) as well. Cf. Gn 2:9; 3:22; Rev 2:7; 22:2.14; cf. also 1En 17ff.; 24:4-25:6; 29:2-32:5; 2En 8; 4QEn<sup>c</sup> col. XII:24-30 (= 1En 30:24-30); 4QEn<sup>c</sup> frag. 2 6.15.16 (= 1En 28:6.15.16); ApPaul 45; ApPeterAch 15ff.

9. “the delicious fruits of the Paradise”, أثمار الفردوس الفاحرة, cf. Gn 2:9; Ez 47:12; Rev 2:7; 22:14, refers the well know literary cycle on Adam’s figure in which Adam ordered his sons to look for the Paradise fruits, a motif which is developed in the ‘Testament of Adam’ in several literary and linguistic traditions,<sup>104</sup> and can be found in VitAd 31 and ApMoses 6 as well. On the fruits of

<sup>102</sup> Antonio RODRÍGUEZ CARMONA, *Targum y resurrección. Estudio de los textos del Targum palestinese sobre la resurrección*, «Biblioteca Teológica Granadina» 18 (Granada: Facultad de Teología, 1978), pp. 160-161.

<sup>103</sup> On martyrdom and its significance, see D. BOYARIN, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Judaism and Christianity* (Stanford Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1999); E.A. CASTELLI, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2004); J.W. VAN HENTEN- Fr. AVEMARIE, *Martyrdom and Noble Death* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>104</sup> See for instance, M. E. STONE, “Report on Seth Traditions in the Armenian Adam Books”, in M. E. STONE (ed.), *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha, with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition*, «Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha» 9 (Leiden – New York – Köln: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp. 41-53; Su-Min RI, “La Caverne des Trésors et le testament d’Adam”, in René LAVENANT (ed.), *V Symposium Syriacum 1988 (Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, 29-31 août 1988)*, «Orientalia Christiana Analecta» 236 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1990), pp. 111-122; J. P. MONFERRER-SALA, “Fragments from the Testament of

paradise, which are provided for the pleasure of the righteous ones, cf. for instance 1En 32:3; 2En 84; VitAd 32:1.

10. “the upper heavens”, السموات العالية, is a vague expression which in the present text does not mean the seven heavens<sup>105</sup> referred in some apocryphal texts (other texts speak of three, five or ten),<sup>106</sup> but God’s dwelling in the *‘Arabôt*.<sup>107</sup> Here there are three heavens mentioned explicitly: “She ascended and saw the first heaven, the second and the third”; cf. TLev 2:7-3:10.

11. “the heavenly Jerusalem”, بيت المقدس السماوية, is the Messianic Jerusalem, which according to the apocryphal texts does already exist in front of God in heaven (2Bar 4:2-6; 5Bar 4:2-6; 32:2-4), and it will descend from heaven into earth in the Messianic age (4Ezra 7:26; 10:25-28; 13:36; 2Bar 4:1-7). Cf. also Rev 21;<sup>108</sup> Hebr 12:22; *Rec* I.51. Cf. ↓32. The heavenly Jerusalem is referred like “a heavenly city” in ApZeph 5:1-6; cf. also ApEl 1:10; ApPaul 29; and in ApPeterAr as well.<sup>109</sup> A description of the ‘new Jerusalem’ under the inspiration of Ezekiel’s vision of the temple at the end of days (Ez 40-48) is given by the Aramaic 4QNJ<sup>a</sup>.<sup>110</sup> The ‘heavenly Jerusalem’ here is on the third heaven, where more

Adam in some Arabic Islamic sources”, *Journal of Medieval and Islamic History* 4 (2004-5), pp. 13-21.

<sup>105</sup> On the seven heavens and their symbolism, see A.Y. COLLINS, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 21-54.

<sup>106</sup> Bernhard HELLER, “Ginzberg Legends of the Jews”, *The Jewish Quarterly Review* N.S. XXIV (1933-34), p. 288.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Louis GINZBERG, *The Legends of the Jews*, translated from the German Manuscript by H. Szold (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954), I, p. 84. See also Bernard ALFRINK, “L’expression «šamaim ou šmei haš-šamaim» dans l’Ancien Testament”, in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, ST 231, 2 vols. (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964), I, pp. 1-7.

<sup>108</sup> See on this Adela Yarbro COLLINS, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2000) pp. 130-134.

<sup>109</sup> A. MINGANA, “The Apocalypse of Peter”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Manchester* 14:1 (1930), pp. 234-235.

<sup>110</sup> Robert EISENMAN & Michael WISE, *Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered: The First Complete Translation and Interpretation of 50 Key Documents withheld for over 35 Years* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), pp. 39-46.



commonly the paradise is placed (cf. 2 Cor 12:2-4;<sup>111</sup> 2En 81,6A; 42,3A). It seems obvious that our text here follows older traditions, according to which paradise is located on earth, which goes back to Gn 2:10-14. The relation between both the earthly and the eschatological paradise in apocryphal and rabbinical works is based on Gn 3:23-24, together with a development of the belief in a heavenly retribution for the just before the resurrection, cf. for instance 2En 60:8; 61:4.12; 70:4. ↑5.

12. “heaven’s door”, باب السماء, must refer to the heaven or paradise’s gate or entrance (CombAd V), which was located on Mount Moriah.<sup>112</sup> However, “a gate of heaven” is mentioned in ApZeph 3:6.9. Cf. also ApPaul 19, where a “golden gate” to the third heaven is mentioned. For ‘gates of paradise’, see TLev 18:10; TAbr 11.

13. “the dome of the Paradise”, قبة الفردوس, is a figurative description which occurs in poetic texts, where the firmament was viewed like a glass over the earth (cf. 1En 14:11). This figurative description was based in the ancient Hebrew cosmological belief in which several heavens rose around the circle described by the earth and the seas.<sup>113</sup> For the image of the heaven as a canopy, see Ps 104:2; Is 40:22.

14. “the Lord sat in a chariot of light over the sun”, والسيد جالس على مركبة النور, is a paraphrase of the *topos* of Yahweh’s chariot (מרכבות יהוה) as it occurs in 3En 24:1-23; cf. 3 En 7:1; 8:1; 15:1; 33:3; 1:6, 2 En 22:2. Cf. ↑2.

15. “the sun rose through heaven’s door”, الشمس فقامت في باب السماء. The sun comes out the gate of heaven also in 1 En 72:2-6. Angels are in charge of the sun in 3 Bar: 6-8; 3 En 14:4.

16. “the storehouses of light”, خزائن من نور, is a development of the *topos* of the “eternal light” which God has prepared for the righteous (1En 58:3.6; QuesEzra

<sup>111</sup> On this New Testament passage in Syriac, see Erik TEN NAPEL, “«Third heaven» and «Paradise». Some remarks on the exegesis of 2Cor. 12,2-4 in Syriac”, in René LAVENANT (ed.), *V Symposium Syriacum*, pp. 53-65.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. L. GINZBERG, *The Legends of the Jews*, V, p. 117, n. 109.

<sup>113</sup> On this figure, see Juan Pedro MONFERRER-SALA, “Sacred readings, lexicographic soundings. Cosmology, men, asses and gods in the Semitic Orient”, in J.P. MONFERRER-SALA & A. URBÁN (eds.), *Sacred text. Explorations in lexicography*, forthcoming.

3; ApPaul (NHC V,2) 22)<sup>114</sup>. Cf. 1En 41:5-8. Opposite to the darkness, light (עור, φῶς) means life (cf. Job 3:16; 33:30; Bar 3:20; Ps 38:11, etc.), since life and salvation go together: Am 5:18.20. In Rabbinical literature this motif is used for salvation time and for the Messiah: PR 162b and God is called “light of the world” (אורו של עולם), NumR 15:5 on 8:2.

17. “the ice, the snow, the cold, the rain, the dew, the lightning, the thunder and similar things”, الجليد والتلج والبرد والمطر والنداء والبرق والرعد وأشياء ذلك, seems to be a simplification of a possible source-reference in 1En 17:3-18:5. Cf. also 1En 34:2; 41:3-9; 60:11-22; 2En 6; 5:1; 3En 22B:3-4; 37:2; 48D2; 2Bar 10:11; TLev 3:2; Ps-Philo 19:10. The motif can be found also in the 9th cent. Byzantine text, Apocalypse of Anastasia § 19-20.<sup>115</sup>

18. “beautiful and bright places for the people pray standing up there”, المواضع المبهية والنورانية لكي يقفون فيها الناس يصلون, refers to the description of a heavenly space description, which is based on the *topos* of the “eternal life”, ↑16. The symbolism of the heavenly prayers – apart from the evident eschatological influence (cf. the ‘Horarium’ of 1TAd and 2TAd) – may reflect the importance of the liturgy among the Christians in general and Melkites in particular to whom our Arabic text belongs.<sup>116</sup> On heavenly liturgy cf. TDan 6:2; TLev 3; Rev 11:1; Ep.Apost. 113.

19. “armies of the angels”, أجناد الملائكة, is perhaps a plural form for Hebrew צבא המלאכים (“host of the angels”). This military figure is quite frequent in the apocrypha, cf. GkApEzra 1:7.

20. “with their extended wings and with their eyes fixed on the high”, مبسوطين الأجنحة وأبصارهم شاخصة إلى فوق. Although angels are represented moving forward in the air, they are rarely represented with wings (1En 61:1, only attested in MSS ‘B’ and ‘C’; 3En 18:25), quite the opposite with cherubs (1 Kgs 6:27; 2 Chron 3:12) and seraphs (Is 6:2). Angels with wings present also a later iconographical development. The earliest known depiction of winged angel can be

<sup>114</sup> See also ĪLIYYĀ AL-TĀNĪ († 1131), *Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn*, study & edition by Gianmaria GIANAZZA, sdb, «al-Turāṭ al-‘Arabī al-Masīḥī» 17-18, 2 vols. (Beirut: CEDRAC, USJ, 2005), II, p. 389 § 39.

<sup>115</sup> See Jane BAUN, *Tales from Another Byzantium: Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 404.

<sup>116</sup> For the Melkite liturgy, see Johannes MADEY, “Liturgische Bücher”, in Hubert KAUFHOLD (ed.), *Kleines Lexikon des Christlichen Orients* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), pp. 297-299.

found in a sarcophagus from the area of Sarigüzel-Istanbul, which is dated to the late fourth century and betrays clear borrowings from pagan funerary art. The idea, however, although not common, was not totally unfamiliar to Early Christianity. Tertullian states, for example, that “every spirit is possessed of wings. This is a common property of angels and demons” (Apol. 22.8).<sup>117</sup> In the current context the expression “raise the eyes unto heaven” means that those angels can talk and sing, because they have not sinned against God (cf. 1En 13:5). Otherwise, to look up to heaven means to look up to God, cf. Mt 14:19 (par. Mk 6:41; Lk 9:16); Mk 7:34; Lk 18:13; Jn 17:1; Acts 7:55.

21. “who do not cease glorifying”, لا يبطلون من التسبيح. Cherubs and seraphs’ glorifications, a *topos* which is attested, for instance, in 1TAd I,4.9; II,6 and 2 TAd 3.4, has a parallel in a Bohairic account of the ‘Falling Asleep of Mary’ (VI:24):  $\mu\chi\epsilon\rho\gamma\beta\iota\mu\ \mu\epsilon\mu\ \mu\iota\sigma\epsilon\rho\alpha\phi\iota\mu\ \alpha\gamma\tau\ \bar{\pi}\tau\omicron\gamma\lambda\omicron\zeta\omicron\lambda\omicron\tau\iota\bar{\alpha}\ \mu\epsilon\mu\omicron\gamma\ \epsilon\theta\beta\epsilon\ \mu\alpha\iota\rho\alpha\psi\bar{\iota}\ \mu\cdot\mu\omicron\omicron\gamma$  (“The cherubim and the seraphim give their doxology of praise this joy to day”).<sup>118</sup> On the never-ceasing glorifying of God by the angels in paradise, cf. also 2En 8.

22. “Holy, holy, holy the Lord Sebaoth!”, قدّوس قدّوس قدّوس الربّ الصباووت. The quotation of the trisagion from Is 6:3 (which is reduced to a simple  $\mu\delta\mu\ \mu\delta\mu$  in Wright’ text,<sup>119</sup> whereas Lewis’ text gathers the rendition  $\mu\delta\mu\ \mu\delta\mu\ \mu\delta\mu\ \mu\delta\mu\ \mu\delta\mu$  “Holy, holy, holy, the Mighty Lord, and Supreme God!”)<sup>120</sup> which is attested, for instance, in 3En 22B:8; 40:2; QuesEzra 29; Rev. 4:8. The

<sup>117</sup> Cf. GL. PEERS, *Subtle Bodies: Representing angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley Cal.: University of California Press, 2001), esp. pp. 23ff.; G. BEREFELT, *A Study on the Winged Angel. The Origin of a Motif* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1968), M. BUSSAGLI, *Storia degli angeli: Racconto di immagini e di idee* (Milano: Rusconi 1991).

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Forbes ROBINSON, *Coptic apocryphal gospels: translations together with the texts of some of them* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), pp. 114 (Coptic) and 115 (English). On the image of the cherubim and seraphim, see O. WULFF, *Cherubim, Thone und Seraphim* (Altenburg: Roude, 1894); A. WOOD, *Of Wings and Wheels: A Synthetic Study of the Biblical Cherubim* «Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 385» (Berlin et al.: W. de Gruyter, 2008); R.M.M. TUSCHLING, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, «Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 40» (Mohr: P. Siebeck, 2007).

<sup>119</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-h (Syriac) and 156 (English).

<sup>120</sup> A. Smith LEWIS, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae*, pp. qh (Syriac) and 65 (English).

trisagion is also found in a Bohairic account of the ‘Falling Asleep of Mary’ (VI:25)  $\chi\sigma\gamma\alpha\beta \chi\sigma\gamma\alpha\beta \chi\sigma\gamma\alpha\beta \pi\bar{\delta}\bar{\epsilon} \epsilon\alpha\beta\alpha\omega\theta$  (LXX ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος σαβαωθ).<sup>121</sup> In 1 En 39:12 the trisagion is “Holy, holy, holy, Lord of the Spirits”, where the plural “spirits” is obviously a synonym for ‘angels’ of Hebrew plural צבאות. Obviously, *al-Rabb al-ṣabā’ūt* is a transliteration of the Hebrew יהוה צבאות, “God of the *ṣēbā’ōt*”, where *ṣēbā’ōt* is interpreted as “armies of the angels”.<sup>122</sup> In Arabic *Allāh al-ṣabā’ūt* is a calque through the hybrid Greek syntagm Θεός/Κύριος σαβαωθ. The feminine abstract plural *ṣēbā’ōt* is oftentimes used in exorcistic formulas in Aramaic and in Greek, but also in Coptic ( $\epsilon\alpha\beta\alpha\omega\theta$ )<sup>123</sup> and in Ethiopic apocrypha ( $\text{ጸባኢት}$ ).<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, *quddūs* is a loanword, which etymon is the Akkadian *quddušu*.<sup>125</sup>

23. “twelve walls of light with twelve gates with the names of the disciples”,  $\text{إثني عشر حائط من نور وفيها إثني عشر باب عليها أسماء التلاميذ}$ , refers to Rev 21:12-13 (cf. Ez 48:3-34), where the number twelve appears repeatedly in the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem: the wall around the city has twelve gates and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written on them, although without specifying if every gate has a single name written on it.<sup>126</sup> The symbolic value of the number twelve is well known in the Semitic context for indicating the totality, which in the first part of the sentence is purely related to its astronomic origin of the twelve months. On the contrary, in the second part of the sentence a theological connotation is added

<sup>121</sup> On a legend linked to the Trisagion in Coptic, see Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, “Notes on the traditions concerning the Trisagion”, *ParOr* 29 (204), pp. 147-159. For an Islamic adaptation of the Trisagion, see J.P. MONFERRER-SALA, “Una variante árabe del Trisagio llegada a al-Andalus en el siglo IX”, *Qurṭuba* 1 (1996), pp. 117-137.

<sup>122</sup> For a historical and religious explanation of this expression, see J.P. ROSS, “*Jahweh Sebaôt* in Samuel and Psalms”, *Vetus Testamentum* 17 (1967), pp. 76-92.

<sup>123</sup> So in the ‘Magical Book of Mary and the Angels’, see Marvin MEYER, “The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels (P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685)”, in Stephen EMMEL et al. (eds.), *Ägypten und nublen in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit. Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses Münster, 20.-26. Juli 1996* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1999), II, p. 293.

<sup>124</sup> *Testamentum Salomonis Arabicum*, edition, translation & study by J.P. MONFERRER-SALA, «Studia Semitica» 5 (Córdoba: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba, 2006), p. 53, n. 46.

<sup>125</sup> Heinrich ZIMMERN, *Akkadische Fremdwörter als Beweis für babylonischen Kultureinfluss* [Leipzig: A. Edelmann, 1914], p. 66.

<sup>126</sup> See A.Y. COLLINS, “Numerical Symbolism in Jewish and Early Christian Apocalyptic Literature”, *ANRW* II.21.2 (1984), pp. 1222-1285, esp. pp. 1279-1284. Gates of a heavenly city are also mentioned in *ApZeph* 5:1-6; *ApPeter* 17:5.

in order to show that the names of the disciples are just twelve, i.e. the number of the tribes of Israel, so the disciples are the symbol of the *verus Israel* (Mk 3:13ff; Mt 10:1ff; Lk 6:13ff; cf. Mk 6:43; Jn 6:13). The astronomic symbol of the twelve gates of heaven is mentioned, for instance, in 1 En 34:2-36:3. Six of these heavenly gates are located to the East, and the other six to the West (1 En 72:2-3; 75:4-7; 2 En 6:8-15).<sup>127</sup> An interesting spiritual interpretation is gathered in a passage given by Clement of Alexandria (*Paedagogus* II.13): “We have heard, too, that the Jerusalem above is walled with sacred stones; and we allow that the twelve gates of the celestial city, by being made like precious stones, indicate the transcendent grace of the apostolic voice. For the colours are laid on in precious stones, and these colours are precious; while the other parts remain of earthy material. With these symbolically, as is meet, the city of the saints, which is spiritually built, is walled”. In the Islamic tradition, for instance, the number of the gates of Paradise fluctuates between seven, eight or ten.<sup>128</sup>

24. “every gate has a guardian”, وعلى كل باب حافظا, is referring to a cherub (↓27), since cherubs are the guardians of the way that leads to the ‘Tree of Life’ in Gn 3:24: וַיִּשְׁכֵּן ה' קִדְמָה לְיִן עֵדֶן אַחֲרֵהֶכָּר בַּיָּם: “and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim”, cf. Ez 28:14.16.

25. “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and all the patriarchs from Adam up to Moses”, إبراهيم وإسحق ويعقوب وموسى وداود وجميع الأباء من آدم إلى داود, under several combinations represent the group of the heavenly righteous ones, cf. ApZeph 9:4; StJEv XLIX; cf. also 3En 44:1-2; TIsaac 2; GrApEzra 5:21-22. For an interpretation of these names ↑5;11.

26. “Blessed are you among women, and blessed who is born of you!”, السلام والنعمة لك الربّ معك مباركة أنت في النساء ومبارك المولود منك, is a direct quotation of Lk 1:42: مباركة أنت في النساء ومبارك المولود منك (< εὐλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξίν καὶ εὐλογημένος ὁ καρπὸς τῆς κοιλίας σου). Cf. StJEv III.

27. “cherubs”, الشاروييم, from Hebrew כְּרוּבִים, occurs 91 times in the Hebrew Bible and it seems to be the counterpart of the sphinx known in the ancient Near

<sup>127</sup> Cf. A. MINGANA, “The Apocalypse of Peter”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Manchester* 14:1 (1930), p. 234.

<sup>128</sup> IBN ḤABĪB, *Kitāb waṣf al-firdaws*, intr., trans., and study J. P. MONFERRER SALA, p. 53 and n. 57.

East.<sup>129</sup> Cherub's singing function should be connected with cherubs' prayers in the 'Six hour praise' of 1TAd II,6; cf. 2TAd 3, a text which has a developed angelology.<sup>130</sup>

28. "archangels", ربوات الملائكة. Although a forerunner of the concept 'archangel' occurs already in Josh 5:13-14, the figure of the 'archangel' (1En 40:9; 54:6; 71:8.13; SibOr 2:215) comes from Greek ἀρχάγγελος, which does not appear in the Greek versions of the Bible, but in the Old Testament Apocrypha, and twice in the New Testament in two different apocalyptic and eschatological respective contexts, vgr. 1 Th 4:16: ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον ("for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first") and Jude 9: ὁ δὲ Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος, ὅτε τῷ διαβόλῳ διακρινόμενος διελέγετο περὶ τοῦ Μωϋσέως σώματος, οὐκ ἐτόλμησεν κρίσιν ἐπενεγκεῖν βλασφημίας ἀλλὰ εἶπεν· ἐπιτιμήσαι σοι κύριος ("but when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, «The Lord rebuke you»".)

29. "Gabriel and Michael", جبرائيل وميكائيل, two of the four archangels in early Judaism, make up a standardized angelic pair for eschatological contexts (cf. 1En 9:1; VisEzra 56). The former is the protector and advocate of Israel and Satan's main adversary, whose importance in Jewish and Christian eschatological contexts is well known (cf. Dn 10:13.21; 12:1; TAb 1:4A, and TIsaac, *passim*; 1En 9:1; 4Bar 9:5). Gabriel, on his hand, is the prince over the sixth heavenly host according to 3En 17:3.<sup>131</sup> cf. though 1En 40:9, where Michael is "merciful and forbearing" and Gabriel is "set over all exercise and strength".

<sup>129</sup> Roland DE VAUX, "Les chérubins et l'arche d'alliance, les sphinx gardiens et les trônes divins dans l'ancien Orient", *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 37 (1960-61), pp. 91-124.

<sup>130</sup> Robert MURRAY, "Some Themes and Problems of Early Syriac Angelology", in René LAVENANT (ed.), *V Symposium Syriacum*, pp. 143-153. See also M. KMOŠKO, "Testamentum Adae", in R. GRAFFIN, *Patrologia Syriaca* (Paris, 1907), II, pp. 1309-1360; G.J. REININK, "Das Problem des Ursprungs des Testaments Adams", *OCA* 197 (1972), pp. 387-399; S.E. ROBINSON, *The Testament of Adam: An Examination of the Syriac and Greek Traditions* (Chico Cal.: Scholars Press, 1982).

<sup>131</sup> On these two angelic figures, see J. P. MONFERRER-SALA, "«The Antichrist is coming...» The making of an apocalyptic *topos* in Arabic (Ps.-Athanasius, Vat. ar. 158 / Par. ar. 153/32)", in D.

30. “the robe of the glory”, حلة المجد, based on Gn 3,21, is a clothing metaphor for describe Adam and Eve’s eschatological garments, i.e. the “garments of glory/light” they both were dressed in the garden of Eden before the Fall. At the Fall they were stripped of their robes of glory/light, although this theme was picked up by Christians at their baptism rite,<sup>132</sup> since this *topos* was a very popular theme in early Syriac poetry.<sup>133</sup>

31. “throne of light”, كرسی النور, refers Christ’s throne in the current context. However, as referred to God, a source-parallel of this “throne of light” could be “the throne of his glory” of 1En 9:4 (cf. 61:8; 62:2 and 4QBer<sup>a</sup>, 4QBer<sup>b</sup>),<sup>134</sup> which is also described in 1En 14:18-19 like “a lofty throne, its appearance was like crystal and its wheels like the shining sun [...] and from beneath the throne were issuing streams of flaming fire. It was difficult to look at it”. Cf. also 1En 9:4; 14:22; 60:1-4; TLev 5:1; ApPeter 6:1; Rev 4:2-11. In 1En 51:3 it is written that the ‘Elected one’, i.e. the Messiah, “shall seat on my throne” (cf. 61:8). A description of God’s throne is included in 3En 22C:1-6. The reference in the text here echoes Mt 19:28: ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὑμεῖς οἱ ἀκολουθήσαντές μοι ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ ὅταν καθίσῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ, καθήσεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐπὶ δώδεκα θρόνους κρίνοντες τὰς δώδεκα φυλὰς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ (“Jesus said to them: truly, I am telling you, when the Son of Man sits on his throne of glory at the renewal of all things, you that you have followed me, will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”).

32. “the upper Jerusalem”, بيت المقدس العليا, is another name for the heavenly or Messianic Jerusalem, ↑11. Cf. 2En 55, where the heavenly Jerusalem is on the highest heaven.

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BUMAZHNOV ET AL. (eds), *Bibel, christlicher Orient und Byzanz. Festschrift für Prof. Stephen Gerö zum 65. Geburtstag* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009, forthcoming), sub §§ 2.16 and 2.20.

<sup>132</sup> See for instance J.P. MONFERRER-SALA, “An Early Muslim Tradition in Light of its Christian Environment”, *Edebiyât* 13/1 (2002), pp. 27-35.

<sup>133</sup> Sebastian BROCK, “Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources”, *Journal of Jewish Studies* XXX (1979), pp. 221-223; IDEM, “Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac tradition”, in Margot SCHMIDT (ed.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1982), pp. 14-15 (reed. both articles in S. BROCK, *Studies in Syriac Christianity*, «Collected Studies Series» 357 [Hampshire: Variorum, 1992], IV and XI respectively).

<sup>134</sup> R. EISENMAN & M. WISE, *Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered...*, pp. 222-230.





visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven").<sup>138</sup> On the *irîn* and the *qaddiṣîn*, 3En 28:1-10. Enoch's dwelling, on the other hand, is located together with the dwelling places of the holy ones and the righteous ones, in 1 En 39:8-10. Cf. ↑6.

36. "a great and bright world with innumerable tabernacles", عالم عظيمه مضين, refers to the heavenly mansions of the apocrypha (4Ezra 8:20). On the issue of the 'heavenly light' ↑16,18. On the heavenly abodes of the righteous see also 1En 39:4; 2En 61:2-3. Lk 16:9 has "eternal dwellings". The notion is also common in patristic literature, see for example Irenaeus, *Adv.haer.* V.36.1. 'Tents' or 'tabernacles' of the righteous are mentioned in TAb 20A; in Rabbinic literature cf. bShab 152.<sup>139</sup> The paradise is also empty in 1En 32:2; 2En 8-9; 4Ezra 8:52; while it is inhabited in 2En 42:3B; ApAb 21.

37. "the incense was rising and the trumpets were sounding", بخور مرتفع وأبواق, includes two apocalyptic motifs, the incense and the trumpets, both of which are present, for instance, in Rev 8:3-5ff. The smoke of the burning incense is a symbol of the prayers of the just (Rev 8:3-4; cf. 5:8; 1TAd I:12; StJEv IV, IX, X; cf. also ApMoses 33:4 where angels burn incense in Paradise), and the trumpet, among other functions,<sup>140</sup> is the symbol for announcing the coming of the *ἔσχατα* in apocrypha (4Ezra 6:24; QuesEzra 11; ApAbr 31:1; ApZeph 9:1; 10:1; 12:1; GBart 4:12) and in NT as well (1 Th 4:16; 1 Cor 15:52), the origin of which is in the Sinai theophany in Ex 19:16.19 with interferences provided by other texts.

38. "when their spirits return to their bodies forever", إذا رجعت بلا زوال, includes a figurative meaning just to refer the resurrection of the body as part of a symbolic description (↓40) in early Judaism which was later developed in the apocrypha (SibOr 2:221-226) and by Christian authors

<sup>138</sup> On the issue of the descent of the 'watchers' in the Syriac Christian milieu, see S. BHAYRO, "A Karshuni (Christian Arabic) account of the Descent of the Watchers", in A. RAPOPORT-ALBERT & G. GREENBERG (eds.), *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts. Seáis in Memory of M.P. Weitzman* (Sheffield, 2001), pp. 365-374.

<sup>139</sup> See H. BIETENHARD, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum*, «Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament» 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1951), pp. 173-174.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. 'The Mysteries of St John', in *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, ed. E.A. Wallis Budge, pp. 65 (Coptic) and 247-248 (English).

like Justin Martyr.<sup>141</sup> In fact, the resurrection of the dead (תהיית המתים)<sup>142</sup> in Judaism (and in a large part of the early Syriac tradition),<sup>143</sup> which involves that the bodies of the dead will arise from their graves before the day of Judgement, has been often identified with the immortality of the soul (cf. ApPeter 75), an argument which is connected with the preexistence of the soul in Judaism.<sup>144</sup> The return of the spirit to the body represents a *topos* attested, for instance, in 1En 103:4 and 3En 43:1-3, where the concept *rūḥ* has recovered the ancestral meaning of “breath”,<sup>145</sup> i.e. the essential necessity for life (cf. Gn 6:17; 7:15.22, etc.).<sup>146</sup> All in all, the *topos* of the spiritual survival and the resurrection of the body represent two different concepts,<sup>147</sup> whence the eschatological belief of the resurrection of the body in the early church should be set within the context of martyrdom.<sup>148</sup>

39. “there was a very dark place, and a great smoke was going up from it, and a stinking smell, like the sulphur or stronger gave off, and a great fire was

<sup>141</sup> See on this issue, Claudia SETZER, *Resurrection of the body in early Judaism and early Christianity: doctrine, community, and self-definition* (Boston – Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2004).

<sup>142</sup> This *topos* will be vigorously used by the Ethiopic Church in the late Middle Ages against those who denied the resurrection, Enrico CERULLI “«De resurrectione mortuorum», opuscolo della Chiesa Etiopica del sec. XIV”, in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, II, pp. 1-27.

<sup>143</sup> See, for instance, F. GAVIN, “The Sleep of the Soul in the early Syriac Church”, *JAOS* 40 (1920), pp. 103-120 and J. TEIXIDOR, “Muerte, cielo y seol en San Efren”, *OCP* 27 (1961), pp. 82-95.

<sup>144</sup> Frank Chamberlin PORTER, “The Pre-existence of the Soul in the Book of Wisdom and in the Rabbinical Writings”, in Robert F. HARPER, Francis BROWN & George Foot MOORE (eds), *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of William Rainey Harper*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1908) I, pp. 25-270.

<sup>145</sup> See in this respect, Harry A. ORLINSKY, “The Plain Meaning of Ruḥ in Gen. 1.2”, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 48 (1957-58), pp. 174-182.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Gregorio DEL OLMO LETE, “El caos y la muerte en la concepción sirio-cananea”, in Wilfred G.E. WATSON (ed.), “*He unfurrowed his brow and laughed*”. *Essays in Honour of Professor Nicolas Wyatt*, «Alter orient und Altes Testament» 299 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007), pp. 220-221.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Richard BAUCKHAM, “Resurrection as Giving Back the Dead: A Traditional Image of Resurrection in the Pseudepigrapha and the Apocalypse of John”, in James H. CHARLESWORTH & Craig A. EVANS (eds.), *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, «Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha. Supplement Series, 14, Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity» 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 269-291.

<sup>148</sup> Caroline Walker BYNUM, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 43-51.

blazing”, وإذا موضع مظلم جدًا ودخان كثير يصعد منه وتخرج له رائحة زفرة مثل الكبريت, وأعظم ونار عظيمة تلهب, has a parallel in 1En 21:7, which is completed in 1En 67:6, where it is said that this place is a valley which smells sulphur (cf. VisEzra 23). The reference to the hell as a dark place is another eschatological *topos* gathered by Job 10:21-22; Ps 87:13; Tob 4:11; Mt 8:12; 22:13, 25:30; QuesEzra 3, etc., which is emphasized in SibOr 2:292 as “immensurable darkness”.<sup>149</sup> Darkness and fire are the basic punishments that have been prepared for the sinners (QuesEzra 3), and fire, sulphur and asphalt will cast upon the wicked men (ApAd 75).<sup>150</sup> As it can be supposed, this is a developed *topos* of the ancient idea of the ‘nether world’ (*yrđm arš*) in the Ugaritic epic texts.<sup>151</sup> The loanword *kibrīt* comes from Akkadian *kuprītu[m]* through Aramaic *ku/ibrītā*’ (cf. Assyrian *ki/ubrītu/kuprītu*) and identifies the ‘common sulphur’, like in Coptic Ⲭⲏⲏ (Gr. θείον).<sup>152</sup>

40. “this is a place of the Gehenna which smokes and is prepared for the sinners”, هذا موضع سقع جهنم ينفتح وهي تعد للخطاة, agrees with the iconographic representation of the idea that both in Judaism and in Christianity (and also in Islam) the punishment inflicted on the wicked<sup>153</sup> is principally associated with fire,

<sup>149</sup> On dead’s place among the Semites, see the general information gathered by Marie Joseph LAGRANGE, *Études sur les religions sémitiques*, «Études bibliques» (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1905), pp. 337-341. Cf. G. DEL OLMO LETE, “El caos y la muerte...”, in W.G.E. WATSON (ed.), “*He unfurrowed his brow and laughed*”..., p. 220.

<sup>150</sup> On the pejorative figurative value of the concept “fire” in later theological contexts, for instance in Joseph Ḥazzāyā (8th c.), see Pablo ARGÁRATE, “The Semantic Domain of Fire in the Writings of Joseph Ḥazzāyā”, in J.P. MONFERRER-SALA (ed.), *Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy*, «Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies» 1 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), esp. pp. 99-102

<sup>151</sup> See Mitchell J. DAHOOD, “Ugaritic lexicography”, in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, I, p. 85.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. respectively H. ZIMMERN, *Akkadische Fremdwörter*, p. 60; *The Assyrian Dictionary* [CAD], ed. M. Civil et al. (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute, 1971), VIII, p. 333b; Athanasius Kircher, *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta* (Rome: Sumptibus Hermanni Scheus, 1643), pp. 203, 373, 383. Cf. S. Gaselee, “Review of Crum’s *Coptic Dictionary* (Part I)”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 5:3 (1929), p. 613.

<sup>153</sup> On the concept of sin in Judaism, see F. Chamberlin Porter, “The *Yeḥer Hara*. A Study in the Jewish Doctrine of Sin”, in *Biblical and Semitic Studies. Critical and Historical Essays by the Members of the Semitic and Biblical Faculty of Yale University* (New York – London: Charles Scribner’s Sons – Edward Arnold, 1901), pp. 93-156. As it is known, the moralistic dualism ‘reward of the righteous’ vs ‘punishment of the sinners’ is a permanent *topos* in apocalyptic contexts, see Emmanouela GRYPEOU, “«The Visions of Apa Shenute of Atripe»: An Analysis in

cf. Is 66:24; 1En 21:10; 27:2-4; 54:1; Mt 3:12; 5:22; 13:42.50; 18:8-9; Mk 9:43-47; Lk 3:17, etc. In Rabbinic sources ('Erub 19a) the word ordinarily used for hell is Gehenna (Aram. גיהנום < Heb. גיהנום),<sup>154</sup> but this is also the name of one of the parts of hell.<sup>155</sup> Cf. also SibOr 1:103; 2:291-192; 4:185.<sup>156</sup>

41. “they will stay in it until the last day, when their spirits return to their bodies”, وهم قيام عندها إلى اليوم الآخر إذا رجعت أرواحهم إلى أجسادهم, confirms the idea just referred above (↑38) that the “spirit” (πνεῦμα) symbolizes the essential issue for the resurrection of the body (σῶμα). Rev speaks of a first resurrection, a spiritual resurrection (Rev 20:4-6),<sup>157</sup> and a second resurrection, a bodily resurrection (Rev 20:11-15)<sup>158</sup>. The resurrection of the sinners is explicitly mentioned in Jn 5:28-29 and Act 24:15.

42. “they writhe with a hard pain, with bereaved and burning groans”, يتألمون بها, بحزن شديداً بحسرات موملة محرقة وندامة على ما فاتهم, is a *topos* (from Jewish provenance, cf. Is 66:24; ↓42) for representing the punishment of the sinners in hell as it is written in Mt 8:12: ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων, “there

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the History of Traditions of Eastern Christian Apocalyptic Motifs”, in J.P. MONFERRER-SALA (ed.), *Eastern Crossroads*, p. 161.

<sup>154</sup> On the etymon of this loanword, see F. BROWN, S.R. DRIVER, CH. A. BRIGGS, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, with an appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic, based on the ‘Lexicon’ of W. Gesenius as translated by E. Robinson (Boston – New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1906), pp. 244b-245a. Cf. Federico CORRIENTE, *Dictionary of Arabic and Allied Loanwords: Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Galician and kindred dialects*, «Handbook of Oriental Studies. 1. The Near and Middle East» 97 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 316a.

<sup>155</sup> See L. BAILEY, “Gehenna: The Topography of Hell”, *Biblical Archaeologist* 49 (1986), pp. 187-191.

<sup>156</sup> See C. MILKOWSKY, “Which Gehenna? Retribution and Eschatology in the Synoptic Gospels and in Early Jewish Texts”, *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988), pp. 238-249; A.E. BERNSTEIN, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca Cal.: Cornell University Press, 1993); A.F. SEGAL, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

<sup>157</sup> Which is far from Bardaisan’s belief that only the soul will be resurrected by rejecting a bodily resurrection, see an extensive discussion of this eschatological *topos* in Ute POSSEKEL, “Bardaisan of Edessa on the Resurrection: Early Syriac Eschatology in its Religious-Historical Context”, *OC* 88 (2004), pp. 1-28.

<sup>158</sup> See in this respect ʿILYYĀ AL-ṬĀNĪ († 1131), *Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn*, study & edition by Gianmaria GIANAZZA, sdb, II, pp. 378 § 18 and 388 § 38.

men will weep and gnash their teeth”, cf. Mt 13:42.50; 2:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk 13:28; cf. SibOr 2:283-312.

43. “they regret forever about they have not done thinking [about them], like the worms which do not die never get burned”, وفكر دائم مثل الدود الذي لا يموت, محترقین دائماً لا زوال له عنهم حيث لا زوال له عنهم حيث لا زوال له عنهم, seems to be an *amplificatio* of the Hebrew sentence *לֹא תִכְבֵּה לֵאשׁוֹם לֹא תִכְבֵּה לֵאשׁוֹם*, “for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched” (Is 66:24), cf. Mk 9:48: ὅπου ὁ σκώληξ αὐτῶν οὐ τελευτᾷ καὶ τὸ πῦρ οὐ σβέννυται, “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched”.

44. “they were opponents to His commandments, denied my humanity and blasphemed against my divinity”, لا زوال له عنهم حيث خالفوا وصاياهم وكفروا بناسوتي, opposite to the Syriac text *ܘܥܘܕܝܢܝܢ ܘܥܘܕܝܢܝܢ*, “those who have neglected my commandments”, cf. ApPeterAch 30),<sup>159</sup> sounds as an emphatical Chalcedonian statement of faith,<sup>160</sup> attacking both the Monophysites and the Nestorians at the same time, which is obvious, since the Arabic text is of Melkite provenance. On blasphemous people in the Gehenna, see 1En 28:2. The motif of the people who deny God at the end of times appears in ApPeterAr.<sup>161</sup>

### Concluding remarks

The text known as the “Six Books” Apocalypse is an interesting document, which attests to the popularity and importance of Marian literature in the Christian world and more particularly in the Christian Orient.

The text follows up the story of the Virgin Mary after her assumption to Paradise. There, she is visited by the Lord in a glorious setting. Paradise is imagined as a place of great glory on earth, where all the prophets, patriarchs and apostles already dwell. Special mention is made to the banquet of the martyrs. The emphasis on the heavenly reward for the martyrs might refer to a culture, where

<sup>159</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, “The Departure...”, *Journal of Sacred Literature* 7 (1865), pp. m-t (Syriac) and 159 (English).

<sup>160</sup> For a synthetic survey, see C.H. MALIK, “The Orthodox Church”, in A.J. ARBERRY (ed.), *Religion in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), I, pp. 297-346.

<sup>161</sup> A. MINGANA, “The Apocalypse of Peter”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Manchester* 14:1 (1930), p. 487.

martyrdom was possibly still an alive memory. Additionally, it probably reflects a culture, where the cult of the martyrs was particularly important.

Mary is then invited to ascend to the heavens. There, she sees three heavens. Heavenly Jerusalem is located on the third heaven. The Lord is depicted according to archaic mythological motifs as the master of the elements of nature and stands triumphantly on his chariot over the entire creation. Mary is offered a cosmic tour, where she is shown several *topoi* transmitted through the celestial apocalyptic genre, vgr. the mysteries of the universe, such as the storehouses of the elements.

The heavenly Jerusalem has twelve gates and an entering gate, where the names of the just, that is all the patriarchs, are engraved. It is thus imagined as the city of the saints. It is built concentrically and Mary walks through it, passing through each gate separately. At each gate, she is glorified by different heavenly beings, saints, and even elements: angels, cherubim, seraphim, archangels, thunder and lightning, angels, fire, dew, Gabriel and Michael, stars, sun, moon, spirits of apostles, patriarchs, prophets, righteous. Apparently, they all represent a heavenly retinue that inhabits the city. As we observe the text does not follow the angelic hierarchy by ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, common to Christian literature, after the fifth century. Moreover, there is an anthropomorphic perception of natural elements that is peculiar and reflects popular archaic beliefs. The list cannot be hierarchical but appears to be totally random, so Gabriel and Michael are mentioned separately from the archangels and by name.

The text has a loose, almost careless structure, including elements that appear at times out of place. As R. Bauckham also notes: “there is an attempt at comprehensiveness, probably drawing on diverse traditional material, which results in a certain degree of apparent incoherence”.<sup>162</sup>

The text maintains that the patriarchs, prophets and righteous partake already to the heavenly Jerusalem. In the centre of the heavenly Jerusalem, Mary sees Christ on a throne of light, and she prostrates herself in front of the Holy Trinity. The text stresses, further, the belief in the eschatological church in heaven, which is identified with the heavenly Jerusalem in early Christian literature.

The Lord himself acts as the heavenly guide to Mary explaining to her the “hidden mysteries”. This motif represents a development of Christian apocalyptic literature, where the angelic guide, common to Jewish apocalyptic tradition is

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<sup>162</sup> R. BAUCKHAM, *Fate of the Dead*, p. 351.

replaced by Christ himself, who acts as the mediator between human world and heavens.

Mary sees the tabernacles that are prepared for the righteous at the end of the days amidst incense, trumpets and glorifying angels. The motif has liturgical associations. Further images, such as the place for prayer, emphasise the liturgical symbolism of heaven. This tendency indicates a monastic milieu of authorship.

The text presents two different notions of Paradise. First, there is the Paradise as a magnificent garden on earth, where the souls of outstanding righteous, such as the patriarchs etc. dwell after their death. Beyond that, there is also the compound of the heavenly tabernacles, apparently on the third heaven, which is the place of rest for the righteous people, who remain almost in a state of limbo, awaiting the Last Judgment. The text postulates the reunion of the soul with the body at the Last Judgement.

At the same place and consequently also on the third heaven, there is hell or Gehenna prepared for the sinners, who are standing opposite to it and cry in horror. The description of hell remains very basic, exhausting basic *topoi*, as it is described mainly as a dark, stinking furnace. Similarly, the suffering of the sinners is described in a general way, reminiscent of biblical *topoi*. This almost sketchy description of hell might indicate the antiquity of the text, since later texts use more graphic, extensive descriptions of hell. However, it is also possible that the present apocalyptic text was intended as a summary of contemporary eschatological beliefs and ideas. Moreover, it is striking that there are no references whatsoever to any social or earthly realities, which could have been conveyed by moralistic exhortations to reward and punishment in afterlife. The setting is entirely metaphysical. Concluding, Mary pleads for mercy for the sinners. Christ promises her that and she is sent back to Paradise.

As we have suggested in the introduction, one of the earliest extant *Transitus Mariae* texts, the *Book of the Dormition of Mary* by (Ps.-) St. John the Theologian, contains elements that might have given rise to apocalyptic speculations. The main motif is, of course, Mary's assumption to heavens, which *per se* could have led to further elaboration on Mary's heavenly trip. Christ promises also to Mary that her body will be transferred to Paradise, but her soul in the heavens, in the treasures of His Father. Moreover, according to the same text, the body of Mary is translated to Paradise after three days in the tomb. During these three days angels singing and praising could be heard at her tomb. The apostles have then a vision, where all the

saints prostrate themselves in front of Mary's body in a paradisiacal setting. Among them they can also see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, who appear prominently also in the "Six Books" apocalypse.<sup>163</sup> It is possible that our apocalyptic text attempted to cover this particular period of time, explaining thus what was happening to Mary between her burial and her final rest in paradise.

The text belongs to the category of an otherworldly journey and only personal eschatology and is related thus to texts such as TIsaac 5-6; TJacob 5; Zosimus; ApMary; Mysteries of St.John the Apostle 17b-19b; ApkSedrach.<sup>164</sup> The text makes use of diverse early Jewish apocalyptic traditions; however, it remains distinctively Christian in its character and theology. It includes also several biblical references, mainly from the New Testament and particularly from John's Revelation. There is a certain emphasis on the figure of Enoch, which implies the familiarity of the author with Enochic literature and more importantly with 1 Enoch.

As we have observed, there are quite a few archaic mythological notions in this text. Even if the text betrays certain archaic motifs, these are not safe indicators for its dating since these survived in much later apocalyptic texts as well. It is striking, however, that it does not elaborate on the rewards of the righteous and more importantly on the punishments of the wicked. Accordingly, it is not related to texts of the same genre, such as for example the ApPeter, which are characterised by a retribution-eschatology. In a way, it represents a compact summarised form of an apocalypse, which might support the hypothesis that it existed as an integral part, even if in the form of an appendix, of the *Transitus Mariae* text.

The text demonstrates significant evidence considering the antiquity and perseverance of certain main traditions in apocalyptic literature. Certain motifs of the text, such as the heavenly tabernacles of the righteous etc., become standard

<sup>163</sup> "καὶ ἰδοὺ μύρον εὐωδίας ἐξήρχετο ἐκ τῶν τριῶν ἡμερῶν ἀοράτων ἀγγέλων φωναί ἠκούοντο δοξαζόντων τὸν ἐξ' αὐτῆς τεχθέντα Χριστὸν τὸν θεόν ἡμῶν. καὶ πληρουμένης τῆς τρίτης ἡμέρας οὐκέτι ἠκούοντο αἱ φωναί, καὶ λοιπὸν ἐκείθεν πάντες ἔγνωσαν ὅτι μετετέθη τὸ ἄμωμον καὶ τίμιον αὐτῆς σῶμα ἐν παραδείσῳ. Τούτου δὲ μετατεθέντος ἰδοὺ θεωροῦμεν τὴν Ἐλισάβετ τὴν μητέρα τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ καὶ Ἄνναν τὴν μητέρα τῆς δεσποίνης καὶ Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαάκ καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ τὸν Δαυὶδ ψάλλοντα τὸ ἀλληλούϊα καὶ πάντας τοὺς χοροὺς τῶν ἁγίων προσκυνοῦντας τὸ τίμιον λείψανον τῆς μητρὸς τοῦ κυρίου, καὶ τόπον φωτοειδῆ, οὐ τοῦ φωτὸς ἐκείνου οὐδὲν λαμπρότερον· καὶ πλῆθος εὐωδίας τοῦ τόπου ἐκείνου, ἔνθα μετετέθη τὸ τίμιον καὶ ἅγιον αὐτῆς σῶμα ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ." (K. v. TISCHENDORF, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, pp. 111-112).

<sup>164</sup> See A.Y. COLLINS, "The Early Christian Apocalypses", *Semeia* 14 (1979), pp. 61-121.



themes of Christian apocalyptic literature and are repeated in texts of this genre until the Middle Ages. Beyond that, this text presents an interesting literary evidence of the use and integration of apocalyptic motifs in the context of narrative literature, since in a way the "sixth" apocalyptic book continues and concludes the narration of the *Transitus Mariae*. Further, we can observe that certain elements and motifs can be found again in the Qur'an (such as the gates of paradise, the description of hell, etc.), which underlines the importance of these Christian traditions for Islamic lore and literature.

Finally, the comparative analysis of the Syriac and Arabic manuscripts has shown that the various linguistic traditions are quite close to each other. Accordingly, we could observe that the various versions of the text belong to the same textual tradition.

In view of our analysis, we may conclude that certain elements in the text, such as its angelology and the special mention of the martyrs favour a dating no later than the fifth century. Its structure and schematic character support the theory that the text has not existed independently from the *Transitus Mariae* text, but it was intended as an elaboration on Mary's exaltation after her assumption. Further, the text indicates a monastic milieu of origin. Although, according to the information given in the text itself, it was originally composed in Greek, the possibility of a Syriac original cannot be ruled out. The various Syriac manuscripts confirm its popularity among Syriac speaking Christians. Regarding the provenance of the text, there are no distinctive elements that would suggest an Egyptian provenance. Taking into account all our observations above, the text must have been composed in Syria or Palestine.

ABBREVIATIONS USED<sup>165</sup>

*Old Testament Apocrypha*

ApAbr = Apocalypse of Abraham  
 ApEl = Apocalypse of Elijah  
 ApMoses = Apocalypse of Moses  
 ApZeph = Coptic Apocalypse of Zephania  
 2Bar = Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch  
 3Bar = Greek Apocalypse of Baruch

*Gnostic works*

ApAd = Apocalypse of Adam  
 ApPaul (NHC V,2) = Coptic Apocalypse of Paul

*Church Fathers*

Irenaeus, *Adv.haer.* = Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses*

<sup>165</sup> Old and New Testament books abbreviations have been excluded.

4Bar = 4 Baruch  
 5Bar = Arabic Apocalypse of Baruch  
 CombAd = Arabic Combat of Adam  
 1En = Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch  
 2En = Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch  
 3En = Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch  
 4Ezra = 4 Ezra  
 GkApEzra = Greek Apocalypse of Ezra  
 QuesEzra = Questions of Ezra  
 VisEzra = Vision of Ezra  
 SibOr = Sibylline Oracles  
 TAb = Testament of Abraham  
 TIsaac = Testament of Isaac  
 TLev = Testament of Levi  
 1TAd = Syriac testament of Adam  
 2TAd = Arabic Testament of Adam  
 VisEzra = Latin Vision of Ezra  
 VitAd = Greek Life of Adam and Eve  
  
*New Testament Apocrypha*  
 ApPaul = Greek Apocalyse of Paul  
 ApPeter = Ethiopic Apocalypse of Peter  
 ApPeterAch = Greek Apocalypse of Peter  
 from Achmim  
 ApPeterAr = Arabic Apocalypse of Peter  
 EpAp = Epistula Apostolorum  
 GBart = Gospel of Bartholomew  
 StJEv = Book of Saint John the Evangelist  
 (= (Ps.-)St. John the Theologian, Book of  
 the Dormition of the Holy Theotokos)  
 John Chrysostom, Comm. Hebr. = Commen-  
 tary on the Epistle to the Hebrews

Cyril of Jerusalem, Cat.Lect. = Catech-  
 etical Lectures  
 Eusebius, Comm.Jes. = Commentary of  
 Isaiah  
 Methodius, Banquet = The Banquet of  
 the Ten Virgins  
 Origen, Comm.Cant. = Commentary on  
 the Song of Songs  
 Origen, Contr. Cels. = Contra Celsum  
 Rec = Ps.-Clement, *Recognitiones*

*Rabbinics*

‘Erub = ‘Erubin  
 NumR = Bemidbar Rabbah  
 PR = Pesiqta Rabbati  
 Shab = Šabbat

*Dead Sea Scrolls*

4QBer<sup>a</sup> = The ‘Blessings’ or ‘Berakōt’  
 from Qumrān Cave 4  
 4QBer<sup>b</sup> = Another copy of the  
 ‘Blessings’ or ‘Berakōt’ from  
 Qumrān Cave 4  
 4QEn<sup>a</sup> = The ‘Enoch’s books’ from  
 Qumrān Cave 4  
 4QEn<sup>c</sup> = The ‘Enoch’s books’ from  
 Qumrān Cave 4  
 4QEn<sup>e</sup> = The ‘Enoch’s books’ from  
 Qumrān Cave 4  
 4QNJ<sup>a</sup> = The ‘New Jerusalem’ from  
 Qumrān Cave 4

*Hellenistic Jewish Authors*

Ps-Philo = Pseudo-Philo

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<sup>166</sup> Only once as OTP is cited James H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., «The Anchor Bible Reference Library» (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985).