Interpreting Vision:

a survey of patristic reception of the Transfiguration

and its earliest depiction,

with special reference to the Gospel of Luke.

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300 Word Thesis Abstract

This thesis shows that patristic interpretation of the Transfiguration had a sensitivity to visionary and ecstatic motifs within the synoptic Transfiguration narratives, and particularly Luke's, which prompted a rich breadth of hermeneutic interaction with our texts. I offer the evidence of my survey of the reception history of the Transfiguration in the first 900 years of Christian history as a way of filling a number of gaps in knowledge in modern biblical scholarship concerning the Transfiguration narratives.

This thesis begins, in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, with an appraisal of interpretation offered by modern biblical scholars, patrologists, and art historians. Critical comment often overlooks a series of ambiguities in the narratives, particularly the distinct characteristics of Luke's version. These include the question of whether the disciples enter the overshadowing cloud, the presence of priestly or cultic imagery, visionary motifs frequently found in apocalyptic texts, such as the disciples' drowsiness, and Peter's confusion at not knowing what he said.

Chapters 4-7 examine the earliest reception in 2 Peter, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Acts of Peter,* explore at some length Origen's and Tertullian's interpretation, and also look at Latin and Greek comment after Origen. I show many ancient writers to understand the disciples as experiencing ecstatic vision. Some also use cultic language appertaining to the Jerusalem Temple in their exegesis of the Transfiguration. They also employ the narrative to interpret other prophetic or

visionary texts. Many of these distinguishing features of interpretation frequently stem from their attentiveness to the Lucan narrative.

Chapter 8 examines the earliest artistic depictions of the Transfiguration from the sixth century onwards. This chapter indicates that many of the visionary and cultic themes we have outlined in previous chapters are frequently overlooked by art historians, and also that Luke's narrative exercised a greater influence on representation of the Transfiguration than many people have imagined.

This thesis concludes with a reconsideration of the visionary character of the Transfiguration narratives. Many of the ambiguities, overlooked details, and distinctive traits we pointed to in our opening chapters will be seen to have had much greater significance through many centuries of early hermeneutic tradition and artistic depiction than is the case in modern historical critical scholarship.

2,500 Word Thesis Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to highlight the diverse hermeneutic and artistic traditions which emerge from readings of the synoptic Transfiguration narratives through the first 900 years of Christian history. I examine patristic comment on the Transfiguration, accounts in biblical commentary, sermons, theological works, and its visual depiction in a wide range of media, including illuminated manuscripts, carved ivory, and icons in painted and mosaic form. I focus especially on interpretation of the Transfiguration which explores its status as an experience of vision. I also take account of the liturgical and architectural contexts in which images of the Transfiguration were intended to be seen. As part of this exploration, I show the Lucan account frequently plays a more significant role in the history of interpretation than has often been noticed. I use the insights gained in this patristic survey as a way of supplementing some of the gaps and shortcomings present in modern comment on the Transfiguration narratives.

I will restrict the time span I examine to the period from the first century up to 900AD. That time frame includes not just the flourishing of textual comment in the patristic period, but also encompasses some of the first attempts to depict the Transfiguration in the visual arts. Extending the parameters of this thesis to 900AD, therefore, allows the earliest visual depiction of the Transfiguration to be included in our survey of interpretation. Restricting my period of focus to the first 900 years of Christian history also allows me, within the limitations of space imposed by a doctoral thesis, to concentrate on one distinct period of reception. My thesis aims, therefore, to explore at some depth one discreet period and a number of modes of

theological expression within it, rather than surveying a longer period, or a more narrow range of interpretation, at a more superficial level.

Chapters 1-3: Research Question

In the first three chapters I establish the research question this thesis is intended to address: how did ancient Christian commentators and artists interpret the synoptic Transfiguration narratives, and what role did Luke's version in particular have within that history of interpretation? I offer an outline of the characteristics of the Transfiguration narratives found in the New Testament and point to a number of ambiguities, complexities, and differences between the different synoptic versions which modern biblical scholars sometimes overlook or find it difficult to assess. Chapter 2 is an exhaustive surveying of modern biblical scholarship on the synoptic narratives. Chapter 3 similarly examines the comment of modern patrologists on the Transfiguration narratives.

I conclude from these surveys that modern New Testament scholars have frequently found it difficult to reach a consensus on the Transfiguration's genre and literary origins. These problems often revolve around the way in which the "visionary" is understood and how it is to be accounted for. In addition, visionary and apocalyptic elements within the Transfiguration narratives have sometimes been ignored or explained only with difficulty. It also becomes clear the differences between the three synoptic accounts, especially the distinctive character of the Lucan version, have often been neglected or misunderstood. Many of the ambiguities present in the Lucan version are sometimes overlooked or the cause of confusion. It is also evident that most modern biblical scholarship on the Transfiguration takes place with no reference

whatsoever to ancient or pre-critical comment and to interpretation at the hands of early artists. Modern patrologists have also seldom been interested in hermeneutic questions and especially in how the language and imagery of Luke's Transfiguration narrative expresses the incident's status as vision.

I argue that a survey of ancient biblical comment shows patristic biblical commentators to be much more sensitive to ecstatic, visionary experience. This prompted them to make connections between the Transfiguration and other prophetic or visionary texts, and to see, especially in Luke's account, the significance of language and motifs appertaining to ecstatic vision. The contribution of my survey is less that it is simply an exercise in cataloguing patristic thought, and more that my investigation of one period of interpretation provides something against which to compare modern approaches to the Transfiguration. That contrast allows me to supplement some of the gaps in modern comment, especially its ignoring of much earlier written comment and artistic depiction, and the frequently underestimated sensitivity and creativity of earlier perspectives.

Chapter 4 – Reception of the Transfiguration in 2 Peter, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Acts of Peter*.

In Chapter 4 I sketch out the first lines of Transfiguration interpretation which begin to emerge, especially in texts which are either written pseudonymously in Peter's voice or are narratives recounting his life and experience. I explore first the language employed by the writer of 2 Peter which speaks of the disciples being "eyewitnesses" on the Mount of Transfiguration. I argue this language may have been capable of evoking experience of ecstatic vision and the Greek mystery cults. I then explore the

way in which the *Apocalypse of Peter* sees Peter's sight as being in need of transformation so that he can witness the Transfiguration as an entry into the heavenly realm conceived as a temple-like dwelling place for God. I also show the *Acts of Peter* displays a similar concern for Peter's vision and point to it as needing miraculous change in order to witness the Transfiguration.

Chapter 5 – Tertullian and Origen

In Chapter 5, I explore the way in which Origen and Tertullian both produce interpretations of the Transfiguration orientated to visionary elements in the Transfiguration narratives. They both see in Luke's description of Peter evidence of his being in an ecstatic state. Tertullian uses the Transfiguration in a two-pronged attack against Marcion on the one hand, and the opponents of Montanist prophecy on the other. He sees in Luke's description of Peter's experience a legitimising example of the sort of ecstatic prophecy practised amongst Montanist adherents, and understands this ecstatic state to have crucial epistemic value. Against Marcion, he uses the Transfiguration to interpret several Old Testament passages, and sees in many of them evidence of similar visionary experience on the part of the prophets.

I then compare this interpretation with that found in Origen. He uses temple and high priestly imagery to explain the Transfiguration, he is influenced by Luke's account, and he is amongst the first to interpret the Transfiguration narratives through comparison with Philippians 2. However, Origen also marks the first juncture at which the Transfiguration is interpreted as a metaphor for the faithful's reading and understanding of the scriptures. He also sees it as exemplifying the soul's ascent to contemplation of the divine. Origen sees Peter's ecstasy, which Tertullian felt to be so

valuable, in a much more ambivalent light and, indeed, sees it as demonic in origin. We see in these two interpreters comment which is highly sensitised to ecstasy's role in the Transfiguration narrative, but which values it very differently. It is noteworthy that large amounts of their comment are focussed on specifically Lucan elements of the New Testament narrative.

Chapter 6 – Interpretation of the Transfiguration in the Greek East after Origen.

Chapter 6 outlines reception of the Transfiguration narratives amongst Eastern Greek commentators writing after Origen. I argue a considerable degree of ambiguity emerges amongst these writers concerning how the Transfiguration was "seen" by the disciples. Many questions emerge in their discourse such. How does the "seeing" of the disciples at the Transfiguration relate to the eschatological "seeing," which faithful Christians can hope for in God's heavenly Kingdom? Do the disciples see the Transfiguration with their mortal faculties of sense, or are their minds transformed to see supernatural realities beyond mortal gaze? Is the glory they witness the same as that to be beheld at the Parousia or a lesser version of it? Does the Transfiguration overwhelm their sense of sight, or is their sight changed to enable them to view it?

Two commentators stand out, however, who offer very distinct interpretations of the disciples' sight of the Transfiguration rooted in details found only in Luke's narrative. In both Anastasius of Sinai and in John Chrysostom, Luke's Transfiguration account prompts either in the disciples, or in the preacher's hearers, a vision of heaven. Anastasius of Sinai is the only commentator I have encountered after Origen and Tertullian explicitly to describe Peter as gripped by ecstasy. He sees the

Transfiguration as prompting in the disciples a direct vision of heaven and of immaterial and immortal realities, which is visualised in their transformed minds as an entry into the heavenly realm. John Chrysostom, by contrast, sees the Transfiguration as a vision principally apprehended by mortal faculties of physical sight. This prompts him to suggest a different, imaginative interaction with the narratives in which his hearer visualises the entry into heaven which he understands the Transfiguration to signify. I use Mary Carruthers' work to examine Chrysostom's interpretation in the light of ancient notions of memory and the imagination, an exercise which enables me to point to similarities between his approach and that of Anastasius, which otherwise seems so different. I show both Chrysostom and Anastasius to be sensitive to visionary motifs in Luke' version, and to see these elements as key evidence for their arguments.

Chapter 7 – Interpretation of the Transfiguration in the Latin West after Tertullian.

Chapter 7 examines reception of the Transfiguration as vision amongst Latin writing commentators. The review of modern comment on Latin interpretation of the Transfiguration undertaken in Chapter 3 reveals a tendency by some modern patrologists to prioritise Greek interpretation of the Transfiguration over Latin. I aim in this chapter to show how Latin comment on the Transfiguration was capable of great creativity and originality, particularly when interpreting the Transfiguration in the light of other scriptural texts. Latin commentary also displays an understanding of the disciples' vision as apprehended principally by mortal faculties of sight.

This chapter outlines, therefore, some of the most distinctive elements of Latin discussion of the Transfiguration, and especially of Luke's text. I show Latin comment to be eager to deny Peter is in any sort of ecstatic state, and to interpret the Lucan details of his not knowing what he said and the disciples' sleepiness in terms of simple joy and mortal sight. Latin commentators also place more importance on the overshadowing cloud and associate Luke's emphasis on the disciples' entry into it with the Holy Spirit's transforming of the mind. In addition, Latin theologians use the Transfiguration as an important hermeneutic key with which to interpret other scriptural texts, such as Isaiah 7, and Luke's birth narratives. They also bring a more corporate understanding of the eschatological vision of God to bear on their interpretation and frequently compare the Transfiguration with Revelation 21 and Hebrews 7. The importance of many of these hermeneutic connections will become particularly evident in the next chapter, where I show their playing an important role in the earliest depictions of the Transfiguration in Rome and Ravenna.

Chapter 8 – the earliest depiction of the Transfiguration

In Chapter 8 I examine the earliest visual depictions of the Transfiguration which remain from the sixth century onwards in manuscripts, icons, ivories, and mosaic form in both East and West.

In the great Transfiguration mosaic of St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, I argue we see a depiction of that moment of entry into the cloud and the presence of God so emphasised by Luke, something compared with the theophanies to Moses on Sinai. I argue few have realised the full influence of Luke's narrative on this mosaic. In the church of S. Apollinare in Classe, I argue we see an interpretation heavily dependent

on the sort of reading found in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which sees the Transfiguration as an entry into the heavenly temple-dwelling of God and an experience of celestial paradise.

I then explore visual interpretation in the latter part of our period. I focus on a strand of interpretation which emerges in depiction of the Transfiguration in eighth and ninth century Rome, which seeks to interpret the Transfiguration with reference to the Book of Revelation. I look at the three depictions of the Transfiguration in the churches Pope Paschal I constructed, S. Prassede, and S. Maria in Domnica, and also in the Church of Ss. Nereo e Achilleo, built by his predecessor Leo III. I show the presence in visual form of a number of interpretative impulses which we examined in written comment in Chapter 7, especially rooted in comparison with other prophetic scriptural texts, and often dependent on details found only in Luke's narrative. This chapter also reveals the significance of the liturgical setting in which the Transfiguration narratives were depicted and the way in which that interacted with the political agenda of the bishops who sponsored the creation of these images.

I conclude by showing the presence of readings of the Transfiguration in the light of Revelation 21 and 22 in other artistic media. I show a ninth century ivory housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum and an illustration from the Utrecht Psalter also display this hermeneutic tradition.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

In this final chapter I return to several visionary details in the synoptic narratives which I highlighted in Chapters 1-3, and summarise the different ways in which they

were interpreted by the many different commentators and artists which we have examined. I show a number of different understandings and emphases to be present in comment concerning the character of the disciples' vision, and divide these into five broad categories: some speak of the apostles' mortal vision being altered; others of the vision on the mountain of Transfiguration as requiring no change in mortal sight at all; some see their vision as prompting the way to greater vision and visualising of different sorts; others emphasise the Transfiguration as principally offering a metaphor for vision of God; whilst others still see it as a form of vision to be compared with other visions and prophecy in the Christian scriptures. This summary prompts a further reflection on questions of vision, in which I use the work of Stephen Pattison and Martin Jay. I use Jay's notion of "scopic regime" to show how ancient commentators and artists shared a closer understanding of the mechanisms of vision with the writers of the New Testament than do modern commentators and that this is possibly the source of some of the confusion and lack of consensus we detected in modern historical-critical studies of the Transfiguration.

I then summarise the importance of the Lucan narrative in the reception history of the Transfiguration. I show how important a role Lucan elements play within discourse about the visionary status of the Transfiguration, such as, the entry into the cloud, his mention of, "glory," and, "exodus," the connections he makes to the Ascension, his mention of sleep, and of Peter's not knowing what he said, and a number of priestly, tabernacle, and temple themes which are read into Lucan detail.

In the final sections of my conclusion I point to two areas whose significance this thesis shows are in need of considerable reappraisal. The first of these is the creativity

of the Latin tradition of Transfiguration interpretation. I show Latin interpretation of the Transfiguration was capable of great hermeneutic ingenuity, especially in the way it compared the Transfiguration with other visionary and prophetic texts, and in the way in which this was often shown in its earliest depiction of the event. The second area is the importance of visual depiction itself in the processes of the scriptural reception. I use the work of Chidester to show this is particularly apposite when examining texts which claim to be the fruit of visionary experience. Artistic depiction allows several images, ideas, and texts to be held together in a way which resists prioritisation and ordering, and which allows a series of more allusive connections to be made between them. Using O'Hear's concept of "visionary visual exegesis," I argue artistic interpretation is also capable of expressing something of the visionary character of the Transfiguration in a way which a writer of words is unable to. In addition, the liturgical space in which many of the images we have examined were placed must also be taken into account in assessing the ways in which the Transfiguration narrative was understood to be actualised and experienced in the lives of those who first worshipped underneath these images.

I conclude by arguing this thesis is not intended to show modern approaches to be useless or misconceived. I simply aim to reveal that the reflections of modern scholarship take place in the context of a much older body of comment, interpretation, depiction, and imaginative engagement with our texts, and that this older body of reflection can be a source of fruitful hermeneutic insight.

Interpreting Vision:

a survey of patristic reception of the Transfiguration

and its earliest depiction,

with special reference to the Gospel of Luke

Introduction

This thesis examines the diverse hermeneutic and artistic traditions which emerge from readings of the synoptic Transfiguration narratives, from the time of the New Testament's composition to 900AD, with particular reference to the role which Luke's version has played in those readings.

0.1 Research Question

This thesis responds to the following research question: how did ancient Christian commentators and artists interpret the synoptic Transfiguration narratives, and what role did Luke's version in particular have within that history of interpretation? The need for an answering of that research question arises from the exhaustive surveying of patristic sources, and also of the modern literature written both on the New Testament texts themselves, and on patristic interpretation of those texts, with which I began this research project. That survey of modern comment revealed a series of gaps in knowledge, which this thesis fills.

An extensive review of modern New Testament scholarship on the synoptic narratives is found in Chapter 2 of this thesis. That survey points to certain shortcomings in existing scholarly comment. The first is the almost complete absence of any reference to patristic interpretation by modern New Testament scholars. This lack of reference to patristic comment seems to stem partly from the field of questions to which modern historical-critical scholarship has restricted itself. It has tended to focus on the historical origins of the narratives, what can be said about the communities that first produced them, and the way in which they relate on a literary and theological level to

the gospels in which they are found. It has tended to be much less interested in the history of interpretation of the Transfiguration texts, and the different ways in which they have been interpreted through Christian history. A frequent characteristic of modern comment is also a scepticism concerning the historical veracity of the narratives' claim to be accounts of a visionary experience. A consequence of this is a lack of consensus amongst modern critical commentators as to how these narratives ought best to be accounted for. The presupposition that they did not originate in the sort of visionary experience recounted in the synoptic gospels has also led modern New Testament scholars to be less interested in a series of visionary themes, motifs, and language used by the gospel writers, and especially Luke, to express how the disciples apprehended the incident.

An important contribution to knowledge this thesis makes, therefore, is to understanding better the history of interpretation of the Transfiguration narratives. Historical-critical comment does not take place in a vacuum, but frequently builds on, or is influenced by, earlier Christian hermeneutic traditions. I argue for an appreciation of the care and attentiveness to linguistic detail with which patristic commentators approach the biblical text, and the subtlety and creativity they employ in the processes of interpretation. I hope to show, for example, that many modern avenues of interpretation were advocated by early Christian commentators, and also that ancient writers had a sensitivity to the significance of visionary elements in a way that modern scholars sometimes lack.

A second major gap in knowledge which the survey of New Testament scholarship presented in Chapter 2 reveals, is an overlooking by many New Testament

commentators of the hermeneutic possibilities present in language appertaining to visionary experience within the synoptic narratives. The examination of the New Testament texts which I undertake in Chapter 1 lays out many of these linguistic ambiguities. Many of them stem from features only found in Luke's narrative, which, I argue, are capable of evoking connections with apocalyptic and visionary texts. These include themes such as Luke's insistence that the disciples enter the cloud with Jesus, Luke's hint at Peter not being in his right mind and at the disciples' sleepiness, his language of *glory* and *exodus,* and connections he draws with the Ascension narrative of Acts 1. With the exception of a small number of scholars, most modern commentators seem to have underestimated the capacity these elements have to present the Transfiguration as a visionary experience, and the way in which Luke's version particularly emphasises this.

The evidence I marshal in this thesis shows this state of affairs not always to have been the case, and supplements this second shortcoming in New Testament scholarship. I show patristic commentators and artists understood the visionary character of the experience recounted at the Transfiguration in a range of different ways. They frequently saw the importance of visionary motifs and language, and drew these strands of interpretation out through the comparisons they make between the Transfiguration and a range of prophetic and apocalyptic texts. I show elements within Luke's narrative to play a crucial role in the way in which these visionary themes are explored by ancient commentators.

The second exhaustive survey of modern comment which I made at the commencement of this research project was of modern writers' comment on patristic

interpretation of the Transfiguration. This revealed a series of further lacunae in their treatment, which makes my research question necessary. An assessment of modern comment on patristic interpretation can be found in Chapter 3. The first shortcoming this reveals is the simple fact that whilst a number of scholars have attempted to survey patristic comment in a series of different works, few have been sufficiently focused on hermeneutic questions appertaining to the question of visionary language within the narratives. Many scholars of the patristic era approach the Transfiguration narratives through a decidedly doctrinal lens, seeing discussion of the Transfiguration as part of wider theological discourse concerning human ascesis, epistemological questions, and speculation of an anthropological or eschatological nature. The wide ranging study of patristic sources with which I began this research project revealed a much greater degree of complexity within patristic understandings of the disciples' visionary experience of the Transfiguration than many patrologists appear to realise. The question of precisely how ancient commentators interpreted the Transfiguration narratives as expressing vision, sight, and seeing tends to be neglected. This thesis corrects that neglect and contributes to scholarly knowledge by revealing the spectrum of hermeneutic approaches that were taken by ancient interpreters trying to understand what it meant for the disciples to *see* the Transfiguration, and especially the importance of the Lucan narrative within that discourse about vision.

The review of modern patrologists' comment which I lay out in Chapter 3 also reveals a neglect of the Western Latin tradition of Transfiguration interpretation. Many modern scholars who comment on the Transfiguration either come from the Eastern Orthodox tradition, or are heavily influenced by it, and have tended to be more interested in the comment of the Greek Fathers. The history of the depiction of the

Transfiguration is also dominated by a focus on the Eastern iconographic tradition, with a relative neglect of depiction in Latin contexts. This focus on Greek interpretation has sometimes conspired to create the implicit value judgement in some comment that Greek traditions of interpretation and depiction are richer, more mature, and more artistically accomplished than Latin ones in the period we are examining. The evidence I present in this thesis shows the need to challenge that assumption. I show in Chapter 8 that Latin traditions produce a wide range of hermeneutically complex interpretations, with a series of distinct focuses and emphases. I also present evidence in Chapter 8 that artistic presentation is used in Ravenna, Rome, and France to compare the incident with a wide range of scriptural passages. This thesis is intended in part, therefore, to address the scholarly neglect from which early Latin iconographic traditions of Transfiguration depiction have suffered.

A further contribution to knowledge this thesis accomplishes is an underlining of the significance of visual depiction in the history of the reception of New Testament texts. Much comment by modern patrologists takes place with little reference to artistic depiction of the Transfiguration, whilst the perspective of many art historians is sometimes insufficiently informed by theological knowledge and understanding. I show visual interpretation is able to communicate the visionary character of the Transfiguration in ways that written comment does not. Artistic depiction, for example, enables the Transfiguration to be presented simultaneously with imagery from texts claiming to be the fruit of visionary experience. Experience of the Transfiguration presented in pictorial form is also one of the most important ways in which passages from the Transfiguration are called to mind during viewers' experience of the liturgy. The visionary character of the Transfiguration narrative, and

elements from Luke's narrative, come together to allow artistic depiction of the incident to make important comparisons and connections in ways different from written comment.

0.2 Choice of material to be covered

I have shown this thesis is necessary by highlighting several gaps in scholarly knowledge. In certain respects, the survey I undertake in this thesis is not dissimilar to the approach taken by Ian Boxall in his recent examination of the reception history of the significance of the island of Patmos in interpretation of the Book of Revelation. Boxall opens his work by exploring the range of meaning and hermeneutic possibilities present in the syntax of Revelation 1.9.[1] He then surveys the role Patmos has played in the different ways Rev 1.9 has been interpreted through the whole of Christian history. This thesis will similarly begin by examining the Transfiguration narratives afresh and showing a range of meaning to be present in language appertaining to vision present in them. Whereas Boxall's survey of interpretation history is exhaustive, I restrict mine to the period up to 900 AD and have to be selective in the material I choose to present.

As I show in Chapter 2 that the simple task of cataloguing patristic comment on the Transfiguration is one that has been accomplished by other scholars, the most needful focus for this thesis is comment whose significance has been overlooked, and material which answers those gaps in knowledge which I have outlined above. In chapters 4-7, I will particularly focus on material that reveals how the Transfiguration was understood by ancient writers to be a visionary experience, and the ways in which

[1] Ian Boxall, *Patmos in the Reception History of the Apocalypse* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2013), pp. 14-27.

details from the Lucan narrative are used as part of that discourse. A further focus will be material which reveals the hermeneutic processes by which the Transfiguration narratives are compared with other scriptural texts, often of a prophetic, or apocalyptic character. In sum, the material I present in this thesis is not intended to be a comprehensive account of all patristic Transfiguration interpretation, but a very specific response to a precise research question concerning the visionary character of the Transfiguration, the hermeneutic processes employed to interpret the synoptic narratives, and the role of details from Luke's version.

0.3 Justification of historical scope

The exhaustive time span Boxall's survey ranges across is possible because of the much narrower focus of his study on one verse. The length of the Transfiguration narratives, along with the greater amount written on them, means such an wide ranging study is not possible within the confines of a 100,000 word thesis. This thesis will therefore limit itself to the period up to 900 AD.

My justification for extending the period usually conceived of as the patristic era to 900 stems principally from wanting to include the earliest visual depiction of the Transfiguration in this thesis. I show how it expresses much of the theology expounded by earlier writers, and how, in turn, these images continue to influence worshippers, writers and artists who reflect on those images. The first examples of such depictions do not emerge until the sixth century in Ravenna and Sinai, but are followed by both a lull in creativity in the West, and periods of iconoclasm in the East, which mean we have very few further images until those of the ninth century which start to appear in mosaic work found in Rome. I argue our period needs to

extend to 900, therefore, in order to take full account of the earliest interpretation of the Transfiguration by including the first examples of visual depiction.

A terminus of 900AD, however, also means our survey does not include the philosophical discussion which emerges in later Eastern Palamite controversy, or the debates of Western Medieval theologians concerning the Transfiguration. Both of these periods have received significant attention in scholarly discourse. Much discussion of the Transfiguration after 900 AD forms part of wider philosophical debates concerning anthropology, epistemology, and questions appertaining to the Resurrection in a way that often moves away from direct interpretation of the Transfiguration texts, and can reside almost entirely in the realm of philosophical discourse. I have decided, therefore, to restrict my historical period solely to the years just before the emergence of these very distinct, and in many ways different debates, so as to be able to concentrate on two corpuses of evidence: the earliest written comment of the Christian era, and the earliest depictions which survive.

A further justification lies in the fact that the methodological focus of my thesis is hermeneutic in character rather than historical. By this I mean I am more concerned with revealing *how* a specific series of texts was interpreted, the mechanisms of logic which drew exegetes to various interpretations, and the contexts within which those texts were read. The principal focus of my work is to explain *how* these texts were interpreted *theologically*, rather than drawing up a linear history of doctrine or art. The fact that the time span I have set is a long one, full of change and development, is not, therefore, a problem when one recognises my focus is the hermeneutics of theological interpretation, rather than exhaustive historical account.

0.4 Preliminary Definitions: "vision" and "visionary"

Before any attempt is made to answer the research question I have outlined above, it is necessary to define several of the terms I have used, and to outline how I intend to understand them throughout this thesis. The most important of these terms is "vision," and its related adjective "visionary." In addition, it is important to define how these words relate to the adjective "visual" and the verb to "visualise."

Throughout our survey of the Transfiguration, we note a range of Greek and Latin nouns and verbs appertaining to sight, vision, and light being used by ancient writers with a wide spectrum of meanings. No less complex an array of meaning will be attached by modern scholars to a similar range of modern vocabulary. At times the notion of "vision" will be used to refer by commentators to something apprehended by physical sight, often with strong forensic connotations, as the providing of objective evidence for the Transfiguration having happened as it is recounted. At other times it will be meant in a metaphorical sense, referring to "vision" as intellectual understanding or some sort of emotional or intuitive apprehension. Further complexity is introduced by the fact that the Transfiguration claims to be a miraculous vision which is, in some sense, out of the ordinary. The way in which the Transfiguration represents altered vision, or transformed sight will also stretch the boundaries of what is meant by these terms. The relationship of vision to dream and fantasy further complicates questions of semantic meaning. Sometimes the term "vision" is used to refer to the visualising, or calling forth of images in the mind, both in contexts where the conscious mind seems to be is in control, and also in contexts where it seems not to be. In addition, a frequent focus of comment is the way in which the disciples' vision is overcome as they fall on their faces. In such a scenario, the

Transfiguration's status as "vision" paradoxically lies in the fact that it results in *lack* of sight, and blindness. It is important to signal here, however, that I intend to define "vision" as a notion with as wide a range of meaning as possible. Indeed, one of the important insights this thesis brings to scholarship is an emphasis on just how broadly the term has been understood in the history of patristic hermeneutics.

In this thesis, I will understand the term "vision" to describe any experience understood either as perception with the sense of sight, and/or a visualising within the mind, and/or as metaphorically akin to any of those processes. "Vision" in this sense could be the fruit of sense experience, fantasy, imagination, delusion, mental disturbance, dream, prayer, intellectual activity, thought processes, or any combination of the above. The important point for this thesis is not including or excluding different experiences within a tight definition of vision, but rather to reveal the wide range of ways in which the term "vision" was understood, and to be attentive to showing how notions of sight and vision operate in different theologians' and artists' reflections on the Transfiguration's significance. As a consequence, I will understand the term "visionary" to be an adjective describing the experience of "vision," or something that appertains closely to "vision."

The term "visual," however, I want to define in a narrower sense. I understand "visual" interpretation to describe the depiction of imagery intended to be perceived through the faculty of sight, which results in a visualising in the mind. In terms of this thesis' subject, this could describe figurative artistic interpretation which presents the viewer with images of the Transfiguration, which otherwise would have to be described in a verbal narrative. It is, therefore, difficult to use the term "visual," as

defined in this way, of metaphorical uses of the term "vision." By "metaphorical," I mean an intellectual experience understood as akin to "vision" in the solely analogous sense that the mind apprehends God without any sense of form or image. Whilst "vision" and "visionary" may refer to a range of experiences appertaining to the sense of sight, intellectual thought, fantasy, dream or things metaphorically akin to them, I will use the term "visual" to speak solely of figurative depiction of the Transfiguration, or the perceiving of figurative depiction of the Transfiguration through physical sight. Related to this is my use of the verb to "visualise." I understand this to involve the creation or calling forth within the mind of figurative imagery as a way of presenting or expressing an idea or experience. In this sense, a blind person might not be able to see "visual" depiction of the Transfiguration, but may still be able to "visualise" the image in his or her mind. Whilst a "visual" experience results in the "visualising" of a subject, a "visionary" experience may indeed do the same, but need not necessarily result in the same calling forth of image in the mind, as the experience could be "visionary" in a solely metaphoric sense.

0.5 Preliminary definitions: tabernacle, temple, and priestly imagery

One consequence of this thesis' discussion of the Transfiguration's status as "vision" is a series of interpretations which emerge comparing the Transfiguration to the heavenly tabernacle, the Jerusalem Temple, and which introduce priestly motifs, sometimes seeing the transfigured Christ as a High Priest. A dynamic frequently present in apocalyptic texts is the presentation of a seer's entry into the presence of God in heaven, often conceived as a tabernacle or temple dwelling.[2] In addition, visionary descriptions of heaven in apocalyptic texts often mention the presence of

[2] E.g. 1 Enoch 14; Rev 21.22ff.

priestly worshippers, or present the heavenly company worshiping in a temple space.[3] Whilst there is an obvious connection between apocalyptic texts, visionary concerns, tabernacle, temple and priestly motifs, these motifs are not always employed in the same way by patristic commentators, and such language must be carefully judged. At times, the Transfiguration may be seen as clearly evoking Jesus as a High Priestly figure, and to be part of an analogy drawn with the cultic life of the Jerusalem Temple. At other times, however, it may simply be that commentators are using the language of cult and holiness to express God's separateness, or comparing the Transfiguration in a broader sense with experience of God's glorious presence in heaven. It is also the case that temple analogies are used in the ancient world to describe purely intellectual apprehension of God, [4] and so temple centred interpretations could also be drawing a comparison with an intellectual process rather than a specific comparison with the Jewish cult. At the same time, tent and tabernacle vocabulary can also draw on imagery associated with the Exodus wilderness narratives, or the feast of Sukkoth. I argue this series of cultic, priestly and tabernacle motifs, which many ancient authors associate with the Transfiguration, has often gone unnoticed by modern commentators. At the same time, it is important not to give the impression that this wide range of "cultic" images and ideas are necessarily part of a coherent strand of interpretation consistently making the same point and drawing the same sort of comparison between the Transfiguration, apocalyptic texts, and the life of the Jerusalem Temple. It will be important, in each instance, to make clear how each example of priestly, temple, or tabernacle imagery is employed by patristic commentators, and precisely what sort of connection or comparison is being created.

[3] E.g. Rev 5.10.
[4] See discussion on pp. 273-76 of this thesis.

0.6 Outline of the thesis

In Section 1 of this thesis (Chapters 1-3), I outline a number of gaps in modern scholarship concerning the Transfiguration, and propose a survey of patristic interpretation as a useful way of filling those gaps. In Chapter 1, I examine the New Testament Transfiguration narratives and highlight a number of linguistic and syntactical ambiguities found within them. In Chapter 2, I survey modern scholarly comment on those passages, and conclude that historical-critical comment has frequently found it difficult to reach a consensus concerning these ambiguities, or on the Transfiguration's genre and literary origins. These difficulties often revolve around the way in which the "visionary" is described, understood and accounted for. This survey also reveals the way in which modern biblical scholarship almost universally ignores the contribution of pre-critical comment to exegesis of the Transfiguration narratives. It also becomes clear that the differences between the three synoptic accounts, especially the distinctive character of the Lucan version, have often been insufficiently noted or explained. In Chapter 3, I review the literature written by modern patrologists on the Transfiguration and show few to have focused on hermeneutic questions, and that a certain scholarly neglect exists concerning Latin traditions of interpretation and depiction. I then argue that a survey of ancient biblical comment shows patristic biblical commentators to be sensitive to ecstatic, visionary experience. This prompts them to make connections between the Transfiguration and other prophetic or visionary texts, and to see, especially in Luke's account, the significance of language and motifs appertaining to ecstatic vision.

Section 2 of this thesis (Chapters 4-7) explores the earliest written interpretation of the Transfiguration narratives. In Chapter 4, I explore the reception of the synoptic

Transfiguration narratives in 2 Peter, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Acts of Peter*. In these texts written about, or in the name of Peter, I look especially at the the ways in which ideas to do with the disciples' vision are explored. I count the Transfiguration narratives in 2 Peter and the *Apocalypse of Peter* as the earliest examples we have of reception of the synoptic texts. Although some have argued 2 Peter and the *Apocalypse of Peter* could be witnesses to Transfiguration traditions separate from the synoptic gospels, I conclude they are more likely to be later than the synoptic traditions and that as such they should be considered as the first examples of writers reworking and reinterpreting the synoptic texts. I begin by looking at the way in which the language of the apostles being *eyewitnesses* in 2 Peter's account could be capable of evoking notions of ecstatic vision and esoteric knowledge. I then explore the way in which the *Apocalypse of Peter* interprets the Transfiguration as an entry into the heavenly realm conceived as a temple-like dwelling place for God, through linking it closely with Jesus' Ascension. I then examine the emphasis found in the *Acts of Peter* on the Transfiguration as an experience involving an alteration in Peter's vision.

In Chapter 5 I examine the way in which Origen and Tertullian both produce interpretations of the Transfiguration orientated to visionary elements in the narratives. I examine them both together in this chapter because of the way in which they bring remarkably different interpretations to bear on the same details within our narratives. We see in these two writers, who write at almost the same time, but in a very different cultural milieux, two interpretations which focus on very similar details, yet come to different conclusions concerning them. Both see in Luke's description of Peter evidence of his being in an ecstatic state. Tertullian sees in Peter's

experience a legitimising example of the sort of ecstatic prophecy practised amongst Montanist adherents which he seeks to defend against opponents. He understands this ecstatic state to have epistemic value. He also uses the Transfiguration to interpret several Old Testament passages, and sees in many of them evidence of similar visionary experience on the part of the prophets. By contrast, Origen sees ecstasy in a more ambivalent light, and, Peter's ecstasy as specifically demonic in origin. Origen also describes the transfigured Christ as a high priestly figure, and uses comparison with entry into a temple to describe the way in which the Transfiguration acts as a metaphor for human understanding of the divine. He also interprets the Transfiguration narratives through comparison with Philippians 2, and I speculate whether a number of connections are made on his part between the Transfiguration and episodes in Luke's infancy narratives through use of Philippians 2. We see in these two interpreters comment highly sensitised to ecstasy's role in the Transfiguration narrative, but which values it very differently. It is noteworthy that large amounts of their comment are focused on specifically Lucan elements of the New Testament narrative.

Chapter 6 outlines reception of the Transfiguration narratives amongst Greek commentators writing after Origen. I argue a degree of ambiguity emerges amongst these writers concerning how the Transfiguration was "seen" by the disciples. This ambiguity surrounds how their "seeing" relates to the eschatological "seeing," which faithful Christians can hope for in God's heavenly Kingdom. Many different opinions exist, for example, concerning whether the glory they witness is the same as that to be beheld at the Parousia, or whether it is a lesser version of it. Further complexity surrounds whether Greek commentators understand the Transfiguration to overwhelm

the disciples' sense of sight, or whether their sight is changed to enable them to view it. I show that in the midst of this lack of clarity, two commentators stand out offering very different interpretations of the disciples' sight of the Transfiguration rooted in details found only in Luke's narrative. In the homiletic reflections of Anastasius of Sinai and in John Chrysostom, Luke's Transfiguration account prompts either in the disciples or in the preacher's hearers, a vision of heaven. Anastasius of Sinai is the only commentator I have encountered after Origen and Tertullian explicitly to describe Peter as gripped by ecstasy. He sees the Transfiguration as prompting in the disciples a direct vision of heaven and of immaterial and immortal realities, which is visualised in their transformed minds as an entry into the heavenly realm. John Chrysostom, by contrast, sees the Transfiguration as a vision principally apprehended by mortal faculties of physical sight. This prompts him to suggest a different, imaginative interaction with the narratives, in which his hearer visualises the entry into heaven which he understands the Transfiguration to signify. I show both Chrysostom and Anastasius to be sensitive to visionary motifs in Luke's version, and to see these elements as evidence for their arguments.

Chapter 7 outlines reception of the Transfiguration amongst Latin commentators after Tertullian. I aim in this chapter to show how Latin comment on the Transfiguration was capable of great creativity and originality, particularly when interpreting the Transfiguration in the light of other scriptural texts. Latin commentary also displays a very different understanding of what it means for the disciples to "see" the Transfiguration, an understanding much more in line with Chrysostom's view of a vision apprehended principally by mortal faculties of sight. I show Latin comment to be eager to deny Peter is in any sort of ecstatic state, and to interpret the Lucan details

of his not knowing what he said, and the disciples' sleepiness in terms of simple joy and mortal sight. Latin commentators also place more importance on the overshadowing cloud and associate Luke's emphasis on the disciples' entry into it with the Holy Spirit's transforming of the mind. In addition, Western theologians use the Transfiguration as an important hermeneutic key with which to interpret other scriptural texts, such as Isaiah 7, and Luke's birth narratives. They sometimes bring a more corporate understanding of the eschatological vision of God to bear on their interpretation and some compare the Transfiguration with Revelation 21 and Hebrews 7. The importance of many of these hermeneutic connections will become particularly evident in Chapter 8, where I seek to show their playing an important role in the earliest Western depictions of the Transfiguration.

In chapter 8, I examine the earliest visual depictions of the Transfiguration which remain from the sixth century onwards in manuscripts, icons and church decoration. In the monastery of St Catherine, Mount Sinai, I argue we see a depiction of that moment of entry into the cloud and the presence of God so emphasised by Luke, something compared with the theophanies to Moses on Sinai. In the mosaic of the Transfiguration in S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, I argue we see an interpretation heavily dependent on the sort of reading found in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which sees the Transfiguration as an entry into the heavenly temple-dwelling of God and an experience of celestial paradise. This chapter then focuses on a strand of interpretation which emerges in depiction of the Transfiguration in the West in the eighth and ninth centuries, which interprets the Transfiguration with reference to the Book of Revelation. I show this is present most significantly in the period of construction which took place in Rome in the ninth century in the reign of Pope

Paschal I. It will focus on the three depictions of the Transfiguration in the churches he constructed, S. Prassede, and S. Maria in Domnica, and also in the Church of Ss. Nereo e Achilleo, built by his predecessor Leo III. I show in this distinct period of church decoration in ninth century Rome, interpretation of the Transfiguration rooted in a sensitivity to the episode as visionary and as comparable with other visionary texts. This chapter finishes with an examination of two further ninth century depictions of the Transfiguration, one, an ivory diptych, the other an illustration from the Utrecht Psalter. The diptych shows the Transfiguration being compared once again with the Ascension, and the Utrecht Psalter illustration shows the Transfiguration being used as a mnemonic device for the memorising of Isaiah 12. I argue that depiction of the Transfiguration in art raises significant questions as to whether there is something about visual depiction of the Transfiguration which is particularly suited to the articulating of a reading which sees it as a visionary event.

SECTION 1: RESEARCH QUESTION

Chapter 1: The New Testament Synoptic Transfiguration narratives

In this chapter, I outline the chief characteristics of the New Testament Transfiguration narratives, and point to the critical questions which have been the focus of modern scholarly attention in them. This is intended as a preliminary outlining of the most salient textual issues before our survey of modern critical comment on them in Chapter 2.

I will restrict comment here to the synoptic narratives, as they are the principal focus of this thesis. The account of the Transfiguration in 2 Peter will be addressed in Chapter 4. Broader notions of glorification, transfiguration, and transformation are key themes in John's Gospel, and in Paul's letters, especially in 2 Corinthians 2.3. A surveying of comment on those many references could be a fruitful task and the focus of future research. It cannot, however, be accomplished within the confines of this thesis without losing a coherent focus on the research question I have set which is tightly focused on gaps in knowledge concerning interpretation of the synoptic narratives.

1.1 Mark

Mark places his Transfiguration narrative within the context of Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi, along with speculation concerning Jesus' identity, the suffering and resurrection he must undergo, and his return in judgement. Mark's Transfiguration is preceded by the assertion, at Mk 9.1, that some of those standing around will not taste death before seeing "the Kingdom of God has come with power." Interpretation of

the Transfiguration as embodying the Kingdom coming with power will be a frequent one in Patristic interpretation.[5] By contrast, historical critical comment frequently denies any historical connection between the two, seeing the logion at Mark 9.1 referring, in origin to the Parousia,[6] the Resurrection,[7] or to the in breaking of the Kingdom through Jesus' miracles.[8] Most modern commentators deny the two episodes are historically linked.[9]

The location of the mountain of Transfiguration in Mark is unclear. According to Mk 8.27, Peter's Confession takes place somewhere on the road in the region of Caesarea Philippi. The Transfiguration happens six days later, and so could be anywhere within six days' travel of that place. Origen is the first to identify the hill as Tabor, largely as the result of speculation in the light of Psalm 89.12,[10] which establishes a broad patristic consensus. By contrast, modern critical scholarship has been much more reticent about identifying the Mount of Transfiguration. However, arguments have been made for Mount Hermon as a candidate, particularly because of its height, closer location to Caesarea Philippi, and association with visionary cultic activity in the past,[11] as have arguments for Mount Meron for similar reasons.[12] Mounts Sinai (and

[5] For a summary of patristic reception of the verse with regard to the Transfiguration, see Martin Künzi, *Das Naherwartungslogion Markus 9,1* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), esp. pp. 9-11 (Greek patristic reception), and pp. 23-24, 35-36 (Latin patristic reception).
[6] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2007), p. 412; Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 67-68.
[7] C. H. Dodd, *The Coming of Christ: Four Broadcast Addresses for the Season of Advent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 13 ff.; Erich Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium erklärt* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1950), p. 86.
[8] Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), pp. 28-29.
[9] The only voice I have been able to find in modern scholarship to argue for the reading of the Transfiguration as a fulfillment of Mark 9.1 is Bruce Chilton, "The Transfiguration: Dominical Assurance and Apostolic Vision," *New Testament Studies* 27, (1980), pp. 115-24.
[10] Origen, *Hom Ps 88*, 13 (PG 12, 1548).
[11] Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1925), p. 303; George Nickelsburg, "Enoch, Levi, and Peter: Recipients of

Moriah) and Carmel have been proposed simply because of their association with Moses and Elijah, though these suggestions have not gained support.[13]

We see emerge in Mark 9 the basic Transfiguration narrative which Matthew and Luke in their turn will redact. Mk 9.2 recounts Jesus taking Peter, James, and John up to a high mountain in order to be alone. Patristic commentators will frequently speculate about the reason for the choice of those three, but no canonical gospel explicitly comments on the question. This question has evoked very little interest in modern interpretation. Mark then describes in the same verse a change which takes place to Jesus' appearance in the passive, as being "metamorphosed" before his chosen witnesses. Mark describes this metamorphosis in terms of outward appearance, and as solely concerning the colour and aspect of Jesus' clothing. He describes this as becoming "στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν," "dazzling, very white" (Mk 9.3). Though there is no direct mention of light or glory in Mark, there is possibly implicit in the insistence on Jesus' clothes being "dazzling" some notion of light in the sense of intense whiteness. The narrator also qualifies this brightness as having a non-earthly origin, being of a quality that no human fuller could achieve (Mk 9.3).

Mark continues to use language appertaining to the sense of sight to punctuate his narrative, as Moses and Elijah are described as appearing before the disciples. The use of "ὠφθη," (Mk 9.4) points to their presence only being known to the degree that

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Revelation in Upper Galilee," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100/4, (1981), pp. 575-600; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. 187.

[12] Walter Liefeld, "Theological Motifs in the Transfiguration Narrative," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. R.N. Logenecker, Tenney, M.C. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), esp. p. 167, footnote 27.

[13] For a summary of this debate, see W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), Vol 2, p. 695.

they are seen by Peter, James and John. Although depiction of this scene throughout art history will frequently place Moses and Elijah on either side of Jesus, with the disciples below,[14] no mention is made by Mark of their relative position.

Mark then describes Peter ejaculating, "Ῥαββί, καλόν ἐστιν ἡμᾶς ὧδε εἶναι," and proposing the construction of three "σκηνάς," one each for Jesus, Moses and Elijah (Mk 9.5). The range of references this word "tabernacles" could be evoking is the focus of extensive speculation in both modern and ancient exegesis. Some commentators point to traditions associated with vision of the dwelling of God in heaven described as a tabernacle, such as we see in Rev 21.3, and of these tents being reference to the dwellings of the just in heaven such as we see in *1 Enoch* 39;[15] others will see echoes of Sukkoth motifs, and through those some sort of comparison with the Jerusalem Temple;[16] further Moses echoes have also been discussed concerning possible evocation of the Tent of Meeting.[17] Mark's only response to this suggestion is the comment that Peter did not know what to say, for he and the other disciples were afraid (Mk 9.6). This has frequently been seen as a narratorial criticism of

[14]See Andreas Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), pp. 677-82.
[15] E.g., John Paul Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus: Narrative Meaning and Function of Mark 9:2-8, Matt 17:1-8 and Luke 9:28-36* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), pp. 115-127; E. Lohmeyer, "Die Verklärung Jesu nach dem Markus-Evangelium," *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 21, (1922), pp. 185-215, esp. 194.
[16] E.g., Heinrich Baltensweiler, *Die Verklärung Jesu; Historisches Ereignis Und Synoptische Berichte*, (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1959), p. 37ff. & 130; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man: The Genre, History of Religions Context, and Meaning of the Transfiguration," in *Auferstehung-Resurrection: 4th Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium: Resurrection, Transfiguration, and Exaltation in the Old Testament, Ancient Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. H. Lichtenberger (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), pp. 261-267; Lohmeyer, pp. 191-196; Harald Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré: l'arrière-plan récit évangélique de la Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur* (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1947), esp. pp. 146-205, pp. 265-280; William Stegner, "The Use of Scripture in Two Early Narratives of Early Jewish Christianity (Mt 4.1-11; Mk 9.2-8)," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James Sanders (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1997), p. 116.
[17] E.g., Davies and Allison, Vol 2, pp. 699-700; Heil, p. 117.

Peter's comment.[18] However, the only thing Mark categorically says is that fear was the reason he did not know what to say. Mark does not explicitly state Peter's comment was misguided or inappropriate. The exact reason for the sudden appearance of this fear is unclear in Mark's text. It could be a response to the change in Jesus' appearance which has already happened; or it could be a development in the narrative responding to the appearance of the cloud.

Mark describes the appearance of a cloud which overshadows "αὐτοις." It is unclear who precisely this "them" is. It could refer to Jesus, Moses and Elijah, the subject of Peter's proposal.[19] It could also refer just to the disciples, who are the subject of the previous clause (ἔκφοβοι γὰρ ἐγένοντο). Alternatively it could describe the cloud as engulfing the whole group on the mountain, and refer to everyone mentioned from verse 4 onwards.[20] In Mark's narrative, all movement is on the part of the cloud which does the overshadowing, whilst the disciples remain static.

From this cloud emerges a voice addressed to those witnessing the Transfiguration referring to Jesus in the third person as "ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός", and instructing them to listen to him. This closely echoes the words Mark recounts heard at Mark 1.11, except that at the Baptism, they are addressed to Jesus in the second person, and declare him to be, in addition, the one in whom the Father delights. These words have

[18] E.g, Evans, p. 37; Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 638.
[19] As argued by: Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Zürich: Benziger, 1978), Vol 2, p. 35; Marcus, p. 634; M. Öhler, "Die Verklärung (Mk 9.1-8): die Ankunft der Herrschaft Gottes auf der Erde," *Novum Testamentum* 38, (1996): pp. 210-211; Albrccht Öpke, s.v. "Νεφελη," *TDNT* p. 908.
[20] As argued by: R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), p. 354; D. Zeller, "Bedeutung und religionsgeschichtlicher Hintergrund der Verwandlung Jesu," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 308-309.

prompted some to hear echoes of the Isaac narrative from Genesis 22 in the Transfiguration.[21]

Finally, Mark renews reference to the sense of sight. The disciples look around but find they no longer see anyone with them other than Jesus. Mark seems to understand the Transfiguration as concluded by the point at which Moses and Elijah are no longer to be seen. Nothing whatsoever is said by Mark about Jesus' appearance reverting back to that which he had before the Transfiguration.

Mark concludes his Transfiguration with a descent from the mountain, in which Jesus instructs the disciples to tell nobody of the experience until the Son of Man rises from the dead. Mark again makes reference to the incident in terms of visual apprehension, by describing the Transfiguration at Mk 9.9 as "ἃ εἶδον," "things which they had seen." There then ensues a discussion concerning Elijah's coming. Mark, by contrast with Luke, who will remove this whole section, identifies Elijah with John the Baptist. Matthew will make this identification all the more clear by his narratorial comment at Mt 17.13.

Mark: conclusions

From this initial outlining of the earliest Marcan Transfiguration narrative several important elements should be noted. First, language appertaining to the human senses of sight and hearing recurs frequently, and is something the temporal sequence of the narrative is dependent on. The key moments of progression in the narrative are

[21] Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), pp. 169-73; David Flusser, *Jesus* (New York: Herder, 1969), pp. 95-97.

always accompanied by renewed sensual perception: first Jesus' clothing changes *colour and appearance* (Mk 9.3); then Moses and Elijah *appear* before the disciples (Mk 9.4); they *hear* the voice from the cloud (Mk 9. 7); then they look around themselves and *see* nobody but Jesus (Mk 9.8); finally, Jesus refers to the whole experience as, *"things seen"* (Mk 9.9) by them; in addition, reading the Transfiguration in fulfilment of Mark 9.1 as *seeing* the Kingdom come is a frequent patristic topos, but one rejected by many modern commentators. A series of ambiguities also exists within Mark's text which will not necessarily be resolved by later redaction by Matthew and Luke. There remains, for example, uncertainty concerning who the "αὐτοις" of Mk 9.7 refers to, and whom and how the cloud overshadows. In addition, the range of ideas or scriptural parallels which the mention of "tabernacles" could be intended to evoke is debated. It is also unclear whether we are to understand Peter's comment as gravely inappropriate, or as an inoffensive comment made *faute de mieux*.

1.2: Matthew

The account we read in Matthew of the Transfiguration has had significant influence in the history of interpretation by virtue of that gospel's canonical primacy. This has meant that in both East and West it has tended from the earliest patristic period to be the version read at the Eucharist both on the Saturday of the second week in Lent and on the Feast Day of the Transfiguration.[22]

Matthew's account preserves much of Mark's narrative context. Matthew adds Jesus' more extended interaction with Peter after his Confession, conferring on him the Keys

[22] See Richard Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 13-39.

of the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 17.19). Matthew also makes more explicit some of Mark's eschatological speculation. He links the coming of the Son of Man with the Parousia at Mt 16.28. He also makes clearer the reference to John the Baptist in the discussion of Elijah after the Transfiguration (Mat 17.10-13). Matthew retains Mark's ambiguity concerning location, stating only that it was six days after Peter's Confession, which was in the district of Casearea Philippi (Mt 16.13 cf Mt 17.1).

Matthew introduces a series of new elements to the narrative. The most significant is his insistence that Jesus' metamorphosis is not just restricted to his clothing but also involves his body shining brightly. Matthew describes Jesus' face as shining "ὡς ὁ ἥλιος" (Mt 17.2), and removes Mark's mention of an earthly fuller, instead describing Jesus' clothing as bright as the light. It is Matthew, therefore, who most explicitly introduces the language of light to the Transfiguration narratives. His association of this with Jesus' face will be seen by both modern and patristic authors to evoke a wide range of interpretations associated with Sinai and Moses traditions, which will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 2.

Matthew treats Peter's words differently from Mark. He removes any mention of Peter not knowing what to say, and adds "εἰ θέλεις" to Peter's suggestion. That the three booths are not created implies it is *not* what Jesus *wishes*. This is the first explicitly negative comment on the appropriateness of Peter's suggestion. Peter's comment is much more closely linked with the appearance of the cloud, which is now described as appearing *whilst* Peter is speaking: "ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος" (Mt 17.5).

Matthew continues his addition of motifs connected with light when he describes the overshadowing cloud as "φωτεινὴ", or "bright" (Mt 17.5). However, the ambiguity seen in Mark's narrative concerning precisely who is overshadowed is maintained by Matthew. Matthew's removal of Peter not knowing what to say means that the last people to be referred to before the "αὐτούς" of Mt 17.5 are Moses and Elijah. One could argue, therefore, Matthew implies the cloud only overshadows Moses and Elijah, though this is ultimately unclear.

Matthew alters Mark's words uttered from the cloud, so that Jesus is declared not just to be the beloved Son, but also the one in whom the Father delights. Of all the synoptic evangelists, Matthew most closely ties the Baptism to the Transfiguration by conforming the words spoken at his Baptism narrative and those heard at the Transfiguration to each other. The hearing of this voice is then followed by a motif only found in Matthew, namely the disciples' falling on their faces to the ground with fear. This will be a crucial element of many artistic depictions of the Transfiguration.[23] It is important to note, however, that in Matthew's it concludes the episode. Depictions which show the disciples on their faces, therefore, are representing a moment at the end of the narrative. It is also important to note the emergence here in Matthew of the notion that this is a visionary experience which overwhelms sight. Matthew's text itself presents the falling down as a consequence of terror at *hearing* the voice (Mt 17.6). However, patristic comment will frequently see this as an overwhelming of the faculty of sight. This is emphasised by Matthew's additional mention of the disciples specifically raising their eyes and finding the vision was ended, once Jesus touches them and calls them to rise. The end of the

[23] Andreopoulos, pp. 155-160; Manfred Krüger, *Die Verklärung auf dem Berge: Erkenntnis und Kunst* (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2003), pp. 59-60.

Matthean Transfiguration vision is signalled paradoxically by the restoration of the disciples' ability to raise and use their eyes. We have in the Matthean version the seeds of an important strand of interpretation seeing the Transfiguration as an experience whose visionary quality leads to the overwhelming of the physical faculty of sight, or which needs special grace to make it bearable.

Of great significance is Matthew's interpretation at Mt 17.9 of the Transfiguration as "ὅραμα", a "vision", a *hapax legomenon* amongst the synoptic gospels. The precise meaning of this word is debated by many modern commentators: some point to Matthew's use of it as implying nothing more than a concrete terrestrial sight, or spectacle[24]; whereas others see it as interpreting the Transfiguration as an ecstatic revelation pointing forward to the Resurrection.[25] It is intriguing that Luke uses the word ὅραμα extensively to refer to a wide range of ecstatic, visionary and dream-like incidents in Acts,[26] yet does not use it in his Transfiguration narrative.

Matthew: Conclusions

Although the basic narrative remains very similar in Matthew's Transfiguration, we see in his redaction the addition of a number of new motifs such as an emphasis on light in the description of Jesus' face shining, with its evoking of Moses and Sinai, and the topos of the disciples' falling down in fear. Both of these elements will play an important role in the history of artistic interpretation. Matthew foregrounds, but

[24] Davies and Allison, Vol 2, p. 713; Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1995), p. 498.
[25] Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), p. 254; Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), p. 310.
[26] These include description of Moses' experience of the Burning Bush (Acts 7.31), several elements of Paul's conversion (Acts 9.10; 9.12), Peter's house top vision (Acts 10.3, 17, 19, 11.5), and escape from prison (Acts 12.9), along with various revelations to Paul in dreams (Acts 16.9, 10; 18.9).

also problematises, the Transfiguration's visionary status, and the disciples' participation in it. He describes, for example, the whole experience explicitly as a "vision". However, he invests this term with a considerable degree of complexity by hinting that this vision experience actually overwhelms the disciples' faculty of physical sight. He also retains ambiguity concerning who is overshadowed by the cloud.

1.3: Luke

Luke uses the Transfiguration, just as Mark does, as a narrative turning point, but for him, this is part of the conclusion of the Galilean ministry and the turning to Jerusalem. For Luke, therefore, the Transfiguration confirms Jesus' identity as declared by Peter (Lk 9.20), but defines that against the backdrop of his rejection, death and "taking up" in Jerusalem, to which the narrative turns decisively at Lk 9.51.

Luke introduces a number of new motifs to the Transfiguration narrative and also marks a significant reorganisation of the sequence of events making this a much more radical redaction of Mark's text than Matthew's.

Luke removes the discussion concerning Elijah from the descent from the mountain.[27] He also alters Mark's mention of six days at the beginning of his narrative and replaces it with reference to the events happening on the eighth day. This will be the focus of much patristic comment, which will argue the synoptic accounts are, contrary

[27] Luke inhabits an ambiguous position somewhere between the assertions by Mark and Matthew that John is Elijah returned (Mt 17.10-13; Mk 10-13), and the insistence on the part of the writer of the Fourth Gospel that John is not Elijah (John 1.21). For further discussion, see, Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1966), xliv-xlvii; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 87-89; Barbara Shellard, *New Light on Luke: its Purpose, Sources and Literary Context* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 215-218.

to surface appearances, not in disagreement with each other on this matter. Patristic writers will often read a wide range of complex numerologies or allusion to the Resurrection, and eighth day recreation motifs into Luke's reference to 8 days.[28] By contrast, modern scholarship tends to see this as a simple Lucan re-expressing in different terms of the same period of time mentioned by Mark, and consequently to be of little significance.[29] Baltensweiler[30] and Riesenfeld,[31] for whom, in different ways, the six day reference is a crucial pointer to Sukkoth connections similarly play down Luke's mention of 8 days as unimportant.

A significant Lucan characteristic is his introduction of the motif of prayer. This is described as the purpose of Jesus' retreat up the mountain with the Three. Prayer is the very activity which Luke claims accompanies the alteration in Jesus' appearance (καὶ ἐγένετο *ἐν τῶ προσεύχεσθαι*, Lk 9.29). Luke also removes Mark's language of metamorphosis. Instead, he describes the "εἶδος" of Jesus' face altering and becoming "ἕτερον" – "different" or "other". Luke retains the mention of Jesus' clothing becoming bright, but describes it as "ἐξαστράπτων," "sparkling like lightening." So, whilst Luke does, therefore, mention a change in Jesus' body, he doesn't describe what it was like other than "different", and only attaches mention of light to Jesus' clothing.

[28] See John Anthony McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), pp. 122-123.
[29] Fitzmyer, p. 797; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), p. 382; John Nolland, *Luke*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1989), Vol 3, p. 497.
[30] Baltensweiler, pp. 46-51, sees the reference to six days as pointing to Jesus wanting to spend the seventh day of Sukkoth on the mountain.
[31] Riesenfeld, pp. 276-7, sees the six days as a reference to the length of time between the Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles.

The most significant difference in the Lucan narrative is a substantial alteration of the sequence concerning Moses' and Elijah's appearance, in which the vision is divided into two by a period of sleepiness on the part of the disciples. Two men are described appearing in conversation with Jesus, introduced with the words "ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο" (Luke 9.30). On two other occasions, Luke uses this phrase[32] to introduce angelic men in his Resurrection and Ascension accounts.[33] The narratorial voice then describes these two men as Moses and Elijah. These two are then referred to in 9.31 as "οἳ ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ." Luke is the only evangelist to introduce the term "δόξα." This first mention of glory does not refer to Jesus directly, but rather to the two prophets. Luke's use of the word, "glory" will be examined in a brief excursus included at the end of this chapter.

Luke then introduces one of the most enigmatic references in his narrative, namely the topic of conversation on the mountain, referring to it as "τὴν ἔξοδον" Jesus will accomplish in Jerusalem. The precise meaning of this is debated. In patristic comment it will generally be seen as a reference to Christ's passion and death.[34] Modern scholars have tended to see a wider range of possible references. Some simply see the language of Luke 9.31 as portraying Jesus as a Mosaic prophet-like figure and evoking an Exodus typology.[35] Others have used this Exodus motif as part

[32] c.f. Luke 24.4 and Acts 1.10.
[33] For several examples of Luke linking the Transfiguration to the Ascension, see, J. G. Davies, "Prefigurement of the Ascension in the Third Gospel," *Journal of Theological Studies* 6.2, (1955): pp. 229-233.
[34] See McGuckin, pp. 115-116.
[35] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, (Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 70-76; J. Manek, "The New Exodus in the Books of Luke," *Novum Testamentum* 2, (1958), pp. 8-23; David Moessner, "Luke 9.1-50: Luke's Preview of the Journey of the Prophet Like Moses of Deuteronomy," *Society of Biblical Literature* 102, (1983), pp. 575-605; David Moessner, "Jesus and the 'Wilderness Generation': The Death of the Prophet Like Moses According to Luke," in *S.B.L. 1982 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent

of feminist liberationist readings.[36] Some have seen the exodus being one of bondage to Satan.[37] Although some see it as merely a synonym for Jesus' death,[38] echoing usage in 2 Peter 1.15 and Wisdom 3.2, 7.6, large numbers of modern scholars assert it probably includes Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension.[39] This interpretation would seem to reflect Luke's emphasis on the Ascension as the point of his going to Jerusalem, and his use of ἀνάληψις as short hand for his Passion, Resurrection and Ascension at Lk 9.51.

After this discussion, Luke adds an interlude in which the disciples are described as weighed down by sleepiness. It is unclear whether this description refers back to the disciples' state before the beginning of the episode (in other words, whether we should understand them as waking at the beginning of the Transfiguration) or whether it describes something happening half way through the Transfiguration, after their first glimpse of glory. It is also unclear whether Luke's use of "διαγρηγορήσαντες" to describe their state after being "βεβαρημένοι ὕπνῳ" implies they actually fall fully asleep[40] and are awoken,[41] or whether it suggests, rather, they enter a drowsy state[42] in

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Richards (Chico, California: Scholars, 1982), pp. 319-40; David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), p.87.

[36] S.H. Ringe, "Luke 9.28-36: The Beginning of an Exodus," *Semeia* 28, (1983): pp. 81-99.

[37] Susan Garrett, "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9.31 and Acts 12.1-24," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52, (1990), pp. 656-680.

[38] Wilhelm Michaelis, s.v. "Εἰσ− Ἐξ− Διεξοδος," *TDNT*, p. 107; Heinz Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), Vol 1, p. 558.

[39] E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*, (London: Oliphants, 1974), p. 143; A. Feuillet, "Les perspectives propres à chaque évangéliste dans les récits de la Transfiguration.," *Biblica* 39, (1958), p. 290; Fitzmyer, p. 800; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, Minnisota: Liturgical Press, 1991), p. 153; Manek, p.12; Marshall, pp. 384ff.; G. Schneider, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Vol. 1 (Güttersloh: G. Mohn, 1977), p. 216.

[40] This is implied by the translation offered by: the *REB*: "Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep; but when they awoke…"; the *RSV*, "Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened…"; and the *NIV*, "Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake…"

[41] See also, Johnson and Harrington, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 150; Jacob Kremer, *Lukasevangelium*, (Würzburg: Echter, 1988), p. 108; John B. F. Miller, *Convinced that God*

which they are sleepy, but nonetheless manage to stay awake.[43] MacDermot has pointed to the connection frequently made in the ancient world between prayer, attempts to abstain from sleep, and visionary experience, often involving heavenly journeys and admission to the divine presence in paradise.[44] Patristic commentators, such as Tertullian, Origen, and Anastasius of Sinai will be shown in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis to point to this drowsiness as characteristic of entry into the sort of ecstatic state that MacDermot claims frequently accompanied visionary experience. This Lucan motif will also be seen by interpreters both modern and ancient as creating a link with events at Gethsemane, when the disciples fall asleep again.[45]

The depiction of this sleepiness will become a very complex part of visual portrayal of the Transfiguration. Some images will show the disciples asleep, whereas others will show them falling on their faces as Matthew describes. Other depictions seem intentionally to elide these two characteristics and to make it difficult to establish whether the disciples are shown to be falling or sleeping. It is important to note that Luke's sleepiness is mentioned half way through the Transfiguration, at a very different point from Matthew's falling on their faces, which takes place at the very end of the incident. If, therefore, an image unequivocally shows Lucan sleeping, it depicts a very different point in the narrative from that being shown in the classic

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had called us: Dreams, Visions and the Perception of God's Will in Luke-Acts, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 155; Schürmann, Vol 1, p. 558; Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988), p. 181.

[42] This is implied by the translation offered by the *NRSV*, "Now Peter and his companions were weighed down by sleep, but since they had stayed awake…"; the Jerusalem Bible, "Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but since they kept awake…"

[43] See also, François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), p. 377; Fitzmyer, p. 791; Walter Liefeld, *Luke*, (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1984), p. 925; Marshall, p. 385; Nolland, p. 48.

[44] Violet MacDermot, *The Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East: A Contribution to Current Research on Hallucinations Drawn from Coptic and Other Texts*. (London: Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 1971), pp. 43-48, pp. 338-340.

[45] Mt 26.40; Mk 14.37; Lk 22.45.

Eastern image which tends much more regularly to depict the disciples falling down the mountain.

When they awake, the disciples are no longer described as seeing Jesus, but his "glory" and the two men standing with him. "Glory" has now ceased to be simply the aura surrounding Moses and Elijah which it seemed to be in 9.31, and becomes in 9.32 closely associated with Jesus alone, something which belongs to him and which appears now to outshine Moses' and Elijah's.

Luke introduces a much more precise sense of temporal sequence, space, and movement to his narrative which is absent in Matthew and Mark. The first element of this is his reference to Moses and Elijah *standing* with Jesus in 9.32. This notion of the two prophets standing with Jesus, separate from the disciples who are either fallen on the floor (cf Mt 17.6) or sleeping (cf Lk 9.31) will form a crucial foundation for the depiction of the Transfiguration. Luke then adds a distinct element not found in Mark or Matthew, namely a sudden separation of Jesus, and possibly Moses and Elijah, from the disciples. One consequence of this is a fuller awareness of spatial movement. Luke is the only evangelist to say Peter's booths suggestion is triggered by a movement of separation (ἐν τῳ διαχωρίζεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἀπ'αὐτοῦ [Lk 9.33]). Most translations interpret this to mean Moses and Elijah beginning to leave.[46] Indeed, some actually *add* a specific reference to Moses and Elijah not present in the Greek to remove this ambiguity.[47] This interpretation of the text is presumably

[46] *RSV*: "And as the men were parting from him…"; *NRSV*: "Just as they were leaving him…"; *NIV*: "As the men were leaving Jesus…"; *NEB*: "And as these were moving away from Jesus…"; *Jerusalem Bible*: "As these were leaving him…"
[47] Eg, *Translator's NT*: "While Moses and Elijah were parting from Jesus..."; *REB*: "...as these two were moving away from Jesus...".

intended to explain Peter's booths suggestion as an attempt to prolong their presence. It is far from clear, however, that the αὐτοὺς of Lk 9.33a has to refer to Moses and Elijah. They were certainly the object of the verb of the last sentence (εἶδον). However, this αὐτοὺς at Lk 9.33a could also include Peter, or all three disciples, as they are the subjects of verbs in both the sentence before and after this one (διαγρηγορήσαντες, εἶδον, and εἶπεν). The αὐτοὺς of Lk 9.33, therefore, could refer to Moses and Elijah, or the disciples, or both. A second problem concerns the supposition that διαχωρίζω means "to leave". Liddell and Scott[48] define it as "to separate." Lampe gives two meanings, "to separate" and "to distinguish."[49] Danker[50] defines the verb as, "to cause a distance to be put between objects or persons, separate." "Ἐν τῶ διαχωρίζεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἀπ′αὐτοῦ" could, therefore, be translated, "as they were separating from him,"[51] as Leaney renders it.[52] A translation involving a sense of departure necessarily means that the αὐτοὺς is more likely to be interpreted as Moses and Elijah only, as there would be no sense in the disciples beginning to leave. Once the ambiguity of the meaning of εν τῶ διαχωρίζεσθαι is realised, however, a wider range of possible meaning involving a broader sense of separation of Jesus from the others, rather than of departure by Moses and Elijah, becomes apparent. Whoever the αὐτοὺς are, the moment at 9.32 when the disciples see Jesus as the sole embodiment of glory, is one in which he is beginning to be separated from

[48] s.v. διαχωρίζω, *Liddell and Scott.*
[49] s.v. διαχωρίζω, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*.
[50] s.v. διαχωρίζω, *Danker.*
[51] A. R. C. Leaney, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (London: Black, 1966), p. 168.
[52] It is noteworthy that German translators tend to retain the ambiguity of the Greek because they have at their disposal the verb *sich trennen*, which conveys both a sense of separation but also departure, or leaving. See, François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Vol I (Zurich: Benziger, 1989), "…als sie sich von ihm trennten…," p. 488; Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, "…als sie von ihm getrennt wurden...," p. 179.

those around him. The third gospel creates, therefore, a sense of expanded space between Christ and the other figures in this scene at the very point at which they are overshadowed by the cloud.

In Luke, it is this movement of separation which triggers Peter's word concerning booths. Luke adds a subtle alteration of Mark's verdict on Peter. Luke asserts not that he did not know what he was to say (Mk 9.6: οὐ γὰρ ἤδει τί ἀποκριθῇ), but rather that he did not know *what he was saying* (Lk 9.33: μὴ εἰδὼς ὃ λέγει). We will show in Chapter 5 the nature of Peter's mental state was debated extensively by Tertullian, and Origen, who see in this not knowing what he said some degree of ecstasy and even madness. This Lucan change is very infrequently commented upon by modern commentators, and I have found none who detects any visionary significance in it.

There then follows a very different sequence of events from those recounted by Matthew and Mark, in which Luke describes a precise moment of entry into the overshadowing cloud. This exploits the fuller sense of space and movement which Luke has been careful to create and describes the overshadowing cloud as something the disciples *enter into* (ἐφοβήθησαν δὲ ἐν τῷ εἰσελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν νεφέλην [Lk 9.34]).

This verse is characterised by a number of textual variants, some of which may be attempts to remove ambiguity present in the Greek text. It is once again unclear who the αὐτοὺς is that enter the cloud: possibly Moses and Elijah; the disciples; or both groups. The variant at 9.34 found in A, D, W, Θ, and Ψ that reads, "ἐκεινους εἰσελθεῖν," makes it much clearer that Moses and Elijah are envisaged as the ones

entering the cloud, pointing to the subject of εἰσελθεῖν not being that of the last verb, ἐφοβήθησαν. There are, however, significant problems with accepting this variant over the reading preferred by the Nestle-Aland 26th Edition and UBS. Not only is the N-A 26/UBS reading attested in ℵ, B, and L, but the disciples' reaction of fear would make little sense if only Moses and Elijah enter the cloud; fear on the disciples' part would be a much more natural response to their own entry. Secondly, Fitzmyer[53] points to the early evidence of $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, which, by omitting αὐτοὺς, implies it is those who were afraid who enter the cloud. It is highly likely, as Nolland asserts,[54] that 9.34 refers to the disciples entering the cloud.

A verdict that the αὐτοὺς in 9.34b refers to the disciples entering into the cloud also has an impact on our interpretation of who the αὐτοὺς are that are overshadowed by the cloud in the first half of 9.34. The text is, again, ambiguous as to who is overshadowed: just Moses and Elijah; Moses and Elijah with Jesus; the disciples; or everyone present? Again, the witness of $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, ℵ, B, and L could be significant: a variant here places the verb to overshadow in the imperfect (ἐπεσκίαζεν), rather than the aorist (ἐπεσκίασεν) as attested by $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$, A, D, W, Θ, and Ψ. This imperfect verb could be read as describing a process whereby the cloud *began* to overshadow the disciples. In other words, the entry into the cloud could be a description of the overshadowing. By contrast with this, the aorist verb would produce a more clearly delineated sequence, in which the cloud's overshadowing is complete, halts, and then the disciples enter it. If this latter reading is accepted, the more natural sense might be to presume that as the overshadowing, and the fear which accompanies entry are two

[53] Fitzmyer, p. 802.
[54] Nolland, Vol 2, p. 501.

separate actions, the following happens: the cloud overshadows Jesus, Moses and Elijah, then after this, the three apostles enter the cloud. Luke's treatment of the scene is very different, therefore, from that of Mark and Matthew. The first two gospels retain a similar ambiguity over who the overshadowed αὐτούς (Mt 17.5) /αὐτοῖς (Mk 9.7) might be, but do not have a verb mentioning fear whose subject shows the object of ἐπισκιάζω to include the disciples. Three possible conceptions, therefore, of the Lucan scene are possible.

1. First, Jesus appears in glory. He is then separated from everyone else. When this glory filled space is overshadowed, Moses and Elijah are included in it with Jesus. Then the disciples enter into this cloud, and join Jesus, Moses, and Elijah there.
2. Second, the disciples only are separated from Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, who are in a space which is overshadowed, and then finally entered by the disciples (if $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$, A, D, W, Θ, and Ψ's use of the aorist is accepted).
3. Third, the process of the overshadowing of the glory-filled space in which Jesus, Moses and Elijah are standing could be understood to be the same as the disciples' entry (if $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, א, B, and L's imperfect is accepted).[55]

In all three, Luke has created a scenario in which the disciples enter a cloud which has overshadowed a glory-filled space. The most significant thing revealed by this examination of the text, however, is that this overshadowing takes place *after* the distancing of Jesus from those around him in 9.34. In other words, Luke creates a space which the cloud can be conceived of as filling. The three apostles then enter into this cloud- and glory-filled space. It is unclear whether Moses and Elijah are with

[55] This would seem to be the interpretation offered by the *Good News Bible's* translation: "...and the disciples were afraid as the cloud came over them."

Jesus in that space, or on the apostles' side of the divide. Whereas Matthew associates the disciples' fear with the *voice*, Luke's mention of fear coincides with the disciples' *going into* the cloud. This distinct sense of space, with a key point of entry into it, which Luke develops has been largely overlooked by modern commentators. One of the conjectures of this thesis is that this increased sense of space and entry could represent an echoing of the entry of the seer into the heavenly tabernacle of God seen in many apocalyptic texts, or of the priest into the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple. If this is the case, then Luke could be emphasising the Transfiguration's status as a visionary experience similar to that recounted in many apocalyptic texts, a theological point which we will see in Chapters 5, 7, and 8 is noticed and developed by Origen, and a number of artists working in the Italian peninsula in the sixth and ninth centuries.

Luke's narrative then concludes by omitting the instruction from Jesus not to tell anyone of the event on the mountain top. Instead, the disciples voluntarily keep silence. There is also a hint at the end of Luke's narrative, not to be found in any other version, that the Transfiguration possibly took place at night. Lk 9.37 speaks of the party descending from the mountain first thing the next morning. Such a possibility would seem to make sense of the sleepiness of the disciples. It is intriguing that this verse has been the subject of remarkably little speculation indeed both in Christian antiquity and modern comment.

Before concluding this assessment of Luke's narrative, I now include a short excursus on his wider use of the word "glory."

Excursus: Luke's use of "glory"

In this brief excursus, I explore Luke's use of the word "glory" in order to reveal the distinct way in which Luke employs this term. A characteristic of Luke's Transfiguration which we have noted is his addition of the word δόξα[56] at Lk 9.31 and 32.

The term δόξα can have a wide range of meanings throughout the Old and New Testaments. First, the word is used in the LXX to designate the presence of God in the earthly Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temple. It is used in Exod 25 to signify God's presence within the Tabernacle, and in 1 Kings 8.11 and Ezekiel 10.4 & 19, to speak of God's presence in the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple. Here it is frequently connected with the accompanying motif of an overshadowing cloud (egs Exod 40.34-38; 1Kgs 8.10; Ezek 10.3). Secondly, δόξα is also used to describe the heavenly dwelling place of God (Ezek 1.28, 1 Enoch 14.16 & Rev 21.11,23), and by extension it is associated with the appearance of beings from the heavenly sphere (Dan 7.14, Lk 2.3), human beings exalted to heaven (Lk 24.26), or the renewed eschatological city where God will dwell (Rev 21.11, 23). Thirdly δόξα is linked in the gospels with the Eschaton, especially to describe Jesus returning in judgement as Son of Man, drawing on the imagery of Dan 7 (eg Mt 24.30, 25.31). Fourthly, it can be used in a much more general sense simply to mean splendour (Mt 6.29/Lk12.27), as an indication of human hierarchy (Lk 14.10), riches (Mt 4.8/Lk 4.6, Rev 21.24) or brightness (Acts 22.11). The word δόξα is also used to signify the giving of worship (Rev1.6, Lk 17.18, Acts 12.23), either appropriately or inappropriately ascribed.

I want to explore here the range of lexical meaning we can infer from Luke's use of the word elsewhere. A survey of Luke's uses of δόξα reveals he uses the word far more that either Mark or Matthew. He employs it 13 times in his gospel, and 4 times in Acts, whereas Matthew uses it 8 times, and Mark only 3. Four of Luke's uses simply employ δόξα to mean a reasonably uncomplicated sense of splendour, esteem, or worship of God by humans: Lk 12.27; Lk 14.10; Lk 17.18; Acts 12.23.

Luke uses "glory" on at least one occasion with the same eschatological import as Mark and Matthew when he retains mention of the Son of Man coming, "μετὰ δυνάμεως και δόξης πολλῆς" in the synoptic "apocalypse".[57] However, in other places, Luke omits uses of δόξα when used to refer to the Eschaton. He omits, for example [c.f. Mk 10.37-40], the request of James and John to sit at Jesus' right and left in his "glory". In addition, if Luke 22.28-30 is a parallel to Mt 19.28, we see a further example of possible Lucan aversion to use of δόξα with reference to eschatological judgement in his removal of mention of the Son of Man sitting "ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης". In the parallel found at Mt 16.27/Mk 8.38/Lk 9.26, Luke substantially alters his source: the glory described in Lk 9.26 is not just the Father's but is shared by the Son of Man and the angels as well. Luke also realises the eschatological hope referred to in Lk 9.27; there is no mention of either the Son of Man or the Kingdom coming, just of seeing the Kingdom of God. Although one cannot claim Luke 9.26-27 has no eschatological referent, we may note two things: first that Luke ascribes glory to all three categories of beings originating in heaven (Son of Man; Father; holy angels) as an indicator of their celestial origin; secondly

[57] Lk 21.27.

that he bluntens the future-eschatological meaning of the next verse removing any explicit mention of the Son of Man's eschatological coming.

In addition, we should note examples of "glory" added by Matthew: there is mention at Mt 25.31 of the Son of Man coming "ἐν τῇ δοξῃ αὐτοῦ" in the solely Matthean parable of the sheep and goats, along with his sitting "ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ." The pattern we see emerge is of Matthew and Mark, when not using this term simply to mean earthly "splendour," using it exclusively to refer to a glory associated with the eschatological judgement of the Son of Man. Luke, by contrast, has a wider range of referents, some of which have eschatological import, but the largest number of which refer more to the glory of the heavenly realm and the dwelling of God.

In instances when the word δόξα is added in solely Lucan material, it never refers to eschatological judgement. Luke's first use of δόξα is in his infancy narratives at the angelic visitation to the shepherds, when the "glory of the Lord" accompanies the angel's message both as a sign of God's presence[58] and also of the realm from which the angel has come. The revelatory, visionary nature of the incident is emphasised by Luke's use of the same verb (Lk 2.9: περιέλαψεν; Acts 26.13: περιλάμψαν) to describe the heavenly light accompanying Paul's conversion. Rowland points to the visit of the shepherds as an experience of heavenly, angelic worship, of God's *Shekinah* found not in Temple or heaven, but amongst the mundane and earthly, in the birth of Jesus.[59] The host of angels then ascribe glory to God "in the highest" (Lk

[58] Fitzmyer, p. 409.
[59] Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 100.

2.14). Fitzmyer sees this as evoking Ps Sol 18.10, and as referring "not to degree,"[60] but to the place of God's abode in the highest heaven, contrasted with the terrestrial life of earth beneath. We see a similar ascribing of glory to God in his highest dwelling by the crowd at Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Lk 19.38). However, the peace which was to be the possession of those on earth in Luke 2 is ascribed to heaven, pointing to its divine origin. Here the glory given to God belongs "in the highest" part of heaven, where he dwells. Luke also uses a description on Simeon's lips addressed to God in the context of the Temple to describe Jesus himself as the "δόξαν λαοῦ σου Ἰσραήλ" at Lk 2.32. Like the experience of angelic worship by the shepherds, this is described with language frequently used of visionary revelation. Here, in the Temple, the divine *shekinah* is pointed to as embodied in the child Jesus. The final use of δόξα in Luke's gospel is in Jesus' reference on the road to Emmaus to his Resurrection and Ascension being the entry of the Christ "into his glory" (Lk 24.26). Here this glory is something Jesus receives as a result of his having suffered, and, as at Lk 9.26, is something which is his own. The climax of the Messiah's earthly ministry is seen, therefore, as his return to the heavenly realm, an experience described as him enjoying a glory which is his own by virtue of his passion.

We can conclude from this survey of Luke's use of δόξα several points. First, that his use of the word has a wider range of meaning than that of Matthew and Mark, who, when not using it in a generic sense of "splendour" or "riches" use it exclusively in association with the eschatological coming of the Son of Man. Luke, by contrast frequently bluntens the future-eschatological import of passages where he inherits use of δόξα from the synoptic tradition, or removes them altogether. In addition, on all

[60] Fitzmyer, p. 410.

the occasions when he adds the word in material of his own, he uses it to describe the dwelling of God in heaven or experience of the life of heaven rather than a designation of eschatological authority. If Luke's use of the word in the Transfiguration is in keeping with that which he displays in other parts of his gospel, then it might be judged more likely that we see here a reference to the divine glory associated with the presence of God in the heavenly tabernacle. Luke's use of δόξα presents the Transfiguration as a complex revelation of Jesus' heavenly status and his embodiment of God's glory, rather than as a simple evocation of Jesus' future eschatological return.

Luke: Conclusion

Luke's version adds a number of elements not found in any other gospel. First, he creates a Transfiguration narrative much more frequently linked to other episodes in his gospel through shared language. These episodes often involve the presence of angelic beings, such as in the Lucan Gethsemane, Resurrection and the Ascension recounted in Acts. Second, Luke expands the language of vision used of the Transfiguration. Luke describes the Transfiguration as the "ὧν ἑώρακαν," - "the things they had seen" - in Lk 9.36, and includes the motif of sleep followed by wakefulness and a refreshed ability to see in Lk 9.32. He also introduces hints at the disciples being in some sort of liminal visionary state through their passing from sleepiness to vision, and through hints that Peter was somehow unable consciously to understand what he said. A third element is the different sense of movement and space which characterises his narrative, creating a feeling of separation and space between Jesus and the others, followed by a specific mention of entry into the cloud. Fourth, Luke adds two motifs closely associated with liturgical worship and the

temple, in the mention of prayer, and δόξα, a term closely linked with God's presence both in the Tent of Meeting and in the Jerusalem Temple. One of the most important elements to emerge from Luke's account, therefore, is the way in which the disciples' *participation* in the Transfiguration is foregrounded and made more complex both through more explicit description of their movements and entry into the cloud, through motifs such as their *hearing* and *understanding* more of the conversation on the mountain top, and hints at ecstatic, liminal states of awareness.

1.4 Synoptic narratives: Conclusion

Our outlining of the main characteristics of the Transfiguration narratives has shown a number of complexities, differences, and ambiguities to exist in the three synoptic versions. These include a difference in the narrative order of events, the sense of space and movement, and uncertainty about how the cloud overshadows and who is included in that overshadowing. Luke's version is distinct in that it uses language of glory, mentions the disciples feeling sleepy, and describes the content of the conversation with Moses and Elijah.

A repeated motif emphasised in different ways by the gospel writers is its status as a vision. That is to say, our narrative presents the experience as something *seen*, a revelation perceived through the sense of sight, of something which is usually hidden, or unavailable to perception by the eyes. The Transfiguration is also linked through shared language, especially in Luke, with other revelatory moments in the New Testament, which are frequently presented as visionary, or which involve entry into the divine presence in heaven, such as the Ascension. A renewed awareness of this dynamic within our narratives reveals two things. First, that the Lucan narrative

emphasises many of these visionary elements through some of its distinctive characteristics. Secondly, interpretation of our narrative in terms of vision correspondingly raises questions concerning the *participation* of the disciples in it. If the Transfiguration is presented as a visionary experience, then questions concerning who it is seen by, and how, are important ones, and lie at the heart of many of the complexities we have outlined.

Chapter 2: Modern Interpretation of the Synoptic Narratives

Having outlined the main characteristics of the synoptic narratives, I examine in this chapter the main critical approaches which have guided study of them in the modern period. In addition, I examine certain questions which have been the focus of discussion such as the presence of Exodus and Moses echoes, a number of source theories, and motifs appertaining to temple, tabernacle, and priestly ideas. This survey is intended to be as exhaustive a summary as possible of the main critical approaches used by modern scholars. I conclude by pointing to what I argue are a number of shortcomings and unresolved questions in modern attempts to understand the Transfiguration narratives.

2.1 Early Historical-Critical Theories

The advent of historical-critical approaches to exegesis of the New Testament in the nineteenth century prompted a series of attempts to establish whether it was reasonable to suppose a historically verifiable incident could lie behind the Transfiguration narratives. A large number of these attempts saw it necessary to posit some sort of event, possibly visionary, in the life of Jesus or the disciples as triggering the creation of the synoptic accounts. Some of these theories revolved around tricks of the light, or early morning meteorological phenomena. These supposedly gave the disciples, upon awaking from sleep, a glorious, though entirely terrestrial, vision of Jesus.[61] Similar theories abounded which saw, at the prompting of Luke's mention of

[61] Strauss lists Paulus and Schleiermacher advocating such a rationalisation, *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: S. Sonnenschein; Macmillan, 1892), pp. 539-40.

sleepiness, the Transfiguration as a dream.[62] Others, such as Baltensweiler, posited some sort of mystical experience in Jesus' own experience of prayer as the historical kernel around which the Transfiguration was created. He posited a mountain-top temptation experience around the feast of Sukkoth in which Jesus resisted taking kingly power before the allotted time.[63] Others, such as Harnack, saw the Transfiguration's origins lying in a pre-Resurrection visionary experience comparable with that Peter is described having after Christ's Resurrection in 1 Cor 15.3.[64] The popularity of these approaches waned through the second half of the twentieth century, though a small minority of scholars has persisted which sees some sort of visionary experience on the part of the disciples as lying behind our narrative.[65]

Even amongst those who assert a historical kernel, there is no consensus concerning how the Transfiguration should be understood as vision: for some, this could be subjective psychological disturbance; for others a dream; for others an optical experience physically apprehended with the eye, dependent on surrounding physical phenomena. At the heart of many of these historical-critical examinations of the Transfiguration lies uncertainty about what counts as "vision" and how such a vision might count as verifiable or historically plausible.

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[62] Strauss lists Rau, Gabler, Kuinöl, and Neander as holding some version of this idea, ibid., p. 538.
[63] Baltensweiler, pp. 134-135.
[64] Adolf von Harnack, "Die Verklärung Jesu, der Bericht des Paulus (1 Kor 15,3)," in *Sitzung der philosophisch-historischen Klasse vom 2. März, 1922* (Sitzungen der Königlichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1922) pp. 62-80.
[65] Joseph Blinzler, *Die neutestamentlichen Berichte über die Verklärung Jesu* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1937); C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 292-4; Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1949), p. 150; *The Gospel According to St Mark : The Greek Text* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 387.

2.2 Misplaced Resurrection Account

One of the most popular theories to emerge amongst form critics was the assertion that the Markan Transfiguration might be a misplaced Resurrection narrative. Wellhausen[66] was the first to propose this theory, which was then more fully fleshed out by Bultmann.[67] He saw use of language such as ὤφθη and μεταμορφόω as redolent of Resurrection narratives elsewhere in the New Testament.[68] Other elements such as the mountain setting,[69] the disciples' fear[70] and Jesus' luminosity[71] were further proof of this for Bultmann, along with evidence from the *Apocalypse of Peter* with its conflation of Resurrection, Ascension and Transfiguration motifs. Bultmann's theory grew considerably in popularity[72] and also spawned a number of variant theories. Theissen,[73] for example, agreed with Bultmann in seeing the Transfiguration as a misplaced Easter story, but judged it to be an ascension account. Weeden[74] thought Mark knowingly intended to subvert the *theios anēr* tradition evident in Resurrection accounts by placing this narrative earlier in Jesus' ministry. However, an influential article by Stein[75] convincingly undermined many of these theories and reasserted that whatever the narrative's historical origins, the pre-Markan

[66] Julius Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci* (Berlin: Reimer, 1909), p. 71.
[67] Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), pp. 259-261.
[68] c.f. 1Cor 15.5-8; Mark 16.12.
[69] c.f. Mt 28.16-20; Acts 1.12
[70] c.f. Mark 16.8
[71] c.f. Acts 9.3; 22.6; 26.13.
[72] The following see the Transfiguration as originally a resurrection narrative: C. Carlston, "Transfiguration and Resurrection," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961), pp. 233-240; F. McCurley, ""And after Six Days," (Mark 9.2): A Semitic Literary Device," *Jounral of Biblical Literature* 93 (1971), p. 79; W. Schmithals, "Der Markusschluss, Die Verklärungsgeschichte Und Die Sendung Der Zwölf," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 95 (1976), pp. 79-96; M. Thrall, "Elijah and Moses in Mark's Account of the Resurrection," *New Testament Studies* 16 (1969-70), pp. 305-317, esp. p. 310.
[73] Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983), pp. 96-7.
[74] Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 118-126.
[75] R. Stein, "Is the Transfiguration (Mark 9.2-8) a Misplaced Resurrection Account?," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95.1 (1976), pp. 79-96.

Transfiguration account was principally one of a glorification of Jesus during his pre-resurrection earthly life. Stein put forward four main arguments: first that Bultmann's theory was popular because it tallied with the pre-supposition many critical scholars brought to biblical study that visionary or supernatural phenomena such as the Transfiguration simply don't happen; second he questioned whether many of the elements Bultmann saw emerging from the context of a Resurrection narrative necessarily had to be understood as such; third, he expanded Dodd's argument[76] that much of the narrative makes no sense in a Resurrection account, such as Moses' and Elijah's presence, or the voice from heaven; and fourth, he successfully argued that the *Apocalypse of Peter* is a much later document than Bultmann thought and is an inappropriate source of comparison as a document contemporary with the gospels. Most scholarship written after Stein has rejected Bultmann's ideas.

Ultimately, the story of the rise and fall of this theory points to a recurring tension we have noticed in much historical-critical reading of the Transfiguration, namely a strong ambivalence about whether it can be attributed to a historically verifiable event in the life of Jesus and his disciples. Bultmann's theory ultimately allows one to side-step some of these questions. It allows one to transfer questions of historicity to a period after Jesus' death when his disciples claimed to have seen him alive again. This is, of course, a scenario in which it is much easier for historical critical scholars to see the narrative as the creation of Jesus' disciples than that it originated in some sort of mystical experience in the earthly life of Jesus. Misplaced Resurrection

[76] C. H. Dodd, " Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form-Criticism of the Gospels," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. D. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), p. 25.

theories dodge rather than resolve many of the questions prompted by historical study of the Transfiguration narrative's claim to be an account of visionary experience.

2.3 Source- and Redaction-critical Questions

Source-critical speculation concerning the Transfiguration as a misplaced Resurrection account prompted further questions concerning the relationship between the synoptic accounts, which have tended to focus on two questions: first, how to account for the remarkably high number of minor agreements between Luke and Matthew; and second, how to explain the distinct character of the Lucan text. One of the most significant consequences of this was the popularity for a time of a theory suggesting Luke had access to some sort of distinct, separate Transfiguration source in the construction of his gospel.

The first investigations of the redaction history of Luke's Transfiguration tended to focus on examination of the high number of minor agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark. Many concluded the most reasonable solution to this question was positing use by Matthew and Luke of some sort of non-Markan Transfiguration source.[77] This culminated in the assertion by the late 80s and early 90s by Reid[78] and

[77] Blinzler, pp. 32-62; Eugeniusz Dabrowski, *La Transfiguration de Jésus*, (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1939), p. 21; Wolfgang Dietrich, *Das Petrusbild der lukanischen Schriften*, (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1972), pp. 104-109; E. E. Ellis, "The Composition of Luke 9 and the Source of its Christology," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honour of Merrill C. Tenney*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 122-124; Walter Grundmann and Friedrich Hauck, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1964), p. 191; Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), p. 121; Tim Schramm, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas: eine literakritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 139.

[78] Barbara E. Reid, *The Transfiguration: A Source- and Redaction- Critical Study of Luke 9 : 28-36* (Paris: Gabalda, 1993), esp. pp. 29-75, 145-148.

Murphy-O'Connor,[79] that Matthew's version was simply attributable to his redaction, whereas Luke must have access to a distinct, separate, written Transfiguration narrative. Reid sees evidence of the splicing of two narratives by Luke in an alleged confusion of focus, by the addition of the phrase "two men" in Luke, and in the supposedly otherwise inexplicable motif of the apostles' drowsiness in the third gospel.

In response to these theories, two very impressive critiques have been offered by Neyrick[80] and Miller.[81] Neyrinck's article from the 70s simply examines two of the minor agreements[82] and shows them to be only apparent agreements, and to be perfectly explicable as independent redaction. As a small test case study, he is successful at showing how overly eager source-critical scholars can be in interpreting evidence as proof for the use of shared, written sources. In a more extensive methodological assessment, Miller seriously undermines the foundations of many of Reid's and Murphy-O'Connor's assumptions, showing them frequently to be based on contradictory logic. The supposition, for example, that all material unique to Luke should be attributed to the Transfiguration source assumes Luke never composed anything of his own, and that he always copied verbatim, which is shown clearly not to be the case in his use of Mark. Several arguments to do with attributing *hapax legomena* to the separate source are also clearly circular: just because Luke hasn't used a phrase before doesn't prove he didn't create in now. Miller also points to the

[79] J. Murphy-O'Connor, "What Really Happened at the Transfiguration?" *Bible Revue* 3, (1987), pp. 8-21.
[80] F. Neyrinck, "Minor Agreements Matthew-Luke in the Transfiguration Story," in *Orientierung an Jesus: zur Theologie der Synoptiker,* ed. Paul Hoffmann (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), pp. 253-266.
[81] J. Miller, "Source Criticism and the Limits of Certainty," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses,* (1998): pp. 127-144.
[82] Mt 17.2 cf Lk9.29, 256-260; Mt 17.5 cf Lk 9.34, 260-264.

danger inherent in Reid's conclusion that Lucan material may be attributed to a third source by default, unless there is evidence to the contrary, a point at which hypothesis has turned into an automatic presupposition.

Although Miller's article seems to have laid Transfiguration source theories to rest, we might wonder with Neyrinck whether the question ought to be asked, "Is the redactional interpretation not too soon abandoned in favour of the search for a source-critical solution?"[83] Although he and Miller have proven theories involving a third Transfiguration source to be on shaky ground, the fact remains that few scholars have attempted to account for the distinct characteristics of the Lucan Transfiguration in terms of a wider Lucan theology. If Luke's redactional changes express a clear theological interpretation of the narratives he receives, then the question needs to be asked how his Transfiguration fits in with the rest of the Lucan corpus, especially the many visionary incidents recounted in Luke-Acts. Patristic comment and artistic interpretation frequently compare the Transfiguration narrative with Luke's other visionary and apocalyptic episodes. By contrast, a neglect is evident in modern Lucan studies of the importance of visionary and apocalyptic elements in his gospel and Acts. Miller is the only recent commentator to focus on visions in Luke-Acts in a more extensive work, and in his review of scholarship in that study he notes that whilst a few individual investigations of visionary events in Luke-Acts exist, no work before him has examined the question of vision within the Lucan corpus as a whole.[84] In the light of this, we might conclude that many scholars' positing of Lucan access to a third Transfiguration source allowed them to avoid seeing in Luke's Transfiguration

[83] Neiyrick, p. 256.
[84] Miller, J. *Convinced That God Had Called Us : Dreams, Visions and the Perception of God's Will in Luke-Acts*, pp. 66-90, esp. 90.

visionary tendencies which might need explaining in the context of a wider Lucan theology of vision.

2.4 Hellenistic Epiphany Theories

Many of those who have judged there to be no historical foundation to our narratives such as Conzelmann, Dibelius, Kümmel and, more recently, Zeller, have seen the Transfiguration as fundamentally mythic, and frequently influenced by Hellenistic epiphany traditions.[85] In these readings, the Transfiguration is seen as modelled on episodes found in the literature of the Greek-speaking world in which gods residing on earth in human form reveal their divine identity, or in which some sort of divine status or power is bestowed upon a mortal.[86] Interpretations of the kind exemplified by Dibelius and Conzelmann, influenced by a strong history-of-religions approach, have tended to see the principal conceptual background to the Transfiguration narratives as the Greek idea of divinisation in which the *theos-aner* Jesus is empowered and revealed as Christ. Lohmeyer saw the Transfiguration's background as a mixture of Hellenistic motifs, magical elements, and Jewish eschatological material.[87] These theories based on Hellenistic epiphany models have gradually been

[85] Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1969), p. 128ff.; Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), pp. 267-276; Werner Georg Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament: according to its Major Witnesses, Jesus, Paul, John* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1974), p. 123; D. Zeller, "Die Menschwerdung des Sohnes Gottes im Neuen Testament und die antike Religionsgeschichte," in *Menschwerdung Gottes - Vergöttlichung von Menschen*, ed. D. Zeller (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), pp. 141-176, "La Métamorphose de Jésus comme Épiphanie (Mc 9, 2-8)," in *L'évangile exploré*, ed. Alain Marchendour (Paris: Cerf, 1996), pp. 167-186, "Bedeutung und religionsgeschichtlicher Hintergrund der Verwandlung Jesu," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 303-321.
[86] For an extensive list of examples, see Collins, pp. 416-419.
[87] Lohmeyer, pp. 203-208.

undermined on a number of counts. Some, such as Kee and Gerber,[88] have highlighted eschatological motifs present in the Transfiguration narratives which don't form any part of the Hellenistic epiphany tradition.[89] Others, such as Davies and Allison, see Pentateuchal and Mosaic echoes showing the Transfiguration's imaginative milieu to be more appropriately described as Jewish than Greek.[90] More recent scholarship, though, has sought to overcome the assumption of a rigid dichotomy between Jewish and Hellenistic influences: Collins, for example, still detects a significant influence by Greek epiphany traditions, but regards them as reinterpreted in the light of Old Testament theophanies.[91]

We see a complex series of agendas at work in these various epiphany theories. Mythic approaches such as Dibelius' formed part of a historical-critical agenda whose principal focus is the question of what historical reality lies behind our text, and which was ultimately sceptical of any notion of a historical kernel to the Transfiguration. A part of this agenda is the portrayal of Hellenistic motifs as alien to the Jewish imagination, and the Transfiguration as the importing of a myth Kümmel describes as a "conception foreign to Judaism"[92] into the early Christian kerygma. Kee's and Collins' work has shown this not to be the case. The ultimate focus of the questions asked by Dibelius and Conzelmann is the historical origin of our narratives. For them, claims to visionary experience are seen as evidence of purely fictive construction. The question of what such claims might mean is less satisfactorily

[88] W. Gerber, "Die Metamorphose Jesu, Mk9.2f," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (1967), pp. 385-95; H.C. Kee, "The Transfiguration in Mark: Epiphany or Apocalyptic Vision?," in *Understanding the Sacred Text*, ed. J. Reumann (Valley Forge: Judson, 1972), pp. 135-152.
[89] Kee, pp. 140-149.
[90] Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol 2, p. 691.
[91] Collins, pp. 416-417.
[92] Kümmel, p. 123.

explored by them, and seen simply as evidence that our narratives are a fictional creation. In their eagerness to classify the Transfiguration as mythic, Dibelius and Conzelmann seem less interested in how vision was understood in antiquity, the wide spectrum of meaning the notion of vision had, and the ways in which participation in such experiences were interpreted.

2.5 Moses

Further significant strands of interpretation have revolved around reading the Transfiguration in the light of Moses themes and the Exodus Sinai narrative.[93] However, many of these theories revolving around Mosaic echoes involve a very wide range of connections, and frequently come to divergent conclusions concerning their significance. It will also be shown that, in the light of the ambiguity our narratives display concerning who enters the overshadowing cloud, a significant question hardly ever addressed is whether the Transfiguration's principal interest is in showing Jesus' experience to be essentially analogous with Moses' or subtly different from it.

Many commentators recognise numerous connections between the Transfiguration narratives and Exodus 24.[94] However, there is disagreement as to the exact nature of these connections, and precisely which element of Moses' life is being compared with that of Jesus. The most extensive advocacy of Mosaic echoes has been made by Joel

[93] For a good summary see Marcus, pp. 1114-1115.
[94] For a summary see Evans, p. 34; Ulrich Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness: the Wilderness Theme in the Second Gospel and its Basis in the Biblical Tradition* (London: SCM, 1963), pp. 110-119.

Marcus and Dale Allison. Marcus[95] draws on the work done by Meeks[96] in connection with John's gospel, and points to three specific connections between the Transfiguration and Moses being made by Mark's Transfiguration. He highlights, first, traditions seen in Philo's *Life of Moses* and in Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge* that depict Moses as enthroned on Sinai during his time with God. Second, Moses' translation to heaven depicts him as a figure whose experience of glory points forward to the Eschaton and Resurrection. Third, he detects hints in Philo and other Jewish sources that Moses was in some sense divinised by his experience of God's presence. Marcus suggests that Jesus is presented at the Transfiguration, like Moses, as a kingly, eschatological, and divinised figure. Allison detects a sustained attempt throughout Matthew's gospel to create typological connections between Jesus and Moses, and compares them with Mosaic typologies in a wide range of Jewish and Christian texts. He sees these Matthean typologies as bestowing on Jesus Moses' authority, rooting the Matthean church's group identity in the salvation history of Israel, and as part of their apologetic defence of the gospel. The shining face motif is especially important for Allison in Matthew's evocation of Jesus as a Moses figure in the Transfiguration.[97]

Many have agreed with the broad sweep of the position Marcus and Allison have taken. Some see the Transfiguration as a reworking of an event or narrative in the

[95] Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 80-93; Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, p. 1115.
[96] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967).
[97] Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), pp. 243-248.

light of Exodus 24.[98] Many see the eschatological significance of Jesus' fulfilment of Deut 18.15[99] as particularly important, whilst others highlight Jesus' and Moses' shared status as mystical figures privileged with mountain-top vision of God, or with ascent to heaven involving some degree of possibly angelic glorification.[100] Lierman has undertaken extensive discussion of the different ways in which Moses was understood in early Christian and Jewish writings. He argues, amongst other things, that Moses was seen as a priestly figure.[101] Although he does not discuss the Transfiguration at much length, his conclusions do prompt the question whether comparisons with Moses were also capable of presenting the transfigured Christ in a priestly light.

However, a number of complications exist in this Jesus-Moses connection. Luz, for example, points out that the cloud motif found at Sinai is also associated with the Tent of Meeting (Exod 40.34-38), where it *prevents* Moses from entering God's presence.[102] In addition, the shining face motif of the Transfiguration fits ill with Exod 34, where it only appears *after* Moses has spoken with God (a point Mach[103]

[98] Davies, Allison, and Hagner propose a visionary experience rewritten in the light of Exodus 24, and McCurley posits an Ascension reworked using Exodus 24. See Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol 2, p. 693; Hagner, p. 493; McCurley, p. 67-81.
[99] Collins, p. 423 & p. 426; Evans, p. 38; Hagner, p. 494; Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, p. 1114; Howard Merle Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1957), p. 83-94.
[100] Bovon, *Luke 1*, p. 372; Collins, p. 423; Evans, p. 36; J.E. Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels," in *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology*, ed. J.E. Fossum (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), pp. 71-97; Hagner, p. 493; Heil, pp. 95-113, pp. 129-148; Öhler, pp. 197-217.
[101] John Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), pp. 65-78, pp. 272-273.
[102] A similar motif is echoed at the consecration of the Temple (1Kgs 8.10-11), where the glory filled cloud prevents the priests from entering the Sanctuary.
[103] Michael Mach, "Christus Mutans: zur Bedeutung der Verklärung Jesu im Wechsel von jüdischer Messianität zur neutestamentlichen Christologie," in *Messiah and Christos*, ed. Ithamar Grunwald (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), p. 185.

also makes) and continues *after* Moses' descent in a way which is not seen with Jesus. A further complication concerns Moses' presence on the mountain with Jesus. Does he point to Jesus as a prophet like him, or does his presence signify Jesus' replacing him and transcending his greatness? In other words, is Jesus' glory borrowed, like Moses' was, or is it something he possesses in an altogether different way as the embodiment of God's presence with his people? A.D.A. Moses[104] argues Matthew portrays Jesus not as a prophet *like* Moses but as *superior* to him in the Transfiguration, an idea Teeple also argues is present more broadly in the New Testament.[105]

It is clear the *nature* of the comparison being drawn between Moses and Jesus has been the focus of little study. Many commentators assume the Transfiguration draws a simple analogy in which Jesus is shown to be similar to Moses. This is possibly because their focus tends to be on revealing the breadth of imagery and ideas associated with Moses in the ancient world, which through a simple analogy are projected onto Jesus. Lierman's recent work exemplifies this, when he argues, "As Christians sought to establish Jesus in the same pivotal position that Jews ascribed to Moses, they found in Moses a template for describing the kind of figure they believed Christ to be."[106] I wish to challenge this simplistic view of Moses as a christological "template," and argue that considerable ambiguity exists in the character of the comparisons being made between Jesus and Moses.

[104] A. D. A. Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story and Jewish-Christian Controversy* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) esp. pp. 114-160, pp. 239-244.
[105] Teeple, pp. 594-97.
[106] Lierman, p. 279.

A major source of what Davies and Allison acknowledge at times to be the "inexact"[107] nature of the analogy being drawn between Jesus and Moses is the fact that the Sinai narratives themselves are ambiguous concerning the various different ways in which Moses experiences God's presence. Ramsey, in his study of the Transfiguration, outlines the tensions between the different sources in Exodus, which result in three different assertions concerning Moses.[108] One recounts a direct vision of God in Exodus 24.9-11. A second focuses on the idea of Moses ascending Mount Sinai and being privileged with experience of God's glory for forty days in a cloud covering the mountain. However, a third strand describes at Exod 33.20 Moses' *inability* to experience or see the face of God and live. In addition to this, Exod 40's account of the Lord's presence filling the Tent of Meeting speaks of his *not* being able to enter because of the presence of the glory of the Lord. Although the narrative concerning Moses' ascent of Sinai shows him in a singular way to enjoy God's presence, there also exist other more ambiguous traditions concerning Moses' ability (or rather *in*ability) to see God or experience his glory.

An awareness of the ambiguity of the Exodus narratives raises a series of possible scenarios concerning the Transfiguration's comparison of Moses and Jesus:

a. If one emphasises traditions concerning Moses' ascent of Sinai, the Transfiguration could represent a sort of re-run of his 40 days on the mountain. In this scenario, the comparison of Moses with Jesus is one pointing to *similarity* but could operate in one of two ways:

[107] Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol 2, p. 692.
[108] Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (London: Longmans, Green, 1949), pp. 9-22.

1. Jesus could be presented as a Moses figure, who was privileged to experience the presence of God just as Moses was. Moses is the type and Jesus' experience echoes Moses'.
2. However, Jesus' dazzling appearance could point to him as embodying the glory, which Moses saw and which, present on the mount with Elijah, Moses witnesses again. In this case, it is not Jesus who fulfills the role Moses had on Sinai, but Moses, Elijah, *and the disciples*, in witnessing a vision of God's glory. Here the Sinai experience is the archetype, re-presented in a different context, with different people, but with Moses as the unifying constant, experiencing exactly the same thing as he did on Sinai.

b. However, if one emphasises traditions concerning the warning that Moses couldn't see God's face and live,[109] or traditions to do with his *inability* to enter God's cultic presence in the Tabernacle,[110] a series of different readings present themselves emphasising some degree of *dissimilarity* between Moses and Jesus, who fulfils or outstrips his role:
    1. The Transfiguration could be seen as Jesus making possible for Moses something he was unable to experience in his earthly life, finally seeing God's face, embodied in Jesus. If they share in Moses' experience, it is *the disciples* who echo Moses' role on Sinai, and not Jesus.
    2. Alternatively, Jesus could be seen entering the tabernacle cloud which it was not always possible for Moses or the priests to do. Here, Jesus supersedes Moses, and fulfils his role, and extends to the disciples a

[109] Exod 33.20.
[110] Exod 40.35.

privilege which even Moses was not worthy of. In this case, it is *Jesus* who plays the principal mosaic role in this scenario.

c. We have seen that the role of the disciples in any Mosaic analogy is complex and underexplored by scholars. Both a. and b. above are affected by the role one judges the disciples to play in the Transfiguration narrative. If one reads Mark and Matthew as allowing the disciples to enter the overshadowing cloud, as Luke implies, then the narrative could be read a number of different ways:

    1. It could be seen as one in which the privilege granted only to Moses to enter the presence of the Lord's glory on Sinai is radically extended to Peter, James, and John.
    2. Equally, if one emphasises motifs to do with Moses' *inability* to experience the presence of God, such as is described at Ex 40.35 in his not being able to enter the Tabernacle - or the reference at Exod 33.20 that Moses could not see the Lord's face and live - then we could see a privilege granted to the disciples which even Moses did not possess.
    3. If, however, one sees the disciples in Mark and Matthew as left out of the cloud, then the narrative reaffirms that Moses' ability to see God's glory was a singular one, experienced by nobody else other than Jesus (and Elijah).

In an attempt to bring more clarity to the question of how we judge typological connections, Goulder[111] has suggested three characteristics, which need to be fulfilled to establish the presence of a clear, intended, typological reference.[112] He insists first that the *cumulative* nature of intended typology means it can't be posited on the back

[111] M. D. Goulder, *Type and History in Acts* (London: SPCK, 1964), pp. 1-8.
[112] For discussion of Goulder's thoughts, see, Allison, pp. 307-311.

of single instances of echoes or analogies; second he points to the need to establish shared vocabulary; and third that a convincing theological motive for the typology has to exist. In those terms, correspondences between the Transfiguration and the main Sinai narrative of Exodus 24 pointed out by numerous commentators would seem to fulfill the first two requirements, and in terms of the third requirement, we have already outlined how Jesus could be seen either to echo Moses' ability to witness God's glory, or even to embody that very glory. It seems not unreasonable to infer a typological reference is intended by the Transfiguration narrative's creators to Exodus 24. But what of the more complex references to Exodus 40 and Exodus 33.20? These seem less easy to prove as clear typologies, and have nowhere near the same *cumulative* character which Goulder points to as so crucial. However, elements of shared language, and single, though rare, motifs mean it is hard to exclude these as possible reference points. It would seem the clearest and most sustained typological reference is to Exodus 24, but that this is qualified by a range of other references from the Exodus narratives which speak more ambiguously concerning Moses' ability to enter the presence of God.

An examination of this typological analogy between Moses and Jesus reveals a considerable degree of complexity concerning Moses' ability to see and experience God's presence. There is little consensus concerning whether Jesus is portrayed as a Mosaic figure because he experiences or sees similar things as Moses did; or whether he is shown as superseding, fulfilling, and outstripping Moses' experience; or both. In short, the precise mechanic of the typological connection made here is a very neglected area of New Testament study. Few modern scholars comment on these questions, and very few indeed connect them with ambiguities in the Transfiguration

narratives themselves concerning the disciples' possible entry into the overshadowing cloud.

2.6 Eschatological and Apocalyptic Readings

A small number of more recent scholars have sought to interpret the Transfiguration in the light of Jewish eschatological or apocalyptic thought. Most still work within a historical-critical paradigm, seeing the creation of our narratives as best explained by comparison with a particular body of more eschatologically orientated literature. However, the fact that much of this literature claims to be the product of visionary experience and ascent into heaven has produced some worthwhile reflection on visionary dynamics within the Transfiguration narratives.

Boobyer[113] provided a more eschatological reading in order to disprove Dibelius' theories concerning mythic Hellenistic influence. He points particularly to the importance of an eschatological focus in the earliest patristic reception of the Transfiguration as a way of showing how Mark expected his narrative to be read.[114] Kee[115] shares Boobyer's eschatological emphasis, and reads Mark's Transfiguration principally in the light of Daniel 10, and as a foretaste of the Parousia. Bauckham,[116] too, has argued against a Hellenistic interpretation, claiming that it is the 2 Peter account that makes the apocalyptic milieu of the narrative most clear. For Baltensweiler, it is the motif of tabernacles, and their connection to Sukkoth which makes the Transfiguration's eschatological focus evident.[117]

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[113] G. H. Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1942), esp. pp. 64-87.
[114] Ibid., pp. 27-47.
[115] Kee, pp. 135-152.
[116] Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), p. 212.
[117] Baltensweiler, p. 37ff., especially p. 61.

Sabbe [118] has gone further and sees the Transfiguration as a fully apocalyptic revelation of Jesus' enthronement as Son of Man. He underlines the apocalyptic significance of the theme of revealed and guarded mysteries, something Rowland[119] has also particularly emphasised. Sabbe also sees the location of the Confession in Mark and Matthew in the place of Enoch's vision as significant, giving Caesarea Philippi "une allure apocalyptique." [120]

Nickelsburg[121] has expanded on this last idea of Sabbe's, that Caesarea Philippi was associated with a tradition of apocalyptic vision, though he seems to be unaware of his work and does not quote him at any point. Nickelsburg argues that the location of Peter's Confession and the Transfiguration in Caesarea Philippi, near Mount Hermon, draws on the place's associations with pagan vision and oracle, and the location of the heavenly visions of Enoch, and Levi in *The Testament of Levi*.

In a related area, Michael Mach has explored questions of angelomorphic presentation. He sees, for example, the Transfiguration as evidence of a series of developments within Jewish apocalyptic and angelology in which the righteous are increasingly portrayed as having communion with the angels and, indeed, eventually

[118] M. Sabbe, "Le rédaction du récit de la Transfiguration," in *La venue du messie: messianisme et eschatologie*, ed. E. Massaux (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), pp. 65-100.
[119] Rowland and Morray-Jones, pp. 106-109.
[120] Sabbe, p. 96.
[121] Nickelsburg, pp. 575-600.

as being transformed into angelic beings.[122] At the same time, he detects a trend in messianic thought increasingly seeing the Messiah in angelic terms.[123]

Amongst those who read the Transfiguration within an apocalyptic context, a minority emphasise the narrative as one principally concerning entry into the presence of God in the heavenly sphere, and as evoking heavenly ascent narratives. Öhler, for example, reads the Transfiguration as a revelation of Jesus' enthronement and consequently to be akin to an experience on earth of the life of heaven, expressed in language similar to that used in heavenly journey traditions.[124] Gerber has compared the Transfiguration with the Hekhalot writings, showing that those who journey into heaven are changed by their experience of God's presence. Within this context, the Transfiguration can be seen, according to him, as an entry point to the divine realm.[125] Fossum, too, sees the Transfiguration as evoking an ascent to heaven. He points to traditions which see Jesus echoing Moses' divinised status on Sinai, and his receiving of the Law at the summit of the mountain as an entry into heaven.[126] Smith has also made similar claims seeing the Transfiguration as representing an entry into heaven, but sees the narrative's origins in ecstatic visionary experience on the part of Jesus orientated to showing him as a powerful magician or shaman-like figure.[127]

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[122] Mach, pp. 184-189. Examples include Dan 12.2, Wisdom 3.6, Enoch 51.5.
[123] Ibid. 189-192, examples include 11GMelch showing Melchizedek starting to assume a role similar to the Angel of Light of 1QS 3.2ff., and 1QSb 4.25's reference to an eschatological figure referred to as an angel of the presence.
[124] Öhler, p. 215.
[125] Gerber, p. 395.
[126] Fossum, p. 71-94.
[127] Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 237-44; "The Origin and History of the Transfiguration Story," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 36, (1980): pp. 39-44; "Ascent to the Heavens and the Beginnings of Christianity," *Eranos* 50, (1981), pp. 403-429.

Some of the interpreters we have surveyed in this section, such as Kee and Boobyer, read the Transfiguration as a simple evocation of the Parousia and the coming of the Son of Man. For them, the text's visionary character is simply a signpost pointing towards the background of Jewish eschatological speculation against which it ought to be read. For others, such as Nickelsburg, Sabbe and Smith, locating our narratives within a broader range of apocalyptic texts acts as a heuristic prompt, leading them to see visionary elements as more important. Their work is characterised by a more sensitised and positive appraisal of the degree to which some sort of visionary or ecstatic experience on the part of Jesus could form part of the historical origins of the Transfiguration narratives. In addition, recognition of the significance of visionary claims frequently leads these interpreters to see the Transfiguration narrative as intended to evoke ideas to do with ascent and entry into heaven. One of the most intriguing features of these apocalyptic approaches is the more positive way in which they judge the significance of claims to visionary experience. For Dibelius and Bultmann, the claims the Transfiguration narratives make to be visionary were a sure sign of their being an entirely fictive, mythic construct. However, for scholars such as Smith, exactly the same evidence points to ecstatic experience of some kind as *more* likely to form part of the Transfiguration's historic origins. In addition, they see it as showing the narratives were intended to evoke a wider range of traditions and concepts, including heavenly ascent, angelomorphic transformation, and also, as will be seen in the next section of this chapter, priestly and temple motifs.

2.7 Temple, priestly, and tabernacle motifs

A strand of interpretation, advocated by only a very small number of modern scholars, has read the synoptic Transfiguration narratives in the light of a series of motifs

evoking the Jerusalem Temple and its High Priest. Some, such as Fletcher-Louis and Barker, see connections between the Transfiguration narratives and Apocalyptic writings, especially ones which describe a seer's visionary entry into heaven, or which describe the worship of the celestial city found there. Here, a *conceptual* analogy is drawn, in which the Transfiguration is seen as akin to entry into the heavenly tabernacle in which the glorified Jesus appears as a high priestly figure. However, others, principally Harald Riesenfeld, see evidence of a *historical* connection between Temple traditions associated with Sukkoth and the Transfiguration's mention of tabernacles.

2.7.1 Riesenfeld

The principal voice to assert a *historical* connection between the Transfiguration and Temple motifs is Harald Riesenfeld, who compares the gospel accounts with the cultic life of pre-exilic Israel, pointing especially to connections with the feast of Sukkkoth. The first half of his work is an attempt to trace connections between the Autumn feasts, the pre-exilic enthronement rites of the Israelite King, the post-exilic cultic life of the Temple, and later Messianic expectation. Riesenfeld then examines several of the motifs found in the Transfiguration, linking them to the pre-exilic life of the Temple, and to the feast of Sukkoth. Riesenfeld asserts there to be a close association between the Feast of Tabernacles and hopes concerning the enthronement of the Messiah.[128] In the second section of Riesenfeld's study, he claims many of the motifs present in the Transfiguration to have a Sukkoth background, and therefore a Temple association. For Riesenfeld, the Transfiguration is a Messianic enthronement

[128] Riesenfeld, pp. 233-235.

of Jesus in eschatological glory which echoes the kingly and priestly associations he has laid out in the first section of his work.

Several problems can be identified with Riesenfeld's work. The first is that he makes connections spanning considerable periods of time, without defining how these connections are judged to have been discerned. This lack of analytic rigour seems to be the principal reason for the almost complete dismissal of his ideas by modern scholars. There are also elements of the Transfiguration narratives that Riesenfeld finds difficult to fit into his Sukkoth thesis: he is puzzled about the presence of Moses and Elijah, for example, figures not usually associated with the feast of Sukkoth,[129] and he fails to account within his Sukkoth hypothesis for the voice heard from the cloud.[130]

As an exhaustive tracing of all the religious and literary motifs found in the Transfiguration narratives to one cultic source in the pre-exilic history of Israel, Riesenfeld's thesis is not convincing. However, his work is important in its raising of the possibility that Peter's tabernacles suggestion could be capable of evoking, amongst other things, a range of echoes connecting the Transfiguration to the temple feast of Sukkoth. If this Sukkoth connection is an attempt to draw an analogy between the cultic life of the Temple and the Transfiguration, then Riesenfeld is more convincing when he argues the Transfiguration portrays Christ as an eschatological High Priestly figure.

[129] Ibid., p. 256.
[130] Ibid., p. 250.

2.7.2 Fletcher-Louis

Fletcher-Louis has also argued for reading the Transfiguration narratives in the light of high-priestly motifs. [131] He agrees with Riesenfeld and Nickelsburg in positing in the history of the Transfiguration some sort of originating event around the time of Sukkoth. Indeed, he expands on Nickelsburg's work by pointing to an association between springs near Mt Hermon, the Transfiguration and the Feast of Sukkoth in the *Gospel of Thomas*.[132] He goes on to argue that the Son of Man of Daniel 7 was understood in a priestly light. Consequently, Jesus himself is presented in the Transfiguration, according to Fletcher-Louis, as a priestly figure worthy of worship.[133] In defence of this view, he argues[134] that the High Priest was seen, at least by some, as angelic. He also highlights evidence of notions of divinity being ascribed to the High Priest[135] and explores the traditions found in Sirach 50 of the High Priest embodying the Glory of God, which he sees specifically echoing Ezekiel 1.28.[136]

Fletcher-Louis musters a strikingly wide range of evidence in support of a large number of speculative assertions. Indeed the speculative character of his work is one of its most intriguing virtues. Many of his conclusions are perfectly feasible interpretations. However, their speculative character sometimes means they fail to be

[131] Fletcher-Louis, "Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man," pp. 261-271.
[132] Ibid., pp. 264-265.
[133] Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "The Worship of Divine Humanity as God's Image and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism : Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 112-128; "The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man," p. 272ff.; "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah Part 1," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 4.2, (2006), pp. 155-175; "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah Part 2," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 5.1, (2007), pp. 57-79.
[134] Fletcher-Louis, "The Worship of Divine Humanity as God's Image and the Worship of Jesus," p. 115.
[135] E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 11.331.
[136] Fletcher-Louis, "The Worship of Divine Humanity as God's Image and the Worship of Jesus," p. 116.

backed up by incontrovertibly convincing evidence. One of the foundations of his argument is, for example, the assertion that the Son of Man of Daniel 7 was originally seen as a priestly figure. He employs a questionable inductive logic, arguing that because the High Priest could be seen as a Divine Warrior figure, Dan 7's Son of Man also automatically had to be seen as priestly.[137] In addition, some of the eight parallels he draws between the Caesarea-Philippi narratives[138] and temple themes are quite conjectural. It is difficult to see, as Fletcher-Louis argues, that Matthew's placing of the saying concerning the disciple's taking up of his cross close to the Transfiguration, should be seen unequivocally as a direct evocation of the Atonement Day context of Numbers 29.7-11's instruction to the People of Israel to "deny yourselves."

Some may not be convinced by Fletcher-Louis' more speculative conclusions. However, the most convincing part of his thesis is the contribution he makes to emphasising the previously underestimated presence of priestly motifs in the Transfiguration narratives. He underlines, for example, the significance of Enoch traditions in informing our understanding of the Transfiguration. He astutely draws parallels between the Transfiguration and Enoch's heavenly journey in the *Book of Watchers*. He shows that in this, Enoch exercises a priestly role. He sees in Enoch's entry into heaven a parallel to the High Priest's entry of the Holy of Holies, and that when one compares 1 Enoch 14 with the Transfiguration it becomes clear, "the common denominator between the two is the ideology of true priesthood."[139] Fletcher-Louis is also convincing in his interpretation of Peter's comments, seeing his

[137] Fletcher-Louis, "The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man," pp. 257-259.
[138] Ibid., pp. 272-297.
[139] Ibid., p. 261.

mention of booths as intended to be a recognition of the Transfiguration as some sort of cultic sanctuary experience.[140] Finally, and possibly most importantly, Fletcher-Louis recognises the full priestly significance of describing Jesus' appearance in terms of "glory". He draws on evidence from *1 Enoch*, Sirach 50, the *Letter of Aristeas*, material from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Josephus' descriptions of the high priest's garments[141] to make a compelling case that the transfigured Jesus is presented as a priest.

2.7.3 Margaret Barker

A further voice which has interpreted the Transfiguration in terms of temple ideas is Margaret Barker. Her work has failed to gain scholarly approval in some quarters. Just as with Riesenfeld, the historical connections she claims to have made back to the first Jerusalem Temple and its cultic life are very difficult to prove.[142] However, Barker's work has produced some important insights in related areas. Principal amongst these is the importance of a range of motifs connected with the Temple present in the New Testament, even if one chooses not to see them, as she argues, as the vestiges of a cruelly suppressed First Temple theology. In addition, Barker has re-asserted, as a result of considerable study of the Enochic tradition, the connection between apocalyptic writing and the conceptual world of the temple, frequently expressed through accounts of visionary experience of the heavenly temple dwelling of God.[143] She has, like Fletcher-Louis, underlined a number of connections between

[140] Ibid., pp. 293-4.
[141] Ibid., p. 295.
[142] Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: SPCK, 2007), especially, pp. 4-28; *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), pp. 1-18; *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008).
[143] Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), pp. 29-53.

the Transfiguration narratives and the texts of the Enoch tradition, especially parallels with 2 Enoch 22.[144] In addition, her work on the role of the High Priest has emphasised many elements which conceivably cohere closely with the Transfiguration accounts, such as his angelic, possibly divine status, the significance of his garments, and the symbolism of light associated with Resurrection.[145]

Working in a similar area as Barker, Rachel Elior's work, *The Three Temples*, makes, in a more tentative and scholarly convincing way, a series of similar but less speculative assertions. Elior argues conceptions of heaven found in apocalyptic works and the Hekhalot literature as a temple space, and of priests as angelic figures, emerge from the mystical speculation of groups of priests excluded at various points from the life of the Jerusalem Temple. She argues for a widespread conceptual parallel drawn by many in the first century AD between the life of the Jerusalem Temple and conceptions of heaven as a similar cultic space, and for the frequent conception of heavenly figures as both priestly and angelic.[146]

Voices such as Barker's and Elior's have been significant in emphasising the connection between visionary, apocalyptic thought, and the conceptual world of the Temple, along with ensuring a more wide spread rediscovery of the significance of the texts of the Enoch tradition, both of which, I argue, are important for interpretation of the Transfiguration.

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[144] Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, p. 44; Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, pp. 113-114.

[145] Margaret Barker, *On Earth as it is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), pp. 13-25, pp. 61-72; Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, pp. 54-76; Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, pp. 160-165; Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem*, pp. 111-114, pp. 148-150.

[146] Rachel Elior, *The Three Temples : On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford; Portland, Oregon: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), esp. pp. 165-231.

2.8 Transfiguration as part of "Believers' Transformation"

A further approach to the Transfiguration narratives is that taken by Simon Lee[147] in which he sees the Transfiguration narratives of the synoptic gospels as part of the way in which the broader concept of transfiguration and transformation was received by the earliest followers of Jesus. His work represents an analysing of the history of a concept rather than of three discrete narratives. He sees the Transfiguration to be the expression in narrative form by Mark, and then the later synopticists, of a number of ideas explored by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3,[148] concerning Jesus' exaltation and triumph over suffering, and the transfiguration which the Christian believer hoped for both in this life and in the world to come. For Lee, this is part of a dynamic process of reception and re-reception which he then traces through a number of canonical and non-canonical early Christian texts.[149] He sees these pre-existing Pauline ideas to stem from conceptions of Jesus rooted in the Exodus Moses narratives and as pointing to Jesus as a greater Moses.[150]

His work points appositely to the way in which modern critical scholarship often overlooks how the Transfiguration was received in the first and second centuries as a narrative exemplifying something which Christian believers could themselves hope for. Patristic commentary frequently sees in the Transfiguration an analogy for humanity's own hope of eschatological glorification,[151] and a model for the different

[147] Simon S. Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration and the Believers' Transformation : A Study of the Transfiguration and its Development in Early Christian Writings*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).
[148] For an exploration of 2 Corinthians 3 in relation to the Transfiguration, see ibid., pp. 49-91.
[149] Lee examines 2 Peter, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Acts of Peter* 20-21, ibid., pp. 128-209.
[150] Ibid., p. 80.
[151] See McGuckin, pp. 117-120, pp. 122-125.

ways in which the faithful believer might hope to "see" God.[152] Lee's work is useful background for this thesis, as he argues seeing the Transfiguration as a model for transformation and vision which Christians could hope for forms a crucial part of the narratives' creation and reception. He argues this extends right back to the very earliest period of the New Testament's writing, and is a dynamic largely neglected by modern biblical scholarship.

There is a significant difference of approach between Lee's and that being pursued in this thesis. He is more concerned with the historical plotting of the early interpretation of a theological idea, whereas I am interested in the reception of a discrete narrative recounted in the first three gospels. Although these are certainly not unrelated, an exhaustive surveying of every mention of glorification and transformation in the New Testament lies beyond the limited scope of this present thesis. By contrast with my approach, Lee sees the Transfiguration as the narrative expression of a pre-existing idea, and has less interest in exploring the language used by those narratives to express their visionary character.

2.9 Rhetorical- and Narrative-critical readings

A number of commentators have subjected the Transfiguration narratives to readings informed by the concerns of rhetorical and narrative critical approaches. John Heil, for example, has focussed on the narratives' genre in order to explore how the gospels' readers might expect to interpret the Transfiguration. He categorises the incident as a "pivotal mandatory epiphany." By "pivotal" he means it marks a key turning within the gospels' narratives, and by "mandatory" it is orientated to revealing

[152] Ibid., pp. 103-109.

Jesus' identity through the Father's mandate from the cloud, "Listen to him."[153] He points to a series of Old Testament angelophanies, and epiphanies from Numbers, Judges, 1 Enoch, and 2 Maccabees which he sees as informing the First Century reader's expectations of how to read the Transfiguration.[154] Heil's attentiveness to how an ancient audience might read the Transfiguration is to be lauded. However, his overriding concern with the definition of a precise genre to describe this dynamic means he does not address the concerns this thesis seeks to. I focus on how a number of visionary motifs, especially present in Luke, have been interpreted in a wider range of media, through a more extensive period, and by many audiences in a larger number of contexts.

The treatment which the Transfiguration narrative receives in Edith Humphrey's work on the rhetoric of vision in the New Testament should be noted. She argues reports of visions are used by the writers of the New Testament to achieve a number of rhetorical ends in terms of completing, directing and shaping the narrative. Her small section on the Transfiguration[155] points appositely to ways in which Luke's narrative emphasises visionary elements, such as the disciples' sleep. She also points to important voices within the patristic reception of the narratives which have noted such elements. She notes many worthwhile things, but resists drawing them together into any systematic conclusion. Her work is a useful collection of noteworthy observations. Her concern is not, however systematically to explore precisely how the disciples' vision has been perceived and understood in Christian history and the role Luke has played within that history.

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[153] Heil, pp. 51-73.
[154] Ibid., pp. 43-92.
[155] Edith McEwan Humphrey, *And I Turned to See the Voice : The Rhetoric of Vision in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michegan: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 135-150.

Rhetorical-critical approaches frequently contain the seeds of worthwhile exploration of the Transfiguration narratives. Their concern for how different readers react to narratives which claim to be the fruit of visionary experience touches many of the questions I am seeking to explore in this thesis. It appears, however, that nobody has yet subjected the Transfiguration to analysis which satisfactorily takes account of the power which the language of vision has to prompt different responses in both ancient and modern readers, and which takes account of the distinct way in which Luke exploits that language.

2.10 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have pointed to a number of areas where a lack of consensus is to be found in modern scholarly discussion of our topic.

The first is a lack of clarity concerning precisely what critical study of the Transfiguration narratives is attempting to uncover. For some, it is an attempt to establish what historical event or series of events lie behind the text. For others, it is simply a question of explaining the cultural milieu which produced a fictional narrative claiming to be the fruit of visionary experience. A majority of modern critics bring to their study of the Transfiguration a critical presupposition that the event as recounted simply cannot have happened. This, in turn, frequently results in a value judgement which neglects the significance of visionary motifs, or which judges them to be a fictive construct, or the fruit of unsoundness of mind. It also prompts a near universal ignoring of patristic comment as being of any use in the answering of critical questions to do with the Transfiguration narratives. The perspectives of earlier

commentators are rarely seen as a worthwhile source of insight. The narrower range of questions that modern critics are interested in also means many other historical questions have not been investigated by them. These neglected questions include how these narratives were interpreted differently in changing periods of Christian history, the role they played in dogmatic, liturgical, and ascetic speculation, and the influence which visual depiction of the Transfiguration had on hermeneutic and homiletic discourse.

In addition to a neglect of patristic comment, we also see considerable variation in what the visionary experience of the Transfiguration is understood to be within modern comment. For some, it stands as recognition of the existence of the supernatural breaking in on the terrestrial. For others, it is seen as a psychological phenomenon, or as an example of either ecstatic religious experience or a culturally conditioned metaphor. A majority of modern New Testament scholarship dismisses outright the possibility that the Transfiguration is rooted in any historically verifiable visionary event. Historical-critical examinations have frequently shied away from comparing the Transfiguration with other Jewish apocalyptic texts, and from exploration of the significance of vision within the ancient world. They have also failed to examine the participatory role of the disciples in the narrative as viewers, and the ambiguity which exists concerning their entry into the cloud. As part of these tendencies, the distinctive Lucan version has regularly been either unsatisfactorily explained, or its distinct elements over-looked.

We have noted a small number of critics who have sought to explain the Transfiguration in the context of apocalyptic traditions. Their work has revealed a

number of parallels with heavenly ascent narratives, the Enochic corpus, developing angelologies, and temple and high priestly echoes, but has often failed to gain widespread scholarly recognition. Because of the claim made by most apocalyptic writings to be the product of visionary experience, these scholars have often been much more ready to recognise the importance of motifs associated with ecstatic religious experience.

I argue, therefore, there are shortcomings in four areas of modern scholarship's appraisal of the Transfiguration narratives. The first concerns the best methodology and critical approach to be adopted in study of the Transfiguration, and what that approach is intended to discover. This has resulted in the almost universal neglect by modern critics of pre-critical comment as having any use in the elucidation of the Transfiguration narratives. It has also prompted an ignoring of their reception history as having any role in a full account of these texts' historical significance and meaning. A second problem concerns what is understood by the notion of vision, especially as presented in the Transfiguration, and how the ancient world understood sight as a physical faculty and a wider metaphor for experiences in the lives of those who read these narratives. Third, few have adequately accounted for a number of visionary elements, such as ambiguity concerning the disciples' participation in the Transfiguration as spectators who enter the overshadowing cloud, and the presence of priestly, tabernacle and temple echoes. Fourth, it appears few have accounted for the distinct nature of the Lucan version and the particularly prominent role these visionary, participatory, priestly, and temple themes may have in it.

A very small number of scholars has noted these shortcomings within modern scholarship's attempts to account fully for the significance and meaning of the Transfiguration narratives. Luz, for example, comments as follows on Matthew's narrative:

> The modern exegesis of our text leads us into a different world. It asks not how hearers and readers participate in this story; it primarily asks historical questions about the origin of our story…While I would by no means dispute such interpretations, what they have in common is that they experience the story as *alien* and try to rationalise this *strangeness*. It is surprising by contrast how vivid our story is in the exegesis of the church and how relevant it is to life. [My italics][156]

His critique highlights two problems. The first is the way in which modern scholarship experiences the Transfiguration narratives as "alien" and as characterised by "strangeness". He points here to a significant tension inherent in its approach: on the one hand, modern scholarship sees as its aim ascertaining the historical "origin of our story" - in other words, the events which lie behind it, and how we account for the creation of our narrative in the light of that; yet on the other hand, the fact that our narrative claims to be an account of a subjective visionary experience means that to some extent, the "origins of our story" will always remain resistant to historical enquiry. Norris has also come to similar conclusions in a more recent essay comparing modern interpretation of the Transfiguration with that offered by Origen and Chrysostom. For him, the Transfiguration throws into particularly acute relief some of the tensions within modern biblical studies:

> NT studies is a sub-discipline that too often depends on rather narrow views of reality, parts of which were learned from the age of Western Enlightenment rationalism, which have now been discredited by contemporary physics, biology, and chemistry, as well as historical and literary investigations. Such

[156] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), p. 403.

> outlooks occasionally struggle with the accounts of the Transfiguration of Christ…The miraculous is frequently defined poorly and treated as suspect.[157]

One of the reasons historical critics find the Transfiguration "alien" and "strange" is that they are operating with a very different model of what it meant to experience such a vision from that embraced by those who wrote the gospels.

A second problem highlighted in Luz' words above is the gap between the tightly focussed desire of modern scholarship to account historically for the Transfiguration, and the hugely creative influence our narratives have had in the history of Christian theology, spirituality, liturgy, and artistic expression. Lee's work on the Transfiguration, reviewed in section 2.8 above, reveals the range of connections the Transfiguration narratives could be making in a wider discourse concerning the transformation of the faithful believer. In the essay quoted above, Norris[158] also shows a consistent hermeneutic agenda characterising patristic interpretation, but largely absent from modern comment, was a concern to relate the Transfiguration narratives to theological questions concerning the transformation of the Christian church and of the human subject. Luz argues this wider influence by the Transfiguration on Christian theology and spirituality is so great, that to set one's investigative horizons no wider than simple historical accounting for the "origins of our story" would only offer a partial account of the meaning and significance of the Transfiguration narratives. For Luz, there is a disjuncture between the richness and complexity of the reception history of the Transfiguration, and the narrow focus with which historical scholarship has often approached a much smaller number of critical

[157] Frederick Norris, "The Transfiguration of Christ: The Transformation of the Church," in *Reading in Christian Communities: Essays on Interpretation in the Early Church*, ed. Charles Bobert (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), p. 196.
[158] Ibid., pp. 188-196.

questions, frequently resulting in little consensus. This in turn, prompts the question of whether an examination of that history of interpretation might, in fact, reveal exegetical insights which offer a wider account of the Transfiguration's meaning and significance.

I wish to suggest that one way through the impasses we have outlined in modern interpretation is to survey patristic interpretation and artistic depiction of the Transfiguration, as a way of supplementing the insights of modern New Testament scholarship. The need for such a survey is also revealed in the next chapter by a review of the literature which modern patrologists have produced on the Transfiguration. The hermeneutic questions I have made the subject of this thesis have received little attention from them, as has the role of the Lucan narrative in discussion of the Transfiguration's visionary status.

Chapter 3: Review of modern comment on patristic interpretation of the Transfiguration and its earliest depictions

In this chapter I review the comment modern patrologists have offered on the way the Transfiguration was interpreted by ancient writers and artists. I highlight a number of emphases, gaps, and shortcomings which this thesis fills and supplements.

3.1 Modern comment on Greek interpretation

The simple work of surveying and cataloguing Greek Patristic thought on the Transfiguration has already been accomplished by a number of scholars. The most thorough example of this surveying is an unpublished D.Phil. thesis deposited at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in 1991 by Christopher Veniamin.[159] The thesis is an exhaustive survey of all Greek comment and an outlining of the development of the doctrine of the Transfiguration from the earliest times to the Palamite controversies of the Middle Ages. The great virtue is his thesis is its compendious scope. Because his study is an exercise in the history of doctrine, however, he dwells less on hermeneutic questions in the way I wish to in this thesis. He understandably, therefore, shows little interest in the visionary motifs I want to explore, nor much recognition of the distinct role of the Lucan text in the Transfiguration's reception history. As a natural result of its focus, his thesis makes no comment on Latin comment, and tends towards a reading of Greek patristic comment through the lens of later Palamite discussion. He also makes no comment on the reception of New Testament texts through visual depiction.

[159] Christopher N. Veniamin, "The Transfiguration of Christ in Greek Patristic Literature: From Irenaeus of Lyons to Gregory Palamas" (D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1991).

In addition to Veniamin's work there also exists a study produced in 1974 by Georges Habra.[160] Written from a Melkite perspective, this has a more devotional orientation in its comment on the nature of the "Taborian" light, and human experience of God's "energies". Habra concentrates on the Transfiguration's significance as exemplifying stages within the spiritual life, something to which he devotes the last five chapters of his study. From the outset, Habra makes it clear his survey has a resolutely devotional and confessional focus rather than a hermeneutic one.

John McGuckin has also published on the subject of the Transfiguration in 1986, with his work, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*. The short introduction he writes is a useful summary of the outlines of patristic interpretation in East and West and offers a good précis of Transfiguration comment by theme. The work's principal focus is its extensive selection of quotations from the Fathers on the Transfiguration which makes up a good half of the book's pages. McGuckin achieves both a sensitive reading of the New Testament accounts of the Transfiguration, and a nuanced understanding of the life of those narratives in the history of the Church. However, elements of the form- and redaction-critical approach he takes to the New Testament narratives sometimes feel a little dated, with, for example, a focusing, solely on Mark as the most "primitive."[161] McGuckin's task is one of cataloguing and summary, so his work does not have scope for the focus on visionary motifs which this thesis has. McGuckin makes little mention either of the role Luke's narrative has played, and only briefly explores the role artistic depiction has had in the history of the Transfiguration's interpretation.

[160] Georges Habra, *La Transfiguration selon les pères grecs* (Paris: Editions S.O.S, 1974).
[161] McGuckin, pp. 5-19.

Kenneth Stevenson has also produced a short review of Greek patristic comment on the Transfiguration in a chapter of his posthumously published work, *Liturgy and Interpretation.*[162] A strength of his work is its attentiveness to liturgical context which characterises his examination of exegetical material. He notes the distinguishing characteristics of Luke's version, but does not focus on visionary elements. He is also adamant that Chrysostom exercises a significant influence over Eastern thought, perhaps second only to Origen,[163] but does not explore this at any greater length. I examine in Chapter 6 of this thesis Chrysostom's comment and his understanding of readers' interaction with the Transfiguration texts as a way of expanding on Stevenson's instincts concerning Chrysostom's influence.

A further work by Édouard Divry on the Transfiguration[164] offers a more doctrinal focus on divine light, human experience of divine glory and the vision of God. His work is focussed on the Transfiguration as an experience of light, and how that relates to eschatological hope and the mystical tradition of the Church. It is also an attempt to reconcile later Western Thomistic and Eastern Palamite traditions as part of an academic project expressly designed to bear ecumenical fruit.

A number of other works contain short précis of patristic comment as part of wider discussion of the Transfiguration from the perspective of systematic theology or art history. Ramsey includes a small section outlining Eastern Patristic interpretation,[165] as does Andreopoulos in his iconographic study of the Transfiguration.[166] Both

[162] Kenneth Stevenson, *Liturgy and Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 2011), pp. 86-102.
[163] Ibid., pp. 88-90, p. 100.
[164] Divry, Edouard, *La Transfiguration selon l'orient et l'occident*, Croire et Savoir vol. 54 (Paris: Pierre Tequi, 2009).
[165] Ramsey, pp. 128-139.
[166] Andreopoulos, pp. 50-66.

emphasise the continuity between Greek Patristic comment and Eastern Orthodox traditions of interpretation.

Although the work of cataloguing Greek patristic thought has been accomplished by others, I wish to point here to gaps in these surveys which reveal the need for a modest supplementing of their work by the evidence I marshal in this thesis. A frequent characteristic of the works outlined above is the principally doctrinal rather than hermeneutic focus of their work. A substantial majority also write from an avowedly committed Eastern Orthodox perspective, or from a point of view very influenced by, or very sympathetic to, the Eastern Orthodox theological tradition. A consequence of this is a tendency to view Patristic comment on the Transfiguration through distinctly Palamite lenses in a way which leads to a dogmatic focus on notions of divine light, human experience of the divine, and insistence on a distinction between God's unknowable essence and knowable energies. This can draw comment away from the New Testament narratives themselves, and many of the complexities which I have just examined in Chapter 1. Most of these modern scholarly surveys, either with their dogmatic, devotional, or mystical focuses frequently overlook hermeneutic questions concerning interpretation of the visionary and ecstatic elements which are the subject of this thesis. This especially includes the importance of the distinct traits of the Lucan narrative such as the disciples' sleepiness, Peter's not knowing what he said, and the disciples' definite entry into the cloud. In addition, very few pay sufficient attention to the earliest depictions of the Transfiguration in the Patristic era.

3.2 Modern Comment on Latin interpretation

No work of the exhaustive quality of Veniamin's D.Phil. thesis exists covering Latin comment. There is also quite simply less secondary comment written on Western interpretation of the Transfiguration, because the corpus of original writings is smaller than that written in the Greek language. A few smaller studies of Latin comment have been written, however, and amongst the most insightful of them must rank the series of articles undertaken by Kenneth Stevenson. He comments upon Jerome and Peter the Venerable in his work, *Rooted in Detachment*,[167] an exploration of Transfiguration interpretation across a wide spectrum of commentators and periods. Two further articles on Latin Patristic Transfiguration comment were also included in the collection of his essays *Liturgy and Interpretation.*[168] One of his most important observations is a call for further scholarly examination of the reception history of the Transfiguration, and the recognition that Latin interpretation is an area which has suffered from a degree of academic neglect.[169] He also recognises the need to challenge the value judgment implicitly present in much modern comment, that Greek Patristic comment is somehow richer and more sophisticated than Latin interpretation of the Transfiguration.[170] Stevenson points, for example, to the complex allegorical tradition of interpretation that emerges in Latin comment, but which is less prevalent in Greek discussion.[171] A further worthwhile contribution made by Stevenson is his situating of Latin Patristic comment within its liturgical context, and particularly within the development of differing observance of the Transfiguration within Western calendars and rites, and the role Luke's version of the narrative has played in

[167] Kenneth Stevenson, *Rooted in Detachment: Living the Transfiguration* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007), pp. 25-29.
[168] Stevenson, *Liturgy and Interpretation,* pp. 71-85, pp. 103-122.
[169] Ibid., p. 103.
[170] Ibid., p. 104, pp. 121-122.
[171] Ibid., pp. 119-122.

lectionaries.[172] Whilst it is important to commend the usefulness of Stevenson's work, one of its limitations, by Stevenson's own admitting, is the limited length and scope of the two short chapters he has produced. Because of his survey's brevity, he cannot undertake, for example, a deeper examination of visionary motifs, nor penetrate much deeper into the allegorical tradition of interpretation he sees present, other than noting its presence. In many respects parts of this thesis represent a fleshing out of the questions he points to as in need of further exploration, and is a response to his call for further study in this area.

Chapter 3 of McGuckin's introduction covers both Latin and Greek commentators, and offers some clear contours and categories within which to order Latin comment.[173] He describes interpretation shared by the West with the East, such as seeing the Transfiguration as a strengthening for the disciples in preparation for the Passion,[174] a revelation of the harmony of the two covenants,[175] and a foretaste of Resurrection and Parousia glory.[176] He also lists themes which figure prominently in Greek comment, but which are much less widely attested in Latin thought, such as the Transfiguration revealing the unknowability of God,[177] the idea of the disciples' vision being graced with altered or special vision,[178] and the Transfiguration being seen as an allegory for ascetic vision of God.[179] A tension found in McGuckin's work is the question of how one assesses and values the quantity and quality of Eastern comment by comparison with Western. In simple quantitative terms, a much larger

[172] Ibid., pp. 76-81, pp. 111-113, pp. 115-116.
[173] McGuckin, pp. 99-125.
[174] Ibid., pp. 115-116.
[175] Ibid., pp. 116-117.
[176] Ibid., pp. 120-125.
[177] Ibid., p. 103.
[178] Ibid., p. 105.
[179] Ibid., p. 109.

body of earlier writing on the Transfiguration exists in Greek, and Latin interpretation tends to flourish a little later, from the fourth century onwards. The fact that there is less to comment on inevitably means surveys such as McGuckin's spend more time evaluating Greek thought. McGuckin's introduction considers patristic comment theme by theme, in the chronological order in which it was written, which leads often to an appraisal of Greek comment before Latin. McGuckin's survey exemplifies, by the way in which it is ordered, how the false impression can sometimes be given that the most important commentators were always those writing in Greek.

In addition to the surveys outlined above, portions of a number of other works cover Latin exegesis of the Transfiguration, such as Divry's.[180] He devotes the substantial part of a chapter to Latin patristic comment, though this counts more as a preparatory preamble for the real focus of his chapter, which is Thomas Aquinas' thought concerning divine light. Divry's principal interest is dogmatic questions concerning how the human subject is capable of perceiving and revealing divine light. Whilst Divry's work represents a useful précis of Latin patristic comment on the specific question of "Taborian" light, there is much in the Fathers' interpretation of the New Testament narratives which, as a result of this focus, he leaves uncommented upon.

A further work of significance is Canty's study of Transfiguration interpretation amongst mendicant writers in the Middle Ages. Although his period lies after the focus of our study, his book is useful at plotting out the later trajectory that Latin consideration of the Transfiguration will take, and also contains a short summary of

[180] Divry, pp. 223-248.

preceding patristic comment.[181] In that summary, Canty suggests a few key differences between Western and Eastern interpretation. He characterises the East as more interested in readings that emphasise "spiritual meaning,"[182] whereas Latin readings tend to be more orientated towards "exegetical difficulties."[183] He also claims Latin comment focuses frequently on Peter much more than Eastern, and has a predilection for allegorical interpretations which emphasise the ecclesial and corporate over individual ascetic experience.[184] He also sees in comment such as Leo's a much stronger interest in the Transfiguration as a revelation of the glorified *humanity* of Christ, and of that humanity as something which mediates his divinity. This contrasts with an Eastern tendency to focus on the experience as an unmediated vision of Christ's *divinity* in the form of uncreated light proceeding from the godhead. Canty shows the general predisposition of Western Medieval interpretation was to assume, by contrast with Palamite thinkers, that the Transfiguration was susceptible to mortal vision by virtue of being only a partial experience of eschatological glory. This Latin perspective was officially sanctioned by Innocent III (pope 1198-1216) in a Lenten Ember Sermon, in which he defined the "corporal" nature of the vision.[185]

This review of modern comment on Latin Patristic sources shows the need for a correcting of several more general historiographical presuppositions which have characterised much discussion of the Transfiguration, and which have generally emphasised the Greek tradition and neglected the Latin. We have noted how the West's less prolific comment on the Transfiguration is sometimes read as signifying

[181] Aaron Canty, *Light and Glory: The Transfiguration of Christ in Early Fransiscan and Dominican Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), pp. 11-15.
[182] Ibid., p. 14.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid., pp. 14-15.
[185] PL 217, 377D.

lack of interest or theological complexity. This thesis will show Western interpretation of the Transfiguration to display considerable creativity, but to be orientated towards different questions from those which interest Greek writers. There seems to be, for example, as Canty has argued, a greater interest amongst Latin writers in hermeneutic questions, both in explaining difficult elements in the New Testament texts, but also in comparing the Transfiguration with other passages from scripture. I aim in Chapter 7 to explore more deeply many of these characteristics which have only been discussed fleetingly in many of the works outlined above. It is also evident, as Stevenson argued, that the Lucan version of the Transfiguration may have played a significant role in some Western calendars and lectionaries but that no detailed examination of the influence of Luke's narrative in Western interpretation has been undertaken.[186] It must also be noted that nowhere in any of these reviews of Latin comment have I noticed any significant comment on the priestly and tabernacle motifs, which I show are present in Western comment. It remains the case that none of the commentators reviewed above shows interest in the Western artistic tradition of Transfiguration depiction, which has been the focus of very little theological scrutiny.

3.3 Modern art historians' comment on early depictions in East and West

A number of scholars have outlined the earliest history of depiction of the Transfiguration in both East and West from the sixth century.[187] Detailed discussion of their verdicts on specific examples will be left to Chapter 8. I wish here to review the broad contours of their discussion and to highlight gaps in it that prompt the need for fresh study.

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[186] Stevenson, *Liturgy and Interpretation*, pp. 72-76.
[187] Erich Dinkler, *Das Apsismosaik von S. Apollinare in Classe*, (Köln: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1964), pp. 25-50; Krüger, p. 91ff.; Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art* (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), pp. 145-152.

A significant body of comment exists with a strong emphasis on the Eastern iconographic tradition from the emergence of the earliest Transfiguration images to the present day.[188] A number of works written more generally on Eastern icons point to the significance which the image of the Transfiguration has played within the development of Orthodox theology, spirituality and liturgy.[189] This Eastern focus is frequently held to be the result of the pivotal role the Transfiguration would have in polemical dispute during the iconoclastic and hesychastic controversies of the eighth and twelfth centuries.[190] The history of this Eastern tradition of spirituality and artistic expression does not need to be repeated here, partly because it has been documented at length by others, and partly because much of it concerns periods later than the focus of this study. I do, however, want to point to two shortcomings in the way that art history has been written.

The first shortcoming is the way in which extensive comment on Eastern depiction of the Transfiguration throws into relief the relative lack of discussion of Western portrayals. It is certainly arguable that the Transfiguration played a more central role in many aspects of Greek theology and spirituality. However, it is also the case that

[188] E.g., Andreopoulos; Krüger; Solrunn Nes and Arlyne Moi, *The Uncreated Light: An Iconographical Study of the Transfiguration in the Eastern Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich. ; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2007).

[189] John Baggley, *Doors of Perception: Icons and their Spiritual Significance* (London: Mowbray, 1987), p. 40, p. 81, p. 93, pp. 136-137, pp. 146-147; John Baggley, *Festival Icons for the Christian Year* (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 58-71; Paul Evdokimov, *L'art de L'icône : théologie de la beauté* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1970), pp. 249-256; Konrad Onasch, *Icons* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 362, p. 367, p. 370, p. 384; Leonide Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons* (Boston: Boston Book and Art Shop, 1969), pp. 210-213; Kurt Weitzmann, *The Icon: Holy Images, Sixth to Fourteenth Century* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1978), pp. 86-87, pp. 94-96.

[190] Andreopoulos, pp. 209-242; Baggley, *Doors of Perception: Icons and their Spiritual Significance*, pp. 21-33; Ernst Kitzinger and W. Eugene Kleinbauer, *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West : Selected Studies* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 90-156; John Meyendorff and George Lawrence, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (London: Faith Press, 1964).

the figurative template used by the East for depiction of the Transfiguration becomes established very firmly in the sixth century and remains, in its basic outline, relatively static through to the present day.[191] Historians have charted a series of slightly changing emphases within the Orthodox icon of the Transfiguration, particularly concerning how light was revealed to the disciples through differing styles of mandorlas and a series of rays.[192] However, the basic bounds of the Transfiguration icon have remained fixed, and part of a very formal, figurative stencil. As can be seen from Schiller's[193] and Krüger's[194] review of Transfiguration imagery, much less of a sense of convention emerges in the West, where both a greater breadth of media, and a wider spectrum of styles of artistic expression are used to depict the Transfiguration. I suggest that these clear and identifiable artistic conventions surrounding Eastern icons of the Transfiguration have contributed to a misapprehension by some that the Latin artistic tradition is either less sophisticated, or is more puzzling and difficult to read because of its lack of convention. This tendency, for example, is found in the works of Solrun Nes,[195] and Andreas Andreopoulos.[196] Both have written on the iconographical tradition of the early and medieval church with reference to depiction of the Transfiguration. Whilst they both make mention of a few Western depictions, especially the monumental mosaic in Classe, their overwhelming focus is the Eastern tradition.

I argue in Chapter 8 that the originality, diversity, and complexity of the Western iconographic tradition has sometimes made it more difficult to notice, categorize, and

[191] See Andreopoulos, pp. 83-100.
[192] Ibid., pp. 179-192; Krüger, pp. 273-294.
[193] Schiller, pp. 145-152.
[194] Krüger, pp. 93-265.
[195] Nes and Moi, *The Uncreated Light*.
[196] Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*.

analyse. We will see that artists in Rome, Ravenna, and France mix imagery from the Transfiguration with depictions of other scenes from the scriptures and exploit more abstract or allusive ways of presenting the Transfiguration narratives. I do not wish to deny the rich artistic and theological Eastern tradition associated with the icon of the Transfiguration is important. However, I do wish to point to the way in which the Western tradition has suffered from a degree of scholarly neglect, and that the hermeneutic explored within some Western depictions has often been under explored.

A second shortcoming in modern comment on early Transfiguration depiction revolves around the fact that much of it, especially on Western depictions of the Transfiguration, has been the work of art historians rather than theologians. The virtue of my present study, therefore, is that it brings a survey of theological interpretation, as well as a close study of the New Testament texts, to bear on our reading of many of these early images. This allows a more theological reading of various images, which historians of art and architecture are sometimes unaware of by virtue of the historical character of their expertise. My aim is less to plot out a genealogy of these images' artistic history, but more to use the evidence I have amassed in preceding chapters to suggest ways in which these images might have been interpreted and viewed. By the very nature of that task, many of my conclusions have to remain at the level of suggestion or possibility. However, the evidence I marshal will show those conclusions at least to be credible speculation on the hermeneutic role these images may have played.

3.4 Conclusion

I have outlined in this chapter some of the most significant gaps in the literature written by modern patrologists and art historians on early reception of the Transfiguration. Few have investigated at length Patristic understandings of the many visionary motifs we have examined in Chapter 1, and the question of how the disciples are understood as seeing the Transfiguration. In addition, the importance of the Lucan narrative within patristic discourse has often been overlooked. I have also argued a neglect of Latin comment can be detected along with an implicit underrating by some of Western artistic depiction. I argue an appraisal of early depictions of the Transfiguration in the light of reflection on patristic hermeneutic comment is needful.

The survey of patristic comment and early depiction which forms the rest of this thesis aims, therefore, to make a substantial contribution to knowledge by filling these gaps in modern scholarship. It reveals the conclusions of modern New Testament scholars concerning our narratives are but one part of a long and rich tradition of interpretation. The approach I propose is not an attempt to retreat to a cosy, pre-critical hermeneutic naivety; neither is it intended to claim that historical critical scholarship has no contribution to make; nor does it attribute to patristic comment an unwarranted authority or value by virtue of its antiquity. It does, however, see worth in the wider perspective which would be gained by examination of ancient comment and artistic expression in revealing the breadth of the total body of reflection on the narratives we are studying.

SECTION 2: WRITTEN RECEPTION

Chapter 4: Reception of the Transfiguration in 2 Peter, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Acts of Peter*, and the *Acts of John*.

Having outlined in the previous three chapters the need for a surveying of the reception history of the Transfiguration, this chapter explores how the narrative is received in the Second Epistle of Peter, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Acts of Peter* and the *Acts of John*. These are the earliest documents to discuss, use, and interpret the Transfiguration in narratives written either about the lives of the apostles, or pseudonymously in their name. I show the writer of 2 Peter uses language capable of evoking the Transfiguration as an ecstatic visionary, experience which bestows privileged authority on its seer. In addition, the *Apocalypse of Peter* interprets the Transfiguration as a visionary entrance into heaven which draws on Luke's narrative. The *Acts of Peter* and *Acts of John* show the Transfiguration being used in more docetic discourse about the appearance of Jesus, which requires the apostles' vision to be altered. Although all these texts make very different rhetorical and theological points, the status of the Transfiguration as a text describing visionary experience is crucial to their arguments.

4.1 2 Peter 1.16-18

The account of the Transfiguration found in 2 Peter 1.16-18 differs in many respects from that found in the synoptic narratives. It contains no direct reference to an overshadowing cloud, any change in the appearance of Jesus, nor the presence of Moses and Elijah. The number of disciples who witness the Transfiguration is not recounted in 2 Peter. 2 Peter replaces all descriptions of Jesus' change of appearance

by reference to his receiving "honour and glory." 2 Peter describes this glory being bestowed on Jesus by the voice which comes from heaven, directed to Jesus. All mention of Peter's confusion, sleep, fear, or his suggestion concerning tabernacles is absent, and the account seems to be marshalled as evidence in arguments concerning the certainty of Christ's Parousia.

A significant question addressed by modern scholarship is whether this account represents an independent tradition concerning the Transfiguration, as argued by Bauckham[197] or whether it is dependent on the synoptic gospel accounts as Miller[198] and Gilmour[199] have proposed. Miller has shown the evidence of Bauckham's argument to be so finely balanced as to be difficult to prove conclusively. In the absence of a more robustly proven theory positing anything other than the *possibility* of independence for 2 Peter, Miller suggests the simplest explanation is to assume reliance on the synoptic tradition, with Matthew being the most likely source. Gilmour sees the presence of allusions to Matthew's gospel as tipping the scales of likelihood in the direction of reliance by 2 Peter on the synoptic tradition. I find Miller's and Gilmour's logic convincing in that they do not offer an exhaustively comprehensive answer, but simply point to the difficulty of proving independence conclusively, and the importance of a series of likely, though not unassailably proven allusions to the synoptic tradition. I will regard 2 Peter 1.16-18 therefore, as an example of the earliest reception of the synoptic gospels' accounts of the Transfiguration.

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[197] Bauckham, pp. 205-210.
[198] Robert Miller, "Is there Independent Attestation for the Transfiguration in 2 Peter?," *New Testament Studies* 42, (1996), pp. 620-625.
[199] Michael J. Gilmour, *The Significance of Parallels between 2 Peter and Other Early Christian Literature* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), pp. 99-100.

I will focus here on the language 2 Peter uses of "eyewitness" to describe Peter's experience of the Transfiguration and show the writer may be aware of a range of meaning that language is able to evoke concerning the way in which Peter's vision was altered to perceive the event. An assumption lying behind 2 Peter's account could be that Peter experienced some sort of ecstatic vision which bestowed upon him privileged knowledge and sight. We see in 2 Peter the first hints at speculation concerning the precise nature of Peter's vision, a topos which becomes a frequent focus of debate in much later comment.

Most modern scholars of 2 Peter see the writer marshalling the Transfiguration as evidence to support belief in the return of Jesus, with Peter's witnessing of the Transfiguration seen as a foretaste of the glory Jesus will have on the Last Day as eschatological judge.[200] For them, the writer's polemical aims explain his leaving out elements from the gospel accounts as a jettisoning of anything not focussed on Jesus' future eschatological glory. Of crucial importance is the writer's claim to be amongst the "**ἐπόπται**…τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος."[201]

Neyrey emphasises the pseudepigraphical character of the letter and sees this language of eyewitness as simply intended to increase the credibility of the narrator's voice.[202] However, Bauckham asserts the eyewitness claim is best explained by the theological assertions it makes about the character of the Transfiguration and the

[200] See, for example, Bauckham, p. 212; Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Apologetic Use of the Transfiguration in 2 Peter 1.16-21," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42, (1980), pp. 504-519; Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (New York ; London: Doubleday, 1993), pp. 172-174.
[201] 2 Peter 1.16.
[202] Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 129-141.

Parousia as sure events which could be apprehended by human sight.[203] For him, the author evokes the claim by Peter to have seen the Transfiguration in order to argue the reader's seeing of the Parousia is just as likely.

However, the term ἐπόπται evokes a range of meaning in ancient discourse, and has a history of signifying those initiated into esoteric mystical traditions. It does not simply describe uncommitted, dispassionate viewing but necessarily includes some sense of comprehension. Michaelis translates the word's basic sense as, "one who sees and notes something."[204] It can also have a hierarchical and cultic meaning indicating one set in oversight over others in which vision communicates authority. Josephus uses the word to describe the Temple priests,[205] for example, as the "overseers of all things." Some scholars have pointed to the way in which this New Testament *hapax* is used to describe those initiated into the highest of the Eleusinian mysteries, a usage Clement of Alexandria was aware of.[206] Although the content of these mysteries is much debated, the dramas which took place only for the view of initiates had a highly visual, and dramatic form.[207] In addition, initiation into the Greater Mysteries seems frequently to have involved claims to dream and ecstatic vision, often associated with the taking of a drink called the *kykeon*. Mention of this potion has lead to considerable speculation as to whether it might have contained some sort of hallucinogenic agent.[208] We must conclude the word can, in certain

[203] Bauckham, p. 216.
[204] Wilhelm Michaelis, s.v. "Εποπτης," *TDNT*, Vol V, p. 373.
[205] *Contra Apionem*, 2.187 H, St J. Thackeray, *Josephus*, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 366.
[206] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 3.3.17, Wilhelm Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (Lipsiae: apud S. Hirzelium, 1898), p. 42, p. 48ff.
[207] Harold R. Willoughby, *Pagan Regeneration: A Study of Mystery Initiations in the Graeco-Roman World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), pp. 37-67.
[208] Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 93-95, p. 108; R. Gordon Wasson, Carl A. P. Ruck, and Albert Hofmann,

circumstances, carry a sense of initiated knowledge of the divine, especially revealed through ecstatic vision.

Many New Testament commentators have been suspicious of seeing this ecstatic sense present in 2 Peter 1.16.[209] However, Balz and Schneider show it is difficult to prove it is completely absent.[210] Much hangs on whether one interprets the mention of following "cleverly concocted myths" to be an argument of the writer's opponents being answered,[211] or an accusation of the writer.[212] Neyrey convincingly shows the rhetorical significance of the "Οὐ…ἀλλα" construction used by the writer to make best sense if seen as the first reply to his opponents' arguments. It is unclear whether these opponents themselves make claim to exclusive gnostic revelation, or whether they argue the Parousia is akin to it. Their argument would seem to be that Christian expectation concerning the Parousia is to be dismissed as fanciful, and not provable by evidence of any sort. The writer introduces the Transfiguration as the evidence he needs to prove the likelihood of the future event he defends, and holds himself out as amongst the "ἐπόπται" who witnessed it. Either this is intended to trump the gnostic

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The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries (Los Angeles: William Dailey Rare Books, 1998), pp. 21-60.

[209] E.g. Lee, p. 136; Michaelis, "Εποπτης," p. 375; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 176; Donald Senior and Daniel J. Harrington, *1 Peter, Jude and 2 Peter* (Collegeville, Minnesotta: Liturgical Press, 2003), pp. 255-256.

[210] As argued by EDNT, Vol 2, p. 46; Michael Green, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, (London: Tyndale P, 1968), p. 83; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (London: Black, 1969), p. 318.

[211] As argued by, Bauckham, p. 205; Tord Fornberg, "An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society : A Study of 2 Peter" (CWK Gleerup, Uppsala, 1977), p. 60; Green, pp. 81-82; Kelly, p. 316; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, p. 170; Terence V. Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity : Attitudes Towards Peter in Christian Writings of the First Two Centuries*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1985), p. 78.

[212] As argued by, Walter Grundmann, *Der Brief Des Judas Und Der Zweite Brief Des Petrus*, (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1974), pp. 59-64, p. 80; Karl Hermann Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe; Der Judasbrief: Auslegung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), p. 197; Wolfgang Schrage, *Die "Katholischen" Briefe : Die Briefe Des Jakobus, Petrus, Johannes Und Judas*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), p. 135.

knowledge of his opponents by showing them to be outside the initiated circle he shares with his readers, or to argue against their protestations concerning the authenticity of his revealed witness. Either way, his claim to legitimate authority over them is rooted in his claim to have received authentic revelation at the Transfiguration.

2 Peter: Conclusion

It seems difficult entirely to exclude the possibility that something more than the simple forensic reliability of sense vision is being evoked by use of the phrase "ἐπόπται…τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος." I argue the writer is, at least, "aware that it suggests privileged admission to a divine revelation."[213] The word ἐπόπται could be capable of evoking the ecstatic, visionary practices of the mystery cults. For the writer of 2 Peter, the Transfiguration similarly requires altered perception, and bestows revealed insight upon its witnesses. If some degree of extraordinary vision is implied by the word ἐπόπται, then 2 Peter points to the Transfiguration as an experience which requires vision beyond the sense faculty of sight. In other words, the narrator assumes the only way one would believe the evidence of someone claiming to have experienced the Parousia before its time would be if they were in a state of altered, privileged vision. Although 2 Peter says little explicitly about the precise nature of the epistemic state Peter may have been in, it foregrounds a question which will return time and time again throughout patristic comment, namely whether the disciples' vision needed to be altered in order to perceive the Transfiguration. The narrator assumes the authority of a figure who received privileged vision which gave him a

[213] Kelly, p. 318.

distinct authority to report something which is otherwise unavailable to the sight of others, but which in the Parousia will be made known to all.

4.2 *The Apocalypse of Peter*

The next section will examine the "transfiguration" scene contained in the *Apocalypse of Peter*.[214] I argue the synoptic Transfiguration narrative is reworked and presented as a visionary ascent into heaven. In addition, I show the presence of motifs appertaining to the earthly temple, the heavenly tabernacle, and use of the language of priesthood. I will also assess the influence of Revelation 11 and Luke's version of the Transfiguration on the text of the *Ap. Pet*.

The *Ap. Pet.* is generally dated to the early second century as a result of a widely held theory that its reference to a "Liar" figure is Simon Bar Kokhba, who revolted against Roman rule in 132.[215] Until the nineteenth century, it was only known about through a number of fleeting patristic quotations, and its listing in the Muratorian canon as an apocryphal text. However, a Greek version was found in Akhmim, Upper Egypt in 1886; and a fuller version in Ethiopic was recovered in 1910.

4.2.1 The "Transfiguration" scene in the Ethiopic and Greek "Akhmim" texts

The Ethiopic version recounts an extended Olivet discourse, which draws heavily on Matthew 24. After Jesus' prediction of the end time, a description of hell, and allusions to Peter's martyrdom in Rome, there follows a transfiguration scene of

[214] From now on, *Ap. Pet.*
[215] Richard Bauckham, "The Two Fig Tree Parables in the Apocalypse of Peter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, no. 2 (1985), pp. 269-87; Richard Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokhba," *Apocrypha* 5, no. 1 (1994), pp. 7-111.

sorts.[216] Jesus addresses Peter suggesting he and the whole group of disciples ascend "the holy mountain" to pray. On this mountain, Peter sees two men of appearance so glorious that they could hardly be gazed upon. Nothing is said at all concerning Jesus' appearance. Upon asking Christ who they are, Peter is informed they are Moses and Elijah. Jesus then shows the seer a beautiful garden, full of fruits with a tree. Those who rest there are described as having "honour" and "glory." At this point, Peter makes his suggestion concerning 3 tabernacles. This is dismissed by Christ, who describes Peter's understanding as being veiled by Satan. As a result Peter is told his, "eyes therefore must be opened," and his, "ears unstopped," so that he can see, "a tabernacle, not made with men's hands, which my heavenly Father has made for me and for the elect."[217] This Peter then sees, whereupon a celestial voice is heard, and a white cloud carries Jesus, Moses and Elijah off into heaven.

The Akhmim text is much shorter. There is no ascension scene, no apocalyptic discourse at the beginning, nor mention of Peter's martyrdom. It simply contains the "Transfiguration" scene, which happens as a result of the disciples asking to see the fate of those who had died.[218] However, the two glorious men are *not* described as Moses and Elijah, but rather the "righteous brethren whose appearance you wished to see."[219] They are then shown, "a very great region outside this world, exceedingly bright with light,"[220] full of blossoms and fruits in which the righteous dwell in

[216] Buchholz, Dennis, *Your Eyes will be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 232-243.
[217] Buchholz, p. 241; J. K. Elliott and M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament : A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 611.
[218] GCS, Neue Folge, 11, pp. 104-109.
[219] GCS, Neue Folge, 11, p. 106; Elliott, p. 610.
[220] Ibid.

angelic appearance. Following this, Peter sees a tour of hell, at the end of which the text finishes.

There are two significant differences between the two "transfiguration" texts. First, in the Akhmim, the tour of hell is in the form of a vision experienced by Peter, which follows on from the "transfiguration" vision. In the Ethiopic, however, hell is simply *described* by Jesus to Peter, and leads up to the final transfiguration vision and ascension scene. Secondly, the Akhmim "transfiguration" and heavenly tour appears to be more concerned with the *present* state of Christians who have *already* died. By contrast, the Ethiopic version sees its "transfiguration" narrative in terms of the *future* eschatological fate of Jewish Christian believers. Indeed, the "transfiguration" in the Akhmim version seems more distant from the synoptic narratives than the Ethiopic, and to be much closer to a description of the righteous in heaven, than a narrative drawing on an incident in the earthly life of Jesus. Largely because early work on the *Ap. Pet.* was focused on the Akhmim text, many scholars such as Dibelius and Bultmann saw the Greek as the earlier version.[221] Since then, scholarly consensus has moved considerably and now widely sees the Ethiopic version as the more reliable witness[222] to an original Greek text underlying both of these manuscripts, not least because of its closer conformity to known patristic quotations.[223] Lee convincingly

[221] Bultmann, pp. 432-433; Martin Dibelius, *Die Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1975), p. 84.
[222] Dennis Buchholz offers the most recent case for the reliability of the Ethiopic text, based in part on his careful examination of Manuscripts B and R, which frequently agree with the Ethiopic against the Akhmim text. See Buchholz, pp. 107-109, pp. 145-52, pp. 418-22.
[223] See also, Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1998), p. 163; Gilmour, p. 107; M. R. James, "A New Text of the Apocalypse of Peter," *Journal of Theological Studies*, (1911), pp. 367-75, pp. 573-83; M. R. James, "The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter," *Journal of Theological Studies* 32, (1931), pp. 270-279; Erich Klostermann, "Zur Petrusapokalypse," in *Hundert Jahre A. Marcus und E. Webers Verlag*, ed. A. Marcus und E. Webers Verlag(1921), p. 77 ff; Lee, p. 146; K. Prumm, "De Genuine Apocalysis Petri Textu Examen Testium Ian

suggests that the Akhmim version represents a reworking in a context outside Jewish Palestine where mention of the patriarchs or Moses and Elijah would carry less weight, and that the Ethiopic text is probably a translation of an original intended for a more Jewish audience.[224] Hereafter, it will be assumed that any mention of the *"Apocalypse of Peter"* refers to the Ethiopic version unless otherwise stated.

4.2.2 Relationship with New Testament texts

The relationship between the "transfiguration" in *Ap. Pet.* and the synoptic gospels and 2 Peter is a complex one. Earlier scholars[225] saw it for many years as evidence of a tradition more primitive to that found in the gospels, since it has no direct description of Jesus' metamorphosis. This was frequently, however, part of now discounted theories conjecturing the Transfiguration as a misplaced Resurrection narrative. Spitta,[226] Boobyer,[227] and most commentators following them have tended to see *Ap. Pet.* as representing a more developed interpretation of the synoptic Transfiguration traditions, especially as the text seems to expand or explain elements in the synoptic accounts.

Notorum Et Novi Fragmenti Raineriani," *Biblica* 10, (1929): pp. 62-80; P. Van Minnen, "The Greek Apocalypse of Peter," in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Istvan Czachesz (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 15-39.

[224] Lee, p. 146.

[225] K. G. Goetz, *Petrus als Gründer and Oberhaupt der Kirche und Schauer von Gesichten nach den altchristlichen Berichten und Legenden* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1927), pp. 76-92; Maurice Goguel, *La foi à la résurrection de Jésus dans le christianisme primitif* (Paris: Leroux, 1933), pp. 326-330; Adolf von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen literatur bis Eusebius* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1893), Part 2, pp. 470-472; Teeple, pp. 84-86; Wellhausen, p. 71.

[226] F. Spitta, "Die Petrusapokalypse und der Zweite Petrusbrief," *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 12, (1911), pp. 237-242.

[227] Boobyer, pp. 13-14.

Many elements in the *Ap. Pet.*, however, seem to cohere more closely with the 2 Peter account of the Transfiguration than with synoptic accounts,[228] such as interpreting the Transfiguration in the light of Parousia ideas, a focus on false teachers, mention of "honour and glory"[229] and ethical concerns described in terms of the "way of righteousness."[230] Indeed some scholars supposed 2 Peter to be dependent upon *Ap. Pet.*,[231] or to be penned by the same writer,[232] or by writers of an identical theological school.[233] Two major problems with these positions were the fact that *Ap. Pet.* does not actually describe a Transfiguration of Jesus, but just of Moses and Elijah, and that most of these theories revolved around comparison with the Akhmim text before the longer Ethiopic version was widely available. Although Bauckham sees 2 Peter as influenced by a tradition independent from the gospels, a considerable range of scholars agree with his assertion of literary reliance the other way around: dependence *by Ap. Pet. on* 2 Peter.[234] Lee, by contrast, sees 2 Peter and *Ap. Pet.* in a looser relationship, with both dependent on common Petrine traditions.[235]

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[228] Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, pp. 294-303; Buchholz, p. 97 (footnote 3); J. Armitage Robinson and M. R. James, *The Gospel According to Peter, and the Revelation of Peter* (London: C. J. Clay, 1892), pp. 52-53; Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity*, pp. 49-50.
[229]Buchholz, p. 238; *Ap. Pet.* 16 c.f. 2 Peter 1.17.
[230] Akhmim *Apocalypse of Peter* 28 c.f. 2 Peter 2.21.
[231] Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, pp. 470ff.; M. Porter, *The Message of the Apocalyptical Writers* (London: 1905), p. 355; Robinson and James, pp. 819-20.
[232] Ernst Richard T. Kühl, *Die Briefe Petri und Judae* (Göttingen: 1897), pp. 375-376; W. Sanday, *Inspiration: Eight Lectures on the Early History and Origin of the Doctrine of Biblical Inspiration, being the Bampton Lecture for 1893* (London: Longmans, Green, 1894), pp. 346-348, p. 384.
[233] F.H. Chase, "Peter, Second Epistle," in *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Schibner and Sons, 1900), Vol 3, pp. 814-816; M. R. James, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), pp. xxvi-xxviii.
[234] Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, p. 303; Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), pp. 207-209, pp. 242-244, p. 265; Blinzler, pp. 73-76; Green, p. 34; Kelly, p. 236-7; Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St Jude and the Second Epistle of St Peter: Greek Text* (London ; New York: Macmillan, 1907), pp. cxxx-cxxxiv; A.E. Simms, "Second Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter," *Expositor* Fifth Series, 8, (1898),

It is difficult to argue conclusively for the presence of an independent Transfiguration tradition lying behind 2 Peter, and as *Ap. Pet.* bears evidence of being influenced by Matthew's gospel, I agree with Lee that the most we can say with certainty is that *Ap. Pet.* and 2 Peter certainly draw on common petrine traditions, though literary reliance by *Ap. Pet.* on 2 Peter is by no means inconceivable. In creating his Transfiguration narrative, the author of *Ap. Pet.* would seem to have access to at least one synoptic narrative, and a number of petrine traditions reflected also in 2 Peter, and possibly copied from that letter.

The principal significance of the *Ap. Pet.* for this thesis is the way in which it explores imaginatively the sort of interpretation put forward by Fletcher-Louis, Fossum, Sabbe, Gerber and Ohler,[236] that sees the Transfiguration as an apocalyptic opening of heaven, or even entry into it, pointing to Jesus as a high priestly figure entering the celestial tabernacle. In the *Ap. Pet.*, the transfiguration scene is used as the opening of an ascension into heaven, and is presented as a fulfilment of Psalm 24, with its entry of the King of Glory.[237]

However, the text also presents a large number of complications. It must be asked if the transfiguration in the *Ap. Pet.* actually *is* a transfiguration in the sense understood

pp. 460-471; Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity*, pp. 53-54; Spitta, pp. 237-42.

[235] Lee, p. 163.

[236] See section 2.6 of this thesis.

[237] For an examination of the use of Psalm 24 in *Ap. Pet*., see, Ernst Kähler, *Studien zum Te Deum and zur Geschichte des 24. Psalms in der alten Kirche*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), pp. 53-55.

by the synoptic gospel writers.[238] After all, the *Ap. Pet.*'s focus is on Moses and Elijah with no interest in describing any change to Jesus' appearance. There seems to be a much stronger concentration on the Transfiguration as a sign of the eschatological destiny of the righteous, as exemplified by Moses and Elijah, rather than as a scene in which Jesus is revealed as glorified Son of Man. A further difference is that the *Ap. Pet.* describes the whole band of Twelve as present.

The *Ap. Pet.* is an important piece of evidence for this thesis as it reveals one way in which visionary traditions rooted in the synoptic Transfiguration narratives were interpreted and explored. I explore in the rest of this section the way it evokes temple and tabernacle motifs, its links to Revelation 11, and the influence of the Lucan narrative over it. I also look at the reception history of the *Ap. Pet.* to suggest its influence in the interpretation of the Transfiguration could be more important than previously estimated.

4.2.3 Temple and Tabernacle motifs

A distinguishing characteristic of the *Ap. Pet.* is the way in which it presents the Transfiguration as a vision of the heavenly tabernacle, the worship of those within it as priestly, and evokes a number of motifs associated with the Jerusalem Temple and Mount Zion.

[238] F. Spitta asserts the *Ap. Pet.* does not contain a Transfiguration at all, but rather a revelation of the heavenly world, "Die Evangelische Geschichte von der Verklärung Jesu," *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie*, (1911), pp. 126-130.

Much comment has focussed on Jesus' suggestion in the Ethiopic text, "Let us go to the holy mountain,"[239] widely seen to be a reference to 2 Peter 1.18. Some see the mountain mentioned in 2 Peter as holy, simply because the Transfiguration took place there.[240] Others see evidence of Sinai echoes.[241] Baukham has suggested however, that the holy mountain of 2 Peter 1.18 could be Zion.[242] In *Ap. Pet.*, the setting for the first half of the opening discourse is already the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. To proceed from there to "the holy mountain" most logically points to Zion as the destination. This also makes sense of the association of quotations from Psalm 24.6-9, with Jesus', Moses' and Elijah's ascension in *Ap. Pet.* 17. Although the exact location of the mount in *Ap. Pet.* is never explicitly resolved, it seems likely that an evocation of Zion is taking place.

Ap. Pet. also presents the Transfiguration as the revelation of a heavenly tabernacle. Jesus reproves Peter's suggestion concerning tents saying Satan has, "veiled your understanding…your eyes, therefore, must be opened and your ears unstopped that you may see a tabernacle, not made with men's hands, which my heavenly Father has made for me and for the elect."[243] The narrator continues, "And we beheld it, and were full of gladness." Bauckham has made connections between this vision and the Jerusalem Temple. For him, the vision of a truer, heavenly tabernacle should be read as a critique of Bar Kokhba's intention to re-build the earthly Jerusalem Temple.[244] This would seem to be a coherent account of the historical origins of the tabernacle

[239] Buchholz, p.233; *Ap. Pet.* 15, Elliott and James, p. 609.
[240] Senior and Harrington, p. 256.
[241] Sabbe, p. 75.
[242] Bauckham sees a particular reference in 2 Peter 1.18 to Psalm 2.6, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 221.
[243] Buchholz, p.241; *Ap. Pet.* 16, Elliott and James, p. 611.
[244] Richard Bauckham, "Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Bar Kochba War with Special Reference to the Apocalypse of Peter," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Graham Stanton and Guy Stroumsa (Cambridge: C.U.P. , 1998), pp. 228-235.

motifs we have outlined. However, it might be useful to make two further important points of clarification.

The first is to note how Jesus' reply interprets Peter's words. The connection made by Peter between the experience of the Transfiguration and the idea of tabernacles is *not* the thing being criticised. The focus of critique is the idea that they could be built with human hands. *Ap. Pet.* interprets Peter's mention of tabernacles, not as evidence of inappropriate wanting to stay longer on the mountain, but as *correctly* evoking the life of the heavenly tabernacle.

Second, it could be that the experience of the Transfiguration is itself being described as that viewing of God's tabernacle. It is unclear whether this viewing of the heavenly tabernacle is a second vision of something different, following on from the Transfiguration, or whether it represents an interpretation of that first vision. It would seem the most obvious reading is one in which the Transfiguration scene is apprehended imperfectly by Peter's sense of sight. Following this, Peter's "eyes must be opened and…ears unstopped that [he] might see a tabernacle not made with men's hands." Peter's understanding is unveiled, and the disciples' vision of the heavenly tabernacle *is* their seeing of the same sight they viewed before. This viewing of the Paradise garden as a temple space coheres with the conception found in many inter-testamental texts of Eden as a Holy of Holies.[245] The disciples are thus enabled to perceive with renewed sight that the "transfiguration" they are witnessing is in fact a vision of the heavenly tabernacle dwelling of God and his elect. For the writer of the

[245] E.g., *Jub* 3.12 describes Eden as the holiest place on earth; *Jub* 8.19 calls it, the "Holy of Holies"; *Jub* 3.27 describes Adam offering incense; and *Jub* 4.26, shows Enoch offering sacrifice in Eden. See also, *1 Enoch* 25, *Testament of Levi* 18.6-14; *Testament of Dan*, 5.12.

Ap. Pet., the altering of Peter's vision enables his seeing the Transfiguration to become a vision of the heavenly tabernacle.

Further evidence of temple echoes is the language *Ap. Pet.* uses to describe those in heaven as priests. In the Akhmim version, the disciples ask Jesus to show them, "one righteous person who had gone forth out of the world, in order that we might see of what manner of form they are."[246] They then see, "the place of your *high priests,* the righteous men."[247] However, a number of complexities are associated with this verse. The first concerns how this mention of ἀρχιερεων should be translated. Elliott and James see the word as having no cultic significance at all and translate it, "The Lord said to us, this is the place of your leaders, the righteous men."[248] They seem to be taking their lead from the parallel Ethiopic text, "And my Lord and God Jesus Christ said to me, 'Have you seen the companies of the fathers?'"[249] Buchholz, too, is sceptical of giving this reference to high priests too much significance. He sees the presence of ἀρχιερεων as a corruption brought about by the presence of the word πατριαρχων both in the Rainer fragment of *Ap. Pet.* 4.1-14, and in the Ethiopic version's mention of fathers at Ch 16.[250] He prefers a reading in the Greek text in which ἀρχιερεων is replaced with πατριαρχων. In many respects, Buchholz's conclusion is a reasonable hypothesis. However, I wish here to conjecture two further possibilities, which might also be considered. The first is to say that if ἀρχιερεων does represent a corruption of the Greek Akhmim text, the presence of temple and tabernacle motifs which we have outlined in the Ethiopic would seem to stand as a

[246] GCS, Neue Folge, 11, p. 104; Akhmim *Ap. Pet*. 5, Elliott, pp. 609-610.
[247] GCS Neue Folge, 11, p.108; Akhmim *Ap. Pet.* 20, Elliott, p. 611.
[248] Elliott, p. 611.
[249] Buchholz, *Ap. Pet.* 20, Elliott, p. 601.
[250] Buchholz, pp. 236-238.

good explanation for it: it could either be a subliminal slip of the hand by a scribe who had noticed the presence of tabernacle themes in the original; or it could alternatively be a *deliberate* attempt to preserve in his Greek redaction some hint or sign post towards this reading of the Transfiguration, which his abbreviated narrative would otherwise be in danger of losing. Second, I wish to raise the question of whether we need necessarily to see ἀρχιερεων as a corruption. In the light of the tabernacle and temple themes, whose presence I have outlined, might we not reconsider the possibility that Akhmim *Ap. Pet.* 20 reads the paradise inhabited by the righteous as a temple-like tabernacle, just as Ethiopic *Ap. Pet.* 16 does? The idea that the vindicated righteous share a priestly character as they worship in heaven is, after all, a common place in the New Testament.[251] Although I don't claim to have mustered overwhelmingly convincing evidence for the retention of ἀρχιερεων, I hope to have at least provided a theological rationale, which has not been proposed before, which allows us to speculate that retaining ἀρχιερεων might make theological sense in the context of the Ethiopic version.

4.2.4 Possible evocation of Revelation 11 in *Ap. Pet.*

In *Ap. Pet.* 2, after Jesus has explained the fig tree parable, we are told, "Enoch and Elijah shall be sent to teach them that this is the deceiver who must come into the world and do signs and wonders in order to deceive. And therefore, those who die by his hand shall be martyrs…"[252] At first glance this seems simply to be an evocation of well known eschatological traditions concerning the advent of Elijah and Enoch before the end time. Bauckham reads this verse simply as pointing to Bar Kokhba as

[251] E.g. Rev 1.6; 1 Peter 2.4-8.
[252] Buchholz, p. 174; *Ap. Pet.* 2, Elliott, p. 601.

the deceiver concerned.[253] However Seth Turner's work[254] has revealed the two witnesses of Rev 11 were almost universally interpreted as Enoch and Elijah throughout the Patristic period and much less frequently as Moses and Elijah. We need to ask the question whether there might be any evocation of Rev 11 detectable in *Ap. Pet.*

One problem is that further similarities between *Ap. Pet.* and Rev 11 are very few. The principal one, though, is the correlation between the way in which the Two Witnesses of Rev 11 are taken up into heaven on a cloud after hearing a voice beckon them into heaven, and the description in *Ap. Pet.* 17 of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus being similarly taken up into heaven on the white overshadowing cloud, this time after hearing a heavenly voice declare Jesus to be the Father's beloved son. More broadly, Elliott sees allusions to the Book of Revelation in other parts of *Ap. Pet.*, especially in concepts such as God's judgement being "true and just,"[255] and seems to assume the writer knew Revelation. However, differences also abound. In the *Ap. Pet.* Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah are not eschatological prophets like the Witnesses of Rev 11, whose advent presages the End Time. In *Ap. Pet.*, they simply stand as examples of the life of heaven which humanity will experience *after* the Parousia.

There seem also to be few correlations between Rev 11 and the mention of Enoch and Elijah in *Ap. Pet.* 2. There, Elijah and Enoch's vocation is pedagogic, teaching Israel who the real deceiver is, and showing those who die at his hands therefore to be

[253] Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokhba," pp. 177-194.
[254] Seth Turner, "Revelation 11:1-13 : History of Interpretation" (D.Phil., University of Oxford., 2004), esp. pp. 12-44.
[255] Buchholz, p. 202; *Ap. Pet.* 7 c.f. Rev 16.7, 19.2.; Elliott, p. 604, footnotees 29 & 30.

martyrs. By contrast, the Two Witnesses of Rev 11 fight violently against their enemies, die and are resurrected, something of which there is no hint in *Ap. Pet.*

In sum, it is almost impossible to establish whether there is direct use of Rev 11 in *Ap. Pet.* 2, or whether the writer simply draws on similar traditions concerning eschatological prophet-witnesses as those that influenced John of Patmos. However, it is also difficult entirely to dismiss the possibility of some sort of echo of Rev 11 in the ascension scene of *Ap. Pet.* 17. If Rev 11 is an influence, then we see in the *Ap. Pet.* an early bringing of it together with a Transfiguration narrative. Rev 11 could be an important text, which allows the writer of *Ap. Pet.* to reinterpret the Transfiguration as part of an ascent into heaven. We will see this dynamic at work frequently when we examine visual depiction of the Transfiguration in Chapter 8. Reading the Transfiguration in the light of portions of the Book of Revelation could be a remarkably early practice in its history of reception and Rev 11 could be one of the triggers which allow the writer of *Ap. Pet.* to reinterpret the Transfiguration in terms of an ascent into heaven.

4.2.5 Links with Luke

I wish now to challenge the widely held view that Matthew's is the principal gospel to exert influence over the *Ap. Pet.* Bauckham has convincingly proved that Matthew 24 is the principal influence behind the *Ap. Pet.*'s Olivet discourse.[256] In *Ap. Pet.* 16, Peter states, "I rejoiced and believed and understood that which is written in *the book* [my itals] of my Lord Jesus Christ."[257] The fact that only one book is mentioned here

[256] Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokhba," pp. 168-76.
[257] Buchholz, p. 239; *Ap. Pet.* 16.6; Elliott, p. 611.

has moved Buchholz and Lee to think that the writer has access to only one principal gospel, which they assume to be Matthew.[258] While I do not wish to claim that Matthew's gospel is not an influence, this single mention of "the book of my Lord Jesus Christ" can not on its own count as convincing proof that the writer had access to only one gospel. There are a number of motifs present in *Ap. Pet.* only found in Luke's Transfiguration narrative. Amongst these, the mention of prayer,[259] both as the point of ascending the mountain (c.f. Lk 9.28) and as associated with the appearance of the two men in the Akhmim text (c.f. Lk 9.29), must count as significant. Further similarities between Luke's narrative and the *Ap. Pet.* include the fact that Luke links his Transfiguration with the betrayal at Olivet by making both incidents involve ascent of a hill to pray, and the disciples falling asleep. Luke also draws connections between the Transfiguration and the Ascension, an instinct shared with the writer of *Ap. Pet.*[260] In addition, some account has to be made of the fact that the Greek *Ap. Pet.* uses the word "glory" (only used by Luke) to describe the two men who appear and the heavenly world revealed in the vision. Akhmim *Ap. Pet.*6's description of Moses and Elijah's first appearance is also close to Luke's: both texts refer to Moses and Elijah as "two men;" both describe them as appearing in, or clothed with "glory;" and both refer to them as *standing*, a motif not mentioned in Mark or Matthew.

[258] Buchholz, p. 370; Lee, pp. 159-160.
[259] Buchholz, p. 233-235 (Ethiopic *Ap. Pet.* 15); GCS Neue Folge 11, 104 (Akhmim *Ap. Pet.* 4); Elliott, p. 609.
[260] Many have seen discussion of the "exodus" Jesus would accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9.31) as a reference to the Ascension, not least because of its proximity to mention of Jesus' "taking up" at Luke 9.51, and because of the coincidence in the two narratives of use of the phrase "behold two men" (Luke 9.30 cf Acts 1.10). See Davies, "Prefigurement of the Ascension in the Third Gospel," pp. 229-233.

Of all these possible connections with Luke, the mention of prayer is probably the most significant piece of evidence, as its presence in *Ap. Pet.* is so unequivocal, and its status as a specifically Lucan motif so secure. When considered in conjunction with the other Lucan echoes present in *Ap. Pet.* which I have outlined, it would seem reasonable to detect greater influence by Luke's Transfiguration narrative on both the Ethiopic and Akhmim versions of the *Ap. Pet.* than has previously been assumed.

4.2.5 Reception History and Influence of the *Apocalypse of Peter*

I now wish to make an initial assessment of the extent of the influence exerted by *Ap. Pet*. A chapter by Attila Jakab[261] traces evidence of use of *Ap. Pet.* through the Patristic period, in response to Bauckham's assertion that, "the Apocalypse of Peter evidently became a very popular work in the church as a whole, from the second to the fourth centuries."[262] It becomes clear Bauckham's assessment is broadly correct. Jakab points to evidence of initial popularity in the West, in Rome, Syria, Palestine and North Africa in the second and third centuries. The text only spreads to the great centres of Greek learning such as Constantinople by the fifth century. The last mention of it we possess is the evidence of Sozomen in early fifth century Constantinople: "Thus the book entitled 'The Apocalypse of Peter,' which was considered altogether spurious by the ancients, is still read in some churches of Palestine, on the day of preparation, when the people observe a fast in memory of the passion of the Saviour [on Good Friday]."[263] It is evident the question of its

[261] A. Jakab, "The Reception of the Apocalypse of Peter Is Ancient Christianity," in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Istvan Czachesz (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 174-186.
[262] Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, p. 160.
[263] Church History 7.19, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: T. & T. Clark; W.B. Eerdmans, 1988), Series 2, Vol 2, p. 390.

canonicity was increasingly being resolved in favour of exclusion from the New Testament, but local liturgical use in Palestine remained. After the fifth century the *Ap. Pet.* completely disappears until the archeological discoveries of the nineteenth century.

There is, however, a problem with the methodology employed by Jakab. His otherwise very thorough survey of the reception history of the *Ap. Pet.* only touches on written comment, and excludes artistic depiction, and particularly the apse mosaic of the Transfiguration in the early sixth century church of S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna. I will argue in Chapter 8, as others have, that *Ap. Pet.* plays a significant role in the artistic conception of this apse mosaic.[264] Part of my argument in Chapter 8 is that this mosaic, in turn, exerts influence on later depiction in Rome. If one includes artistic depiction in one's survey of *Ap. Pet.'s* reception history, it becomes clear its influence in Italy is possibly greater than Jakab thinks. Jakab's conclusion that its popularity in Rome declines from the second or third century onwards must be questioned. I will argue the mosaic in Classe provides evidence that the *Ap. Pet.* may have had a continued influence until at least the ninth century on depiction of the Transfiguration in Ravenna and Rome.

4.2.6. *Apocalypse of Peter*: Conclusion

The "transfiguration" narrative found in *Ap. Pet.* contains a complex mixture of theological impulses and traditions. Its focus is not on a glorified presentation of Jesus, but on the eschatological fate of the righteous, particularly prophets such as Moses and Elijah. However, *Ap. Pet.* does seem to represent an early attempt to draw

[264] See especially, Dinkler, pp. 90-95.

out a number of more apocalyptically orientated elements within the NT Transfiguration narratives which emphasise vision, entry into heaven, and which use cultic language appertaining to experience of God's presence in the Jerusalem Temple and heavenly tabernacle. It is also possible that we see here early connections being made between the Transfiguration narratives and portions of the Book of Revelation. It is possible that *Ap. Pet.* draws on elements from Rev 11 to conceive of the Transfiguration as a sort of ascension, or prelude to it. I have also made a case for considering the possibility that Luke's gospel exercises a greater influence over *Ap. Pet.* than has often been thought. When one includes visual depiction within an examination of the reception history of *Ap. Pet.*, it is probable that it exercised more influence than has been imagined.

4.3 *Acts of Peter*

Scenes drawing upon the Transfiguration narratives are also to be found in the *Acts of Peter* 20, a text originating from Asia Minor probably around the end of the second century.[265]

Acts of Peter and the *Acts of John*[266]

The complex relationship between the *Act. Pet.* and the *Act. Joh.*, a text in which a transfiguration scene of sorts is also to be found, has been the focus of much scrutiny and little consensus.[267] I do not intend to make any contribution to that debate other than to compare the two Transfiguration scenes, which are very different.

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[265] For discussion of dating and orgins, see Lee, p. 171ff.
[266] From now on, *Act. Pet.*, and *Act. Joh*.
[267]See Lalleman, P.J., "The Relation between the Acts of John and the Acts of Peter," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter*, edited by Jan Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 161-168, esp. p 168; Lee, p. 171ff; MacDonald, Dennis R., "Which came first? Intertextual Relationships

Act. Joh. 90[268] recounts two transformations in the appearance of Jesus, which take place in the presence of Peter, James, and John on a mountain. The first very sparely describes John beholding, "such a light on him that it is not possible for a man who uses mortal speech to describe what it was like."[269] A second incident is then recounted in which Jesus is seen naked by John, with his feet lighting the ground. Jesus grows, so that his head touches heaven, then shrinks to pygmy proportions. When John cries out in astonishment, Jesus playfully tugs at John's beard, which causes him agony for 30 days.

The scene in *Act. Pet.* 20,[270] however, is very different. In Rome, Peter is invited to Marcellus' house and heals the sight of one of the many blind widows who have gathered there, by touching her. As he walks into Marcellus' dining room, a reading of the Transfiguration gospel is taking place for the blind widows. Peter then explains the reading in a little homily to those gathered and describes his experience on the mountain. He recounts how each of the disciples saw, "as his capacity permitted."[271] He then describes falling down as if dead, overwhelmed by the brilliance of the light emitted by Jesus, and imagining he had been blinded. Indeed he wonders if the experience was deliberately designed to blind him. Upon being touched by Jesus, he is enabled to see him, but in a "form which [he] could comprehend."[272] The room in

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Amongst the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," *Semeia* 80 (1997), pp. 11-41; Stoops, R. F., "The Acts of Peter in Intertextual Context," *Semeia* 80 (1997), pp. 57-86.

[268] *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha,* Vol II/1, ed. Richard Lipsius, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag , 1959), p.195; Elliott, pp. 317-318.

[269] Lipsius, Vol II/1, p. 195; Elliott, p.317.

[270] Lipsius, Vol I, p. 66-69; Elliott, p. 413-415.

[271] Lipsius, Vol I, p. 67; Elliott, p. 413.

[272] "vidi qualem capere potui," which Elliott for some inexplicable reason translates this in a way directly opposed to its simple meaning, "which I could not comprehend." See Lipsius, Vol I, p.67; Elliott, pp. 317-318.

which Peter is speaking, full of blind widows, suddenly fills with blinding light. The light cures the widows' sight, and only they are enabled to see it. They report seeing a vision of a man who appeared to some as an old man, to some as a young man, and to some as a boy. Peter then gives a further speech in which he compares many paradoxes and opposites drawn from the scriptures which describe Christ.

Many motifs present in the canonical accounts of the Transfiguration are absent from both "transfigurations." There is no mention in either of Moses and Elijah, the cloud, tabernacles, nor a heavenly voice. The second transfiguration narrative found in *Act. Joh.* presents a miraculous polymorphy which only resembles the Transfiguration in the sense that it takes place on the top of a mountain. The *Act. Pet.,* however, explicitly claims to present the narrative of the Transfiguration as it is found in the New Testament. It describes Peter explaining the narrative in a homily, which then seems to be experienced and exemplified in the vision the widows receive of Christ.

Lalleman feels the writer of the *Act. Joh.* probably knew the synoptic gospel Transfiguration narratives, but did not consider them "authoritative."[273] Cartlidge, by contrast, denies there is any connection at all between the *Act. Joh.* transfigurations and the synoptic versions.[274] It is certainly the case that the second transfiguration in the *Act. Joh.* is more distanced from the synoptic account, than the first one, which is only the briefest of mentions. The *Act. Joh.* narrative displays a significantly more docetic impulse than that found in the *Act. Pet.* Transfiguration. The two texts also present very different notions of polymorphy. In the *Act. Joh.*, Jesus' appearance

[273] See Lalleman, P., *The Acts of John* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), p. 126.
[274] Cartlidge, D. R., "Transfigurations and Metamorphosis Traditions in the Acts of John, Thomas and Peter," Semeia 38 (1986), p. 54

during his earthly life changes in front of the eyes of one viewer, John, whereas in the *Act. Pet.* the polymorpy is a post resurrection vision which is separately different to each of the blind widows. In the light of uncertainty amongst scholars concerning whether the *Act. Joh.* transfigurations should even be considered a version of the synoptic Transfiguration at all, I will simply note the possibility that they very freely and loosely rework a small number of elements from the Transfiguration narratives. These include the three disciples being present, and the idea of ascending a mountain, and are used to create a very different polymorphous revelation of a docetic Christ.

Acts of Peter

A number of points can be made, however, about the narrative found in the *Act. Pet.* which are pertinent to this thesis.

The first is to note the degree to which it emphasises an alteration of Peter's sense of sight. Peter insists that the three disciples present saw only in relation to their capacity to see, and Peter needed Jesus to touch him before he could witness Jesus in the form he could comprehend. It is unclear which gospel this detail is drawing from. Only Matthew mentions a falling down and a touching of the disciples by Jesus, but this moment is usually seen to signal the end of the vision. It could be that the writer interprets the words, "but they saw no-one but Jesus only,"[275] as a further vision, the one which Peter could comprehend. The themes of blindness and sight are also carefully interwoven. Peter, for example, imagines he has been blinded during his vision of Jesus, whilst the blind widows are the only ones who see the light which fills the rooms after Peter's homily. In his sermon, Peter's principal point is that the

[275] Mt 17.8

incident was one in which he first lost his sense of mortal sight, and then regained the ability to see the greater wonder of Jesus in a form he could comprehend, a process which seems then to be echoed in the experience of the blind widows.

A second point worth noting is the way in which Peter's speech after the curing of the blind widows raises a particular hermeneutic tradition also found in Origen. Both Origen and *Act. Pet.* hold that Jesus could present himself in different forms to different people at different times, and both the *Act. Pet.* and Origen speak of the disciples seeing in accordance with their spiritual capacity.[276] In addition to this, they share a similar interpretation dependent on comparing the exaltation of the Transfiguration with the kenosis of the incarnation. Peter's speech presents a number of binary opposites, which exemplify Jesus' life. The first opposite he presents is that between the Transfiguration and Isa 53.4. He contrasts the exaltation of the Transfiguration with the kenosis of the Suffering Servant who "bore our sufferings and carried our transgressions." In the next chapter, in section 5.2.3, we will note how Origen also makes a similar contrast, using Isa 53.4 and the Philippians hymn.[277]

The Transfiguration we see in the *Act. Pet.* presents the Transfiguration as an incident in which Peter's sight needed to be altered in order to give him true sight. This emphasis on the need for transformation of sight is then exemplified in the vision experienced by the blind widows. Vision of the transformed Christ, be that on the Mount of Transfiguration, or in Marcellus' dining room, paradoxically emerges both in the widows' and in Peter's experience from a state of blindness. However, even then, what is seen with that renewed sight is problematic and resists reporting, for

[276] c.f. *Contra Cels*. 2.64 (PG 11, 897, B).
[277] *Contra Cels.* 6.76. (PG 11, 1413) & *Hom. Luc.* 18.1 (SC 87, 264).

Peter recounts nothing of what he saw, simply that he could comprehend it, whilst the blind widows offer contradictory stories concerning what image of Christ was revealed to them. The *Act. Pet.* presents this miraculous sight both as the product of miraculous transformation in the viewer, but also as an equivocal phenomenon which resists human ability to describe in words. The canonical status of the *Act. Pet.,* is much more clearly resolved in favour of exclusion from the canon than was the case with the *Ap. Pet.,* not least by virtue of the *Act. Pet.* being a later text. The *Act. Pet.*, nonetheless, represents a further example of the Transfiguration being reused and reinterpreted as part of a narrative involving Peter in which the transformation of his sight is emphasised as a prerequisite of his witnessing the incident.

4.4 Conclusion

I argue in this chapter that the question of the visionary status of the Transfiguration forms a very significant part of the earliest reception of the narrative, especially in texts which describe the life of Peter, or which are written pseudonymously in his name.

2 Peter describes Peter as an eyewitness of the event, yet uses language which could be capable of evoking an understanding of that vision as an ecstatic experience in which Peter's vision is altered to reveal to him privileged knowledge. Such an assertion makes rhetorical sense and bestows on the petrine narrator authority to speak of mysteries unseen by his readers.

In the *Ap. Pet.*, we see a very different reworking of the Transfiguration in which it is portrayed as a visionary entry into heaven. Here, too, the writer insists Peter's sight

needs to be changed and his perception altered in order to see and enter heaven. We see the Transfiguration presented in the light of motifs appertaining to the Jerusalem Temple, the heavenly tabernacle, and language describing priestly figures in heaven. I have argued that many of these motifs draw on details from the Lucan narrative. I show in Chapter 8 that the influence on visual depiction of the sort of reading we see in the *Ap. Pet.* of the Transfiguration as a visionary entry into heaven is greater than many have thought.

Brief allusion to the Transfiguration found in the *Act. Joh.* shows the Transfiguration used in more docetic and gnostic circles to comment on the appearance of Jesus as miraculously able to change and alter. The *Act. Pet.* also emphasises the need for change within the disciples' own vision in order for them to be able to witness this, and offers a miraculous healing of several blind widows as an exemplifying of this.

These very different texts interpret the disciples' vision as being altered in order that realities unseen by others might be revealed to them. The visionary status of the Transfiguration raises for the writers of these texts a range of questions to do with an alteration in the faculty of sight in those witnessing it.

Chapter 5: The Transfiguration in Tertullian and Origen

In this chapter I explore interpretation of the Transfiguration found in Tertullian (c. 160 - c. 225) and Origen (c. 184 – c. 153).[278] I examine them in the same chapter because both Origen and Tertullian are interested in a series of similar questions concerning the Transfiguration. Both, for example, employ the Transfiguration as an important exemplification of how the Christian scriptures should be read and interpreted. They both see the presence of ecstatic vision within the Transfiguration narrative, even though they judge its worth differently. They both, to different degrees and in different ways, see temple and cultic motifs within the text. In all these reflections, both focus on elements only present in Luke's version of our narrative. I show they both detect visionary and ecstatic motifs within Luke's gospel. This allows both Tertullian and Origen to see the Transfiguration, and especially Luke's version as a crucial hermeneutic nexus that exemplifies how the faithful Christian should read the scriptures, interpret prophetic utterance in the Church, and, through those processes, to conceive of the vision of God.

As shown in Chapter 2, others have already summarised and commented in different ways on Tertullian's and Origen's understanding of the Transfiguration. This chapter does not intend to replicate their work. Rather, I concentrate here on Origen's and Tertullian's interpretation of visionary elements, and the way in which these elements are related to Lucan details, an avenue of enquiry which nobody so far has pursued.

[278] All translations of primary texts in this chapter are my own unless otherwise stated.

5.1. Tertullian

Tertullian's discussion of the Transfiguration is of importance for this thesis as it reveals what Marcion's altered version, based on Luke, may have looked like. Tertullian uses the Transfiguration in argument both against his Marcionite opponents and also in defence of Montanist claims. I show in this chapter that one of the ambiguities we pointed to in Chapter 1 characterising the Lucan narrative, namely uncertainty concerning what it meant for Peter not to know what he said, is crucial for Tertullian in explaining how the Transfiguration is apprehended by the disciples. The Transfiguration becomes for him a legitimising example of prophetic activity in the contemporary church of Tertullian's time. In addition, the Transfiguration becomes a key text in his interpretation of Old Testament prophecy.

In this chapter, I outline Tertullian's comment in *Adversus Marcionem* 4.22, and establish the likely appearance of the Marcionite text he was commenting on. Tertullian evidently regards the concept of ecstasy as crucial to understanding the Transfiguration, so I will then establish what can be known about Tertullian's use of this term and how this relates to Peter's experience of the Transfiguration. I then explore how Tertullian's relating of several Old Testament texts to the Transfiguration exemplifies how he used it as a key interpretative lens for explaining the prophetic coherence of the Old and New Testaments. Finally, I will piece together a summary of what Tertullian believed happened at the Transfiguration, and what he understood by the significance of its ecstatic character.

5.1.1 Marcion's Transfiguration text

It is difficult to establish the entirety of Marcion's gospel with precision.[279] Our concern here is not to add to debate concerning what can or can not be reconstructed of Marcion's whole gospel text. Rather, my focus is solely on his Transfiguration narrative. Although some have argued Luke's gospel itself to be a later expansion of Marcion's text, or a reaction against it,[280] a sustained scholarly consensus has established itself around the basic patristic paradigm asserted by Irenaeus[281] and Tertullian,[282] re-established by Volkmar[283], Hilgenfeld,[284], Harnack,[285] and recently by Moll,[286] which sees Marcion as editor of a text very similar to what we now describe as canonical Luke. Recent commentators have been slightly more sceptical in their appraisal of the idea that Marcion's version of "Luke" is unquestionably what we would recognise today as the final Lucan redaction,[287] and Roth has shown the

[279] For an extensive review and evaluation of different attempts to reconstruct Marcion's gospel see: Andrew F. Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 175-183; Dieter T Roth, "Marcion's Gospel and Luke: The History of Research in Current Debate," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008), pp. 513-27; Dieter T Roth, "Marcion and the Early New Testament Text," in *The Early Text of the New Testament*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Michael Kruger (Oxford: OUP, 2012), pp. 302-312.

[280] Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien* (Tübingen: 1847) pp. 397-427, 501-531; John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942) pp. 77-113; Albrecht Ritschl, *Das Evangelium Marcions und das kanonische Evangelium des Lucas: eine kritische Untersuchung* (Tuebingen: Ostander, 1846), pp. 276-301; Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), esp. 79-120.

[281] *Contra Haer.* 1.27.2 (PG 7, 688); 3.12.12 (PG 7, 906).

[282] *Adv. Marc.* 4.2.4 (CCSL 1, 548).

[283] G Volckmar, "Über das Lukas-Evangelium nach seinem Verhältnis zu Marcion und seinem dogmatischen Charakter, mit besonderer Beziehung auf die kritischen Unter-Suchungen F. Ch. Baur's und A. Ritschl's," *Theologische Jahrbücher* 9, (1850): pp. 110-138, pp. 185-223.

[284] Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die Evangelien Justin's, Der clementinischen Homilien und Marcion's* (Halle: 1850), pp. 394-475.

[285] Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott: eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche*, (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1921), esp. pp. 32-68.

[286] Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 89-102.

[287] See, for example, Gregory, p. 183; Moll, pp. 89-92.

complex diversity of opinion which exists even amongst those who broadly see Marcion post dating Luke.[288] In addition, there tends to be a preference in recent work for less "maximalist" reconstructions than the exhaustive one Harnack offered.[289] Nonetheless, Gregory typifies many when he asserts, "in terms of content and order, it [Marcion's gospel] approximates closely what we might call an abridgement of Luke."[290]

As far as the Marcionite Transfiguration narrative is concerned, evidence for two possible Marcionite alterations emerge from Tertullian's treatment of the Transfiguration found in Book 4 of his treatise *Adversus Marcionem*. First, Tertullian implies Marcion had removed mention of Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus and discussing the exodus he was about to accomplish, when he states, concerning Moses,

> Even though Marcion did not want him to be shown in conversation with the Lord, but just standing there…[291]

One assumes, as Moll points out, that the reason for excising 9.31 would be to show no figure from the Old Testament having authority over Christ, being glorified, or prophesying Christ's future.[292] Harnack also wonders, though ultimately judges it uncertain, whether Luke 9.36, and the ending of the Transfiguration was omitted by Marcion, as this is not commented on by Tertullian.[293]

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[288] Roth, "Marcion's Gospel and Luke: The History of Research in Current Debate," pp. 513-27.
[289] Kenji Tsutsui, "Das Evangelium Marcions: ein neuer Versuch der Textrekonstruktion," *Annual of the Japenese Biblical Institute* 18, (1992): pp. 67-132; D.S. Williams, "Reconsidering Marcion's Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, (1989), pp. 477-496.
[290] Gregory, pp. 182-183.
[291] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.16 (CCSL 1, 604).
[292] Moll, p. 94.
[293] Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, p. 184.

In addition to this, a second question is the uncertainty concerning whether Marcion changed the words uttered from the heavens. Epiphanius, in his fourth century list of Marcion's alterations, claims Marcion's version read, "Out of the cloud, a voice, This is my beloved Son."[294] Harnack judges Epiphanius' reading of "cloud" to be more trustworthy than "heaven." [295] However, it is unclear what Epiphanius judged Marcion's alteration to be. Is it the removal of "hear him," or the change of "chosen" to "beloved"? This question is made more complex by the fact that Tertullian constructs an argument in *Adv Marc* 4.22.1, mocking Marcion's interpretation of the "canonical' version of Luke 9.35, that "hear him" implies Jesus comes to forbid listening to Moses and Elijah:

> This, you imply, was what he wanted to be understood as the meaning of the voice from heaven, 'This is my Son, hear him.'…[296]

Tertullian's words here would seem to imply Marcion hadn't removed "hear him" at all. The situation is rendered even more complicated by the fact that Luke 9.35 contains a number of textual variants concerning whether the son is "chosen" or "beloved," making it not impossible that Marcion could simply be following the variant "beloved" found in A, C*, R, W and *f*13, but which Epiphanius perhaps took to be intentional alteration.

Marcion almost certainly removed Luke 9.31. In addition to this, he may have altered the words uttered by the voice from the cloud, and may possibly have removed mention of the disciples' silence as they descended the mountain. Apart from this, the

[294] Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis. Book I (Sections 1-46)*, 2nd ed., (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2009), p. 305.
[295] Harnack, *Marcion : Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, p. 184.
[296] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.1 (CCSL 1, 600).

rest of Marcion's Transfiguration text seems to have been the Greek narrative we find in canonical Luke.

5.1.2 "not knowing what he said" - ecstasy, *amentia,* and prophetic vision

In *Adv. Marc.* 14.22, Tertullian discusses at some length the reference only found in Luke, that Peter's suggestion concerning tabernacles was made, "not knowing what he said."[297] Tertullian explores what he sees as the two possible meanings they could have. Either Peter was somehow out of his mind, or he was mistaken in assuming Jesus to be the Christ of the Old Covenant, represented by Moses and Elijah.[298] It is crucial for Tertullian to interpret these words as *not* implying criticism of Peter's verdict. Such an interpretation would play into the hands of his Marcionite opponents, and imply the latter of these two meanings is the more likely. It seems probable from Tertullian's argument here that Luke 9.33 was used as a key piece of Marcionite evidence showing Peter to have been mistaken in associating Christ with Moses and Elijah. By bestowing on them all equal honour, Marcionite critics may have claimed Peter failed to see Jesus as the Christ of a different god and a different dispensation than that which Moses and Elijah represent. It is important for Tertullian, therefore, to argue the ambiguity in Luke's phrase points rather to Peter being in a state of ecstasy. He brings two proofs for this.[299] First, how could Peter recognise Moses and Elijah if not in the spirit, as Jews were not permitted to create any image of what they might have looked like? Second, how could Peter be mistaken

[297] Luke 9.33.
[298] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.4-6 (CCSL 1, 601-602).
[299] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.5-6 (CCSL 1, 601-602).

concerning what sort of Christ Jesus was, if he had just confessed him a few verses before[300] in a way which did not imply he doubted him to be the creator's Christ?

Tertullian describes this ecstasy of Peter's as follows:

> How 'not knowing'? Was it the result of a simple mistake? Or was it because of the reason which we, in our argument for the new prophecy claim, that ecstasy or being beside oneself goes hand in hand with grace? For when someone is in the spirit, especially when he glimpses the glory of God, or when God is speaking through him, he must necessarily leave his senses, because he is surely overshadowed by the power of God – a question about which there is debate between us and carnal men.[301]

Tertullian links this ecstasy with Montanist prophetic activity to reject both Marcion and anti-Montanists. He draws a direct parallel between the New Prophecy and Peter's visionary experience in which both cases are a sign of grace, of God's parallel action within the seer. In addition to this, however, they are both seen as part of God's action of "overshadowing." If there is ambiguity in the other synoptic accounts concerning who is included in the overshadowing of the cloud, Tertullian here latches onto Luke's assertion that it definitely includes Peter. If God's overshadowing includes Peter, then it may, by extension, include the visionary prophet of Tertullian's day, he argues.

However, this ecstasy results in a paradox. At one and the same time Tertullian argues it at least partially removes Peter from the realm of sense, yet also somehow transforms his truest sense of sight. Tertullian understands Peter's ecstasy as one in which Peter becomes unaware of what he says and operates as a vessel through which God speaks. He specifically judges that, "because he had spoken in the Spirit, and not

[300] Luke 9.20.
[301] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.4-5 (CCSL 1, 601).

in his senses, it was not possible for him to know what he had said."[302] Peter's ecstasy renders him an unknowing mouth-piece of God's prophetic utterance, for the benefit of others – a scenario not unlike what we can glean was characteristic of prophetic activity in Montanist circles. However, whilst removing him from the realm of sense awareness, Peter's ecstasy retains in him the ability to perceive and imagine visually, as he clearly witnesses the glory scene in front of him. If it weren't for his ecstasy, Tertullian implies he would be unable to recognise Moses and Elijah.[303]

Tertullian also perceives there to be a very grave *danger* inherent in vision of the Transfiguration. In a brief comment in *Adversus Praxean* 15,[304] Tertullian compares Paul's vision on the Damascus Road with the Transfiguration. He comments that just as the Son's divine glory was harmful to Paul's sight, so Peter, James, and John could not experience the Transfiguration's light safely except in a state of mindlessness, "sine rationis et amentia."[305] In both incidents, he argues, the Son's glory was apprehended by physical human sight, but in Paul's case, at the dangerous cost of going blind. The Transfiguration, Tertullian asserts, is a similar experience for the

[302] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.5 (CCSL 1, 602).
[303] Ibid.
[304] *Adv. Prax.* 15.8 (CCSL 2, 1180).
[305] Tertullian's Latin is very complex in this passage. His rather long sentence reads: "De patre autem ad timotheum: quem nemo uidit hominum, sed nec uidere potest, exaggerans amplius: qui solus habet immortalitatem et lucem habitat inaccessibilem, de quo et supra dixerat: regi autem saeculorum, immortali, inuisibili, soli deo, ut et contraria ipsi filio adscriberemus, mortalitatem, accessibilitatem, quem mortuum contestatur secundum scripturas et a se nouissime uisum per accessibilem utique lucem, **quanquam et illam neque et ipse sine periculo luminis expertus est, neque petrus et iohannes et iacobus sine rationis et amentia**, qui, si non passuri filii gloriam sed patrem uidissent, credo, morituri ibidem." In the bold section, Tertullian asserts that the light of the Damascus Road was dangerous to Paul, just as it would be to Peter, James, and John if they weren't in a state of *amentia*. It seems the most straight forward way of reading "rationis et amentia" is "the mindlessness **of** reason," though the presence of "et" is syntactically curious. Tertullian's point is that even though this glory might be physically overwhelming, even dangerous, it is nonetheless capable of being apprehended by humans, by contrast with that of the invisible Father, to experience whose glory is an impossibility, and could only lead to complete destruction and death.

three disciples, but their physical vision, by contrast, is protected, or transformed by, "amentia". It is not clear whether Tertullian sees the physical faculty of sight as going into a complete abeyance, with the only "vision" being that of the mind; or whether the vision he refers to is a synthesis of physical sense, and the imaginative faculties. It is equally unclear whether the danger Tertullian foresees is simply to physical sight, or whether he imagines some sort of mental derangement as a possibility. Tertullian seems to presume a scenario in which reason has to relinquish some of its controlling function over the interpretation of physical sight as it is overwhelmed by divine glory. Tertullian sees the glory of the Transfiguration as something which can be experienced by mortals, but which is so overwhelming that transformed vision bestowed by *amentia* is needed to behold this glory truly and safely.

Prophetic Vision and Montanism

Any attempt to understand what Tertullian means by terms such as *amentia* will be closely related to the extent of Montanist influence on Tertullian, who was increasingly influenced by the claims of the sect from 207 onwards. As Trevett's[306] and Nasrallah's[307] work has shown, however, the diversity and breadth of beliefs which have since been described under the umbrella term of "Montanism," not least the brand in Rome and North Africa which influenced Tertullian, was probably much wider and more pluriform than previously suspected. In addition, piecing together a coherent account of the Phrygian Prophecy involves a complex evaluation of information preserved exclusively by the group's detractors, frequently many years after the sect's period of greatest popularity. The image of Tertullian, the schismatic

[306] Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1-15, pp. 198-223.
[307] Laura Salah Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly : Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Theological Studies, 2003), pp. 95-101, pp. 156-163.

heretic, has gradually given way in scholarly discussion to a more nuanced verdict in which his attitude to visionary prophecy can be seen as surprisingly close to views which would later be described as "orthodox."[308] Trevett,[309] for example, emphasises this interest in ecstatic prophecy as a normative characteristic of the sort of Christianity found within Asia Minor, the milieu from which Montanus' prophecy emerged, and rejects any sense in which his teaching represents the intruding of an alien, or pagan, sensibility into Asiatic Christianity. In addition, Robeck has shown prophetic charismata to be a widespread characteristic of North African "orthodox" Christian culture through an examination of The *Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, Tertullian's, and Cyprian's writings.[310] Nonetheless, a uniting characteristic of the wide range of people claiming some degree of allegiance to the "New Prophecy" was an exalting of the importance of prophetic utterance in the teaching and ordering of the Church. The point of highlighting the influence of Montanism on Tertullian is to recognise the way in which his comment on the Transfiguration emerges from a context highly sensitised to ecstatic, visionary, and prophetic experience, and its polemic defence within the life of the church.

"ecstasis" and "amentia"

We now turn to the question of what Tertullian meant by *ecstasis* and *amentia.* In *Adv. Marc.* 22, Tertullian describes the trance-like state necessary for prophecy, and

[308] See, Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 130-142; Pierre Champagne de Labriolle, *La crise montaniste* (Paris: 1913), pp. 463-464; Eric Francis Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), especially, pp. 209-224; Jean Steinmann, *Tertullien*, (Lyon: Éditions du Chalet, 1967), pp. 245-291, esp. pp. 285-288.
[309] Trevett, pp. 15-26, pp. 46-66.
[310] Cecil M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian, and Cyprian* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1992), pp. 97-145.

which gripped Peter at the Transfiguration, as "ecstasin, id est amentiam,"[311] "ecstasy, which is mindlessness." He uses almost precisely the same phrase, "in ecstasi, id est amentia,'[312] in Book 5 of *Adv. Marc.* to refer to the state of mind which produces the sort of inspired visions, psalms and prayers which he claims Marcion lacks, but which his Montanist circle posseses. It seems likely that Tertullian may be coining a neologism by using this Greek loan-word. When Tertullian states, "ecstasin, id est amentiam,"[313] "amentia," operates as the Latin gloss for a foreign-sounding word. *Amentia* is a much more widely used term, having meanings ranging from, "the state of being out of one's mind, madness,"[314] through to the more creative sense of "poetic inspiration,"[315] or the negative connotation inherent in, "violent excitement, frenzy," or "senselessness, extreme folly, infatuation."[316] *Amentia*, therefore, is a much more general term, referring to a wide range of experiences, both negative and positive, of being out of one's normal mind. In her study of Tertullian's understanding of ecstasy, Nasrallah concludes Tertullian holds the terms *ecstasis*, *excessus*, and *amentia* to be terms equivalent to "prophecy, the power of the spirit".[317] However, she also shows he is capable of using the term *amentia* negatively in many contexts, to mean madness in the sense of mental derangement.[318] Nasrallah concludes Tertullian provocatively uses a term understood in its primary meaning as negative madness, and exploits the term's shock value to emphasise the radical importance of prophetic utterance, and its paradoxical reliability. She argues Tertullian is happy, therefore, with the idea of

[311] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.4 (CCSL 1, 601).
[312] *Adv. Marc.* 5.8.12 (CCSL 1, 688).
[313] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.4 (CCSL 1, 601).
[314] s.v., *amentia,* Oxford Latin Dictionary.
[315] s.v., *amentia,* Lewis and Short.
[316] Ibid.
[317] Nasrallah, p. 134.
[318] Ibid.

ecstasy as a form of madness, but one which is normal and natural to humans, especially being comparable to sleep and dreaming.[319]

Tertullian's understanding of the soul

It is important, therefore, to establish the character of this "madness," which Tertullian describes, for, as Nasrallah[320] and Robeck[321] argue, Tertullian does not believe *amentia* and ecstasy to represent a complete leave-taking of reason. Nasrallah points to the importance of Tertullian's more Stoic understanding of the soul.[322] Unlike the Platonic notions found in Philo of a tripartite soul in which *nous* or intellect is the principal faculty evacuated from the soul in ecstasy, to be replaced by the divine mind, Tertullian advocates a created, and unitary soul. Nasrallah argues that for Tertullian, although one might describe the soul as having different faculties or abilities, it is not made up of separate parts.[323] In addition, he resists Platonic exaltation of the rational soul within the human as the portion most able to apprehend the divine. One of the consequences of this anthropology is Tertullian's ability to describe prophetic insight and vision as a universal charism, open to all Christians,[324] rather than the noetically trained and intellectually superior.

Nasrallah [325] and Robeck [326] show that, although elements of Tertullian's understanding of ecstasy are at times very complex and edge on the seemingly contradictory, it does not for him represent the complete leave-taking of reason,

[319] Ibid., pp. 134-140.
[320] Ibid., pp. 139-140.
[321] Robeck, pp. 104-106.
[322] Nasrallah, pp. 101-111.
[323] Ibid., p. 117ff.
[324] Ibid., p. 140ff., especially pp. 153-154; Robeck, pp. 97-101.
[325] Nasrallah, especially pp. 111-127.
[326] Robeck, pp. 104-106.

precisely because he does not conceive of the human soul as possessing a separate rational portion, which can either flee (as Philo argued) or be overwhelmed in ecstasy (as Origen argued). For Tertullian, ecstasy represents a state in which the faculty of knowledge becomes dimmed, but not completely removed by *amentia*. Tertullian's Stoic conception of the soul prompts him to value the epistemic worth of sense experience, and to see ecstasy as never completely able to compromise the rationality of the soul, even though reason may partially retreat, and the *amentia* appear like madness.

Ecstasy and sleep

We now explore precisely how Tertullian explains the ecstasy he declares grips Peter. Whilst *amentia* was a notion known to Tertullian's readers, the meaning of *ecstasis* may have been more uncertain. One of the greatest frustrations in the study of Tertullian's thought in this area is the disappearance of a treatise mentioned by Jerome entitled, *De ecstasi*.[327] However, Tertullian explores at some length in *De Anima* 45, what he means by *amentia* and *ecstasis*, which will have to be, *faut de mieux*, our main source of information.

In *De Anima* 45, Tertullian draws an extended comparison between *ecstasis* and sleep, in which he argues they are substantially similar phenomena. In sleep, he explains, the physical body rests, and the physical senses perceiving the world around them go into abeyance. However, the soul does not rest, but continues to imagine, perceive, and visualise. Because the limbs of the body are resting, the soul uses its own "limbs", so to speak, to give expression to its activity in dreams. It is like a

[327] See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 4 vols. (Westminster, Md: Spectrum Publishers, 1950), Vol II, p. 317.

gladiator without weapons, Tertullian explains, or a charioteer without horses still gesticulating and going through the actions of their sport, unable to stop their combat.[328] "There is an action, but no real effect," Tertullian concludes, "We call this power ecstasy, which is a leaving of the senses, and resembles mindlessness."[329]

However, dreams can sometimes be vague, inconsistent, and ambiguous. Tertullian, therefore, seeks to distinguish between dreams inspired by demons, and legitimate experiences in which God speaks. The key in this discernment is memory. It is through memory that God helps us discern his communication, and that *ecstasy* is prevented from becoming a flight from reason; memory, according to Tertullian, is the "particular character of *amentia*."[330] Tertullian suggests our reasoning faculties frequently seek to suppress what we imagine in dreams. However, when in a state of ecstasy, that controlling action of the intellect is momentarily withdrawn, allowing us to remember the image or message God wishes to communicate to us.[331] For an ecstatic dream or vision to be preserved in our consciousness, therefore, reason needs paradoxically to retreat and cease to act as it usually does, allowing the dream to come to the fore and be visualised; yet at the same time reason also needs not entirely to disappear, as the dream would not be remembered otherwise.[332]

Ecstasis/amentia: Conclusions

Tertullian sees the terms *ecstasis* and *amentia* as broadly synonymous, and as describing the crucial state of mind which is a prerequisite for prophetic vision and

[328] *De Anima* 45.2 (CCSL 2, 849).
[329] *De Anima* 45.3 (CCSL 2, 849).
[330] *De Anima* 45.4 (CCSL 2, 850).
[331] *De Anima* 45.5 (CCSL 2, 850).
[332] *De Anima* 45.6 (CCSL 2, 850).

utterance. He sees the disciples, and especially Peter, being in just such a state when they witness the Transfiguration. The best analogy he can find to describe the mechanics of this state is a comparison with sleep and dreaming. However, Tertullian's use of the word *amentia* in contexts where it clearly expresses a simple sense of madness, makes me agree with Nasrallah, that he uses the phrase provocatively to emphasise the paradox at the heart of his understanding of *ecstasis/amentia*. On the one hand, prophetic utterance is only possible once the every day control which reason exercises over our imaginations has retreated. Indeed the state required for prophecy looks like madness, and in this sense, may legitimately be described as such, according to Tertullian, to emphasise the distinct nature of this state. However, at the same time, *ecstasis/amentia* can never represent for Tertullian a complete flight from reason. Without reason, we could never remember our dreams and visions, a conviction his more Stoic anthropology makes it necessary for him to affirm.

5.1.3 Tertullian, the Transfiguration, and the New and Old Testaments

Having outlined Tertullian's understanding of *ecstasis* and *amentia*, I will now show how Tertullian's use of the Transfiguration as proof of the prophetic unity of the Old and New Testaments exemplifies the significance of this ecstatic vision. Tertullian points in *Adversus Marcionem* 4.22 to a number of ways in which the Transfiguration was prophetically foreseen in the Old Testament. This both proves the coherence of the scriptural canon he defends against Marcion, but also provides legitimising examples of ecstasy amongst the prophets. Indeed, I will argue he sees the prophetic vision of the prophets Habbakuk and Zechariah years before Christ's time to be the same sort of prophetic vision experienced by the apostles. I will then show how the

concern of the third century Anti-Phrygian source, employed by Epiphanius to insist that the prophets prophesied *without* any sense of ecstasy, confirms and supports my reading of Tertullian's interpretation of the Transfiguration.

Prophetic foreshadowings of the Transfiguration in the Old Testament

Tertullian's first point in *Adversus Marcionem* 4.22 concerns the compatibility of the Old Testament with the revelation of Christ. From Tertullian's argument,[333] it would appear Marcion had insisted that when the voice from the cloud tells the disciples to listen to Jesus, this was an instruction to ignore the Law and the Prophets, which Moses and Elijah represented. It seems Marcionites may have preached a Transfiguration which pointed to the eclipsing of the Old Law, and the demiurge which had dictated it, by the greater god revealed by Christ. This probably stood behind Marcion's unwillingness to allow Luke's mention of Jesus being in discourse with Moses and Elijah to remain in his "gospel".[334] Tertullian, by contrast, argues in *Adv Marc* 4.22.1 that appearing with someone in glory is a very odd way of signaling that person's demise. He also wonders whether Moses and Elijah are consequently the only prophets Marcion would ban being read. What of Isaiah and Jeremiah who do not appear on the mountain, Tertullian wonders. For him, Christ's companionship with Moses and Elijah in glory reveals Christ as the fulfillment of the prophecy made by the one God through them. Tertullian then describes an extended series of Old Testament motifs, references, and incidents, which foreshadow the Transfiguration in order further to make his point. I have sorted them below into four broad categories.

[333] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.1-2 (CCSL 1, 600-601); 4.34.15-16 (CCSL 1, 638-639).
[334] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.16 (CCSL 1, 604).

Category 1: reference to the same reality

The first category of Old Testament references involve Tertullian establishing a simple correspondence between the Transfiguration and Old Testament narratives in which both texts are seen as speaking about the same reality. Tertullian's point is to show that the god of the Old and New Testaments is in fact the same, bringing to pass in the New the same saving mystery seen in the Old. Tertullian argues, for example, the voice coming from the cloud declaring Jesus to be God's Son is addressed to the same individual to whom God spoke in Ps 2.7, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."[335] In a similar way, Tertullian argues that God had asked through Isaiah 50.10, "Who is it that fears God and hears the voice of his Son?"[336] He sees the voice from the overshadowing cloud as commanding the same thing as Isaiah asks about here by virtue of the promise Tertullian sees as implicit in the prophet's words. In these examples, the thing spoken of in Old Testament texts is interpreted as being the same thing spoken of at the Transfiguration.

Category 2: fulfillment of a prediction

A second category of references is one in which something foretold in the Old Testament comes to pass in time in the Transfiguration. The principal example of this is Moses' prediction at Deuteronomy 18.15 that God would raise up a prophet like himself. Tertullian argues Christ dismisses Moses and Elijah, not because they are the prophets of a demiurge, but because Moses finally sees his prediction fulfilled.[337] A transfer is made in which the disciples should listen now to Christ as teacher and

[335] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.8 (CCSL 1, 602).
[336] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.8-9 (CCSL 1, 602).
[337] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.15 (CCSL 1, 604).

prophet as a result of a particular stage in salvation history having been reached.[338] This category represents the fulfillment in time at the Transfiguration of a prediction made in the Old Testament.

Category 3: typological connection with Sinai

A third, more complex, category involves Tertullian making what one might describe as a typological connection between the giving of the Law on Sinai and the Transfiguration. He states, "the creator had first initiated his ancient people in a vision and with his own voice on a mountain. It was necessary that the new covenant should be sealed in just such a raised place as the old covenant had been composed in, and under the same cover of a cloud."[339] In this link, these two incidents are seen to be parallel both in their function (i.e. to confirm teaching) and in the phenomena that accompanied them (mountain; vision; voice; cloud). However, this typology is made more complex by the comparison Tertullian draws not with Exod 24 but with Exod 33.20, in which Moses is *prevented* from seeing fully God's face. Playing on an ambiguity in the Latin translation he uses, Tertullian argues that when God said Moses would see his *later parts* ("Et tunc videbis posterior mea"),[340] he meant not his loins or legs, but that Moses would see him in a *later time*, ("…sed desideraverat gloriam in posteribus temporibus revelandam").[341] In Numbers 12.6 ff, God promises to Moses that he will see him face to face, in the Tent of Meeting. However, God had also said in Exod 33.20 that no one can see his face and live. Tertullian holds out the Transfiguration as the point at which both of these seemingly contradictory prophesies are fulfilled. The logic of Tertullian's argument is that the Tabernacle of

[338] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.12 (CCSL 1, 603).
[339] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.7 (CCSL 1, 602).
[340] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.15 (CCSL 1, 604).
[341] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.15 (CCSL 1, 604).

Meeting which Numbers 12.6 really refers to is, in fact, prophetically the mountain of Transfiguration. Here, Moses finally sees the face of God and lives. Tertullian points to Jesus as the embodiment of God's glory, and the experience on the Mountain as directly comparable with Moses' entry into the Tent of Meeting. Indeed, in just the same way that Moses' appearance was blinding for the Hebrews when Moses left God's presence, so now, Tertullian argues, Moses' appearance upon leaving Christ's presence at the Transfiguration, is blinding for Marcion, who fails to recognise the truth.[342]

So, whilst there is here a typological parallel drawn between the Transfiguration and the giving of the Law on Sinai, as broadly parallel incidents, there is a more complex parallel laid over that in which Moses achieves something at the Transfiguration which he didn't manage to in Exodus, which Tertullian interprets the Old Testament as predicting would eventually be fulfilled in the future.

Category 4: Prophetic vision in Zechariah and Habakkuk

A fourth category of Old Testament reference made by Tertullian concerns two texts in Habakkuk and Zechariah. In these, Tertullian seems to argue for a different sort of typological relationship, claiming that Zechariah and Habakkuk had some sort of prophetic vision of the Transfiguration, which was to take place in the future. Referring to LXX Habakkuk 3.1-4, Tertullian argues as follows.

> We have an entire *outline of this vision* ["habitum visionis"] in Habakkuk as well, where the Spirit, in the person of some of the apostles [says], 'Lord I have heard your hearing and was afraid'. What can this be other than the heavenly voice, 'This is my beloved Son, hear him'? 'I considered your

[342] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.16 (CCSL 1, 604).

> works and was astounded.' When can this be other than when Peter saw his brightness, and did not know what he should say?[343]

Tertullian argues that the Spirit spoke in the voice of the apostles who were yet to live through the prophet Habakkuk, and speaks of the ecstatic state Peter was to experience on Tabor.

Much would seem to revolve around precisely what is meant by "habitum visionis." "Habitus" has a wide lexical range, referring to a broad sweep of concepts to do with appearance or outline, especially to do with "physical make-up, build, form (with emphasis on visual aspect)."[344] There would seem to be two possible interpretations of Tertullian's phrase, "habitum visionis." The first could be that when Tertullian speaks of us having an outline of the vision in Habakkuk, he means the person seeing this is the one reading the Old Testament in the light of the Transfiguration. In other words, the "outline of the vision" is simply a spotting of correspondences by the reader of the New Testament. However, a second interpretation is also possible. This emphasis on "visual aspect"[345] implied in the word "habitus" could mean Tertullian entertains the possibility that Habakkuk had some sort of visual apprehension of the Transfiguration before its time. In this case, the "outline of the vision" refers to *Habakkuk's* visionary experience.

The distinction between these two sorts of vision is shown by the question of precisely what Tertullian means by "apud Abacuc." Does Tertullian mean "in the *book Habakkuk"*, the text, entitled, "Habakkuk" in which we read *allegorical* correspondences with the Transfiguration? Or does he mean "with the *prophet*

[343] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.12 (CCSL 1, 603).
[344] s.v., *habitus*, Oxford Latin Dictionary.
[345] Ibid.

Habakkuk," in the experience of the man who may have undergone some sort of visualization of the Transfiguration as he prophesied, and whose vision establishes a *typological* relationship between his vision and the Transfiguration? If the latter case, Tertullian interprets vision to mean not just that which is seen by the physical eyes, but that which is visualised by the prophetic imagination in the spirit, before the physical event takes place in time, even though its prophetic significance may take many years to become clear.

A similar dynamic is evident in Tertullian's comments concerning Zechariah:

> Zechariah also saw these [i.e. Moses and Elijah] *in the figure* ["vidit in figura"] of the two olive trees and the two olive branches: for these are the ones about whom it was said to him, 'Two noble ones stand by the Lord of the whole earth.'[346]

"Figura" can refer to a general sense of appearance, outline or shape, but can, more specifically, denote things "seen in dreams, visions etc; also of the dead."[347] Tertullian possibly argues that by seeing the Transfiguration in the *figura* of the olive trees, Zechariah had some sort of visual apprehension of the Transfiguration before its time. However, the analogy drawn with the Transfiguration is slightly different than was the case with Habakkuk. There, the prophet spoke prophetically in the person of Peter, and his words and role were shown to be similar to Peter's. In the case of Habakkuk, Tertullian does not say whether he imagines the prophet *seeing* anything. Here, however, Tertullian explicitly understands Zechariah echoing not Peter's words and role, but rather his vision. In visualising the two olive trees, the reality he perceives, was the same as that seen by the disciples in the Transfiguration. Although

[346] *Adv. Marc.* 4.22.12, 13 (CCSL 1, 603).
[347] s.v., *figura*, Oxford Latin Dictionary.

Zechariah saw olive trees, the inspired reader may discern in this a prophetic vision of the same reality seen clearly on the mount of Transfiguration.

The Anti-Phrygian Source in Epiphanius' Panarion

My reading of Tertullian's reference to Habakkuk and Zechariah appears all the more convincing when seen in the context of the polemical debate concerning Montanist claims, which we witness in the Anti-Phrygian source preserved in Epiphanius' *Panarion.*[348] Although Epiphanius' work dates from the fourth century, the source he uses concerning Montanism is widely seen as contemporaneous with Tertullian's work.[349] Few feel it is possible to prove it was written specifically in reply to any of Tertullian's writings,[350] but it does touch on some very similar issues, and appears to participate, in Nasrallah's words, in a "common discourse with Tertullian."[351] The fact that one of the Source's principal concerns is to deny any notion that the prophets of the Old Testament spoke in ecstasy, makes it highly likely, I would argue, that it was a Montanist common-place to point to the prophetic vision and writings of the prophets as analogous to the present day utterance of their Phrygian prophets.

One of the Anti-Phrygian source's basic point is that the sort of ecstasy which Tertullian argues to be epistemically useful is, in fact, a dangerous form of madness and an "ecstasy of folly,"[352] whose peril resides precisely in a decoupling of the soul from reason. The writer marshals a list of Old Testament prophets whom he sees as

[348] Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Books 2-3 (Sections 47-80)*, trans., Frank Williams, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987).
[349] See Nasralla pp.167-71.
[350] Ibid., p. 155.
[351] Ibid.
[352] *Panarion*, 48.5.6; Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Books 2-3 (Sections 47-80)*, p. 11.

prophesying *sanely*: Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.[353] Moses and Isaiah, particularly, are depicted as sane by virtue of the fact that they *saw* God directly.[354] Here, the Source's writer closely links vision with possession of reason. This argument is then extended to the New Testament, as the Anti-Phrygian writer deals with the mention of Peter's ecstasy in Acts 10.10.[355] He argues that ecstasy here simply implies Peter sees, "other than what men usually see in the everyday world,"[356] and, furthermore, does not lead to "distraction," because "Peter was rational and not out of his mind." Indeed, the fact that in Acts 10 Peter sees, but is capable of rationally *refusing* to eat what God urges him to, shows him to be in control of his faculties. Both Tertullian and the Anti-Phrygian Source agree that true, inspired prophecy and vision cannot take place without the presence of reason; where they differ is in the Anti-Phrygian Source's accusation that the Montanists' "ecstasy of folly" represents a madness which takes leave of sanity, and therefore cannot be trusted. Tertullian, on the other hand is happy to use the language of madness, but to assert the paradox that what appears as madness can never represent a complete abandonment of reason.

I suggest the argument deployed in Epiphanius that the prophets saw *sanely* increases the likelihood that Tertullian intends us to see in his interpretation of Habakkuk and Zechariah some sort of prophetic vision of the Transfiguration having taken place before the time of Christ's earthly life. At the very least this is how the Source's writer understood the Phrygian position. Although Nasrallah briefly quotes the portions of *Adv. Marc.* in which Tertullian refers to the Transfiguration, she does so

[353] *Panarion*, 48.3.3; ibid., p. 9.
[354] *Panarion*, 48.3.4-5; ibid., p. 9.
[355] *Panarion*, 48.7.3-5; ibid., p. 12.
[356] *Panarion*, 48.7.3; ibid.

simply to prove his equating of the term *ecstasis* with *amentia*. I hope in this chapter to have added to, and strengthened, Nasrallah's thesis, and to have shown that the Transfiguration has a more significant role than she possibly realises in Tertullian's argument. Through it, the prophetic unity of the Old and New Testaments is established, and linked through the disciples' experience at the Transfiguration, to the role of ecstatic prophecy which Tertullian hopes to legitimise within the Church. I have shown Tertullian employs a sophisticated understanding of prophetic vision, which includes not just the ability of the contemporary reader to notice allegorical correspondences between the Transfiguration and Old Testament incidents, but also an understanding of Habbakuk's and Zechariah's writings as constituting prophetic vision. For Tertullian, some visualised apprehension of the same mystery perceived by Peter James and John is granted to the prophets in their mind's eye before the time of Christ.

It is also important to note that in two of the connections made by Tertullian between the Transfiguration and the Old Testament, temple and tabernacle themes can be detected. Tertullian conceives of the Transfiguration as prophetically embodying the Tabernacle of Meeting. There is also a strong temple and cultic background to the imagery drawn upon in Zechariah 4. Although these temple and tabernacle themes are not as pronounced as will be argued is the case with Origen later in this Chapter, it is important to note their presence, and that this theme is by no means absent from Tertullian's interpretation.

5.1.4 Ecstasis and Luke's Transfiguration: a possible reconstruction.

I will now attempt, in the light of what I have so far established, to piece together as precisely as is possible Tertullian's understanding of the Transfiguration narrative.

Tertullian understands the disciples as having to fall into a state of "ecstasis" in order to be able to witness the Transfiguration. Tertullian's understanding of ecstasy as analogous with sleep coheres closely with the Lucan Transfiguration account. Luke is the only evangelist to describe the disciples' descent into a sleepy state just before their vision. As I outlined in Chapter 1, it is unclear whether Luke's construction "βεβαρημένοι ὑπνῳ, διαγρηγορήσαντες" implies the disciples fall asleep and then wake up, or are somehow in a drowsy, liminal state, but nonetheless alert. When Tertullian discusses in *Adv. Prax.* 15 the disciples' *amentia*, he points to this being a state characterising *all three* of the disciples (by contrast with the concentration in *Adv Marc* 4.22 on Peter). The logic of his argument in *Adv. Prax.* 15 would seem to open the possibility that Tertullian sees their slipping into a sleepy state marking the beginning of their *amentia*. Their physical senses go into abeyance, as if asleep, and Peter is no longer aware of what he says, even when he speaks to suggest three tabernacles.

A further question is how the disciples see Moses and Elijah. In *De Anima* 9, Tertullian insists that one of the characteristics of *ecstasis* is the ability it affords to see departed souls. He does this with reference to the experience of a Montanist prophetess:[357]

> We have a sister amongst us at the moment who has been given several gifts of revelation, which she experiences in ecstasy through the Spirit during the

[357] See, Robeck, pp. 130-134.

> liturgy on the Lord's day in church.…'Amongst other things,' she says, 'a soul has been shown to me in corporal form and its spirit has been seen by me. It did not have a void and empty quality, but rather such that it gave itself to be touched, tender and bright, of a transparent colour, and its outline was human in all respects.' [358]

For Tertullian, the souls of the departed, though spirit, have a corporeal form, which may be perceived in a state of *ecstasis*.[359] It is unclear whether Tertullian conceives of Moses and Elijah as existing as souls in heaven, or as is frequently asserted in later tradition, as individuals who existed embodied in heaven by virtue of having been assumed. We have here in *De Anima* 9, though, the outline of a model which could be applied to the Transfiguration. The corporeal souls of Elijah and Moses appear before the disciples and are perceived as a result of their *amentia*. The disciples' souls, like the gladiator or charioteer mentioned in *De Anima* 45, continue to "see" by visualising the two prophets, even though their physical senses are dulled. It is unclear whether anyone else present on the mountain who was not in an ecstatic state would be unable to see Moses and Elijah. The logic of Tertullian's argument from *De Anima* 9 would seem to be that if Moses and Elijah were present as souls, they wouldn't be visible to a person not in ecstasy.

In addition, there is the question of how Christ, who is physically present, is seen and the glory he appears in is perceived. Something about the ecstasy Peter finds himself in makes seeing Christ's glory possible. Again, it is unclear whether someone on the mountain not in ecstasy would be able to see the glory with physical eyes. *Adv. Prax.* 15 implies that if they could, it would be dangerous both to their eyes and to their reasoning faculties. It is unclear whether Tertullian conceives of the disciples seeing

[358] *De Anima* 9; 791-794.
[359] For an extended examination of Tertullian's understanding of how the souls of the departed can be seen from other visionary experiences he treats, see Robeck, pp. 128-139.

Christ's glory only with their mind's eye, or with their physical eyes, or a combination of both.

For Tertullian, *amentia* brings about a dislocation of the usual connection between the physical faculty of sight, and the cognitive faculty of reasoning which interprets what is seen. What emerges is an experience in which things usually invisible to physical sight are seen by the visionary, and in which things usually hidden from the mind by God are understood and communicated. For Tertullian, vision is not just what is physically apprehended by the eye, but clearly includes, and maybe principally refers to, what is visualised by the soul.

5.1.5. Tertullian: Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from our survey of Tertullian's interpretation of the Transfiguration. The first is to recognise the importance of his interest in visionary prophecy. This leads him to see the Transfiguration as a key text in the legitimising of ecstatic vision within the Church, by interpreting Peter's experience as ecstatic. Tertullian's polemic interests draw him to see ecstatic elements in the Lucan Transfiguration narrative as key evidence in his anti-Marcionite argument. Tertullian's use of language is of singular importance, especially the word "ecstasis," which he defines in terms of the more widely understood notion of "amentia". His varied comments on vision and ecstasy allow us to piece together a reasonably precise summary of Tertullian's understanding of the visionary character of the Transfiguration. He understands this to include in addition to the physical faculty of sight, the memory and imagination's ability to visualise realities revealed to them in the Spirit, in a way not dissimilar to the processes whereby we dream in sleep. In

addition, this interest in ecstatic vision leads Tertullian to interpret the Transfiguration in the light of the Hebrew Scriptures. He views prophetic vision as a crucial part of the way in which the Transfiguration is to be seen as the fulfillment of texts from the Old Testament, both inspiring the writers of Hebrew prophecy, but also those who read the Transfiguration narratives in Tertullian's time. Of great significance is the way in which these interpretive insights are garnered by Tertullian from a reading of Luke's gospel, or at least the slightly altered Marcionite version of Luke's Transfiguration which he commented upon in *Adv Marc*. Tertullian's polemic needs draw him to see visionary and ecstatic elements as a crucial character of Luke's narrative.

5.2. Origen

In the second half of this chapter, I explore the interpretation of the Transfiguration, which we find in the writings of Origen. Origen, like Tertullian, sees in Luke's words evidence of Peter being in ecstasy. However, by contrast with Tertullian, he sees this ecstasy negatively. Origen also draws out a number of tabernacle and priestly themes from our narratives. I argue Origen exploits these themes in a way which enables him to read the Transfiguration side by side with the birth narratives set in the Temple in Luke 2. I aim to show, therefore, that what unites Tertullian and Origen is their ability to use the Transfiguration's visionary status, as emphasised by Luke, in very different ways, to interpret other parts of the Christian scriptures in their attempts to describe human experience of the vision of God.

I explore first the significance which Origen sees in Peter's being in a state he judges to be ecstasy and evaluate Origen's ambivalent attitude to ecstatic vision. I then show

Origen reads the Transfiguration in the light of a number of motifs appertaining to the high priesthood and the heavenly tabernacle. Finally, I point to a comparison which Origen makes between the Temple events of Luke 2.22-52, and the Transfiguration. I argue it might be possible to detect a connection in Origen's understanding between the Finding in the Temple and his interpretation of the Transfiguration narrative as a temple-like experience. I suggest this shows the Transfiguration being used by him as a lens through which to read other portions of Luke's gospel which take place in the Jerusalem Temple.

5.2.1. Transfiguration, Vision, and Ecstasy in Origen.

Origen offers detailed reflection on the Transfiguration in two main contexts: first in direct commentary on the narratives themselves, particularly in his *Commentary on Matthew's Gospel* and in his *Homilies on Luke,* which will be the principal focus of this chapter; and second, indirectly, in discussion concerning the resurrection and the resurrection body.

Origen underlines the Transfiguration as an incident dependent on the disciples' ability to apprehend the experience. He insists that throughout his earthly life, Jesus had the capacity to appear differently to different people. This took place according to their spiritual maturity and their ability to apprehend the gospel. The Transfiguration is, according to Origen, simply one of many examples in Jesus' life when his appearance changed. He insists that the transfiguration of Jesus' body took place "whenever he wanted, and for whomever he wanted."[360] He further argues, "When people saw him, he did not appear in the same way to everyone, but rather

[360] *Contra Cels*. 2.64 (PG 11, 897, B).

according to the ability of each to receive him."[361] The evidence he uses to justify this is the fact that he only took three disciples to experience the Transfiguration, as the others did not possess the necessary spiritual maturity.[362]

Origen extends this point concerning the disciples' sight to use the Transfiguration as a broader metaphor pointing to the ability of the soul to ascend to God, or of ordinary believers to apprehend God's presence in the scriptures. He regards the Transfiguration as a paradigm of how God reveals himself to humankind in which he emphasises the need for conscious human receptivity to divine revelation, and the ascetic preparation that precedes it.[363]

Eichinger[364] sets this within the context of Origen's broader anthropology. He sees Origen's view of humankind as characterised by a series of dichotomies and paradoxes in which Origen regards fallen man as unable to know God by his own efforts. However, amongst the fallen, he distinguishes between the sinful, and the believing. Believing humankind, though fallen, is able to know God through the humanity of the incarnate Word, and through having human sight transformed. Unbelieving humanity, however, can only know the human Jesus, and see no further. This anthropological conviction, therefore, is typified in the Transfiguration, a mystery visible to believers, but not to those who can see no further than Jesus' humanity. Origen extends this analogy by a comparison in *Com. Mat.* between the participation of the three disciples in the Transfiguration and the faithful Christian

[361] *Contra Cels.* 2.64 (PG 11, 896, C).
[362] *Contra Cels.* 2.64 (PG 11, 896, C).
[363] *Contra Cels.* 4.16 (PG 11, 1047, B); *Hom in Gen*, 1.7 (SC 7, 44)
[364] Matthias Eichinger, *Die Verklärung Christi bei Origines: die Bedeutung des Menschen Jesus in seiner Christologie* (Vienna: Herder, 1969), especially, pp. 26-47.

meditating upon scripture. He describes the shining garments of Jesus being like the "discourses and letters of the gospel."[365] These sayings become white for those who "ascend the mountain with him...So when you see someone who has not only a profound theological understanding concerning Jesus but can also interpret the sayings of the gospel, do not hesitate to say that for such a person, the garments of Jesus have become as white as light."[366] The Transfiguration has significance for Origen, therefore, as a visionary experience apprehended by the disciples, and dependent on their spiritual maturity, which may then be used as a broader metaphor for ordinary Christians' encounter with God in the scriptures, which takes place in accordance with their spiritual maturity and level of understanding.

Origen also asserts, however, that the Transfiguration was visible to the disciples not just because of their advanced state of visionary capacity, but because it also represented a lesser experience of eschatological glory than that which will be experienced in the Kingdom of heaven.[367] The body Christ displays at the Transfiguration is not that which he will have in the Age to Come, Origen asserts, as it is not yet a completely spiritual body and had not yet put on incorruption.[368] Indeed, he describes Christ's body at the Transfiguration being "corruptible garments,"[369] even though they are glorious. Origen seems to hold a three stage understanding of Christ's visibility: first there is the physical body he takes on in the incarnation visible to everyone with physical sense; secondly there is a glorified but only semi-spiritualised body shown at the Transfiguration and between the

[365] *Com. Mat.* 12.38 (PG 13, 1069, B)
[366] Ibid.
[367] See, Veniamin, pp. 52-57.
[368] *Frag. Luc.* 140 (GCS 49, 283-284).
[369] Ibid.

Resurrection and Ascension, visible to those with the spiritual maturity to perceive it, and described by Veniamin as an "intermediate state of corporeity;"[370] and third there is the body he has after the Ascension in heaven which is fully spiritual and can only be seen by those who have put on incorruption and assumed their "spiritual" bodies. Indeed, Veniamin suspects Origen holds the body of the ordinary Christian glorified in the Kingdom of Heaven to be more glorious than that shown by Christ at the Transfiguration.[371]

Origen understands the disciples to be able to see the Transfiguration as a result of a number of transformations and stages: first, there is a transformation within Christ himself in which he alters his appearance; second the disciples who see it need to be of advanced spiritual maturity; and third, the body of Christ displays eschatological glory, but only so much as it is possible for mortals to see.

Ecstasy and the Lucan narrative

A point of similarity with Tertullian's understanding of the Transfiguration is a shared interpretation of Luke 9.33 seeing Peter in a state of ecstasy. Remarking that Luke describes Peter as not understanding what he was saying, Origen suggests in *Com. Mat.* that Peter may have been in some sort of trance-like state: "You will consider whether he said this in a trance [κατ′ἐκστασιν], filled with a spirit which prompted him to say these things."[372] He then points out that the Holy Spirit was not given to the Apostles until after the Resurrection, and so comes to the conclusion that Peter must have been possessed by an *evil* spirit. This trance-inducing evil spirit, according

[370] Veniamin, p. 52.
[371] Ibid.
[372] *Com. Mat.* 12.40 (PG 13, 1074, A).

to Origen, sought to use Peter to stop Jesus from coming down the mountain in order to be crucified, or else duped Peter into separating Jesus from Moses and Elijah with three tabernacles rather than one.

It is important to note the influence of the Lucan text on Origen's reflection, even in his commentary on Matthew's gospel. He quotes Luke's words, "he did not know what he was saying"[373] five times in *Com. Mat.* 40 & 41 in order to show Peter was in a state of "ecstasy". Origen also employs Luke's mention of the disciples' falling asleep to refer forward to similar demonic possession of Peter at Gethsemane in his inability to keep awake, and in his denial of Jesus during his Trial.[374] In addition, in *Com. Mat.* 38, Origen breaks away from Matthew's narrative, and quotes Lk 9.31's mention of Moses' and Elijah's discussing Jesus' exodus, as signifying the compatibility of Jesus' teaching with the prophecy of the Old Covenant. In more general terms, the influence of Luke's narrative can also be detected, though not as explicitly, in Origen's language of "glory." In *Contra Celsum*, after making a point about the small number of disciples being invited up the mountain, Origen states that it was only Peter, James and John, who were capable of "beholding his glory on that occasion, and of observing Moses and Elijah in glory."[375] Origen closely echoes here Luke 9.31 ("οί ὀφθεντες ἐν δοξη") rather than the Matthean text by referring to Moses and Elijah as "τους ὀφθεντες ἐν δοξη",[376] and later in chapter 6, to Moses as "ός ἐστιν ἐν δοξη ὀφθεις μετα Ιησου".[377]

[373] Luke 9.33.
[374] *Com. Mat.* 12.40 (PG 13, 1076).
[375] *Contra Cels.* 2.64 (PG 11, 896, D).
[376] *Contra Cels.* 2.64 (PG 11, 896, D).
[377] *Contra Cels.* 6.68 (PG 11, 1401, C).

Origen and Ecstasy

We may conclude from Origen's comment on the Transfiguration, that his attitude to ecstasy is not as positive as Tertullian's. His comments on ecstatic vision discussed in other works display a similar ambivalence. Although Völker[378] argued ecstasy to be an important part of Origen's understanding of human knowledge, a large number of subsequent commentators has disagreed with his argument and shown Origen not to have seen any epistemic value in ecstasy.[379] Puech[380] shows Philo used the word ecstasy in two ways: first as a simple sort of violent astonishment at something unexpected; and second as the expulsion of *nous* from the human mind and replacement with the divine spirit, which results in esoteric knowledge and vison. He argues Origen only ever uses the word in the first sense and not the second. Origen's hesitancy about ecstasy stands as a reaction against Philo's more positive appraisal of it, for whom ecstasy represented an ejection of reason from the human soul, only to be replaced by divine mind, with which it was united and into which it was subsumed.

For Origen, however, the contemplation of God does not require the soul to pass beyond or out of itself, and ecstasy, understood as an ejection of reason, dangerously edges towards an abandoning of the very faculty he sees as most important for vision of God. For Origen, ecstasy can be a negative sign of demonic possession as is seen

[378] Walther Völker, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes: eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit und zu den Anfängen christlicher Mystik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1931), pp. 139-144.
[379] Jean Daniélou, "Les Sources bibliques de la mystique d'Origène," *Revue d'ascetique et de la mystique* 23, (1947) pp. 135-136; Irénée Hausherr, "L'origine de la doctrine occidentale des huit péchés capitaux," *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 30, (1930) p. 129; Henri-Charles Puech, "Un livre recent sur la livre mystique d'Origène," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse* 13, (1933) pp. 508-36; Karl Rahner, "La doctrine des sens spirituels chez Origène," *Revue d'ascetique et de la mystique*, (1932), p. 135; Marcel Viller, "Aux sources de la spiritualité de S. Maxime le Confesseur: les ouevres d'Évagre le Pontique," *Revue d'ascetique et de la mystique*, (1930), p. 255.
[380] Puech, pp. 249-256.

not just in his treatment of Peter at the Transfiguration, but in Origen's criticism of the Pythian seer's ecstasy in *Contra Celsum* 7.3-4.[381] Because Origen asserts the soul's contemplation of the Logos to be a possibility natural to the human condition, he is very suspicious indeed both of notions of God's complete unknowability on the one hand, and also of the need for ecstasy to know him on the other. Indeed, Danielou, Louth, and McGinn see Origen's suspicion of ecstasy to be a reaction against Montanist use of the phrase.[382]

Origen does concede that the soul may be possessed by a sort of rapture, or "sober drunkenness," as a *consequence* of the divine vision. However, as Lewy[383] has pointed out, Origen speaks of "sober drunkenness" in *Joh. Com.*[384] as something which does not involve loss of reason, but as a sense of spiritual joy. Indeed, Lewy argues that in *Hom. Lev.* 7,[385] Origen's use of the phrase has a more eschatological focus, characterising *future* vision of God in heaven rather than present day ecstasy. Origen does use the word ἔκστασις in a positive sense once in *Hom. Nom. 7*, as characterising the last stages of ascent to the vision of God in an analogy based on the wilderness wanderings. He points out that there is no one Latin word which translates the term ἔκστασις satisfactorily, but that his interpretation of the place name Thara, which Rufinus translates, "contemplatio stuporis,"[386] expresses what the Greek term means. For Origen, this "contemplation of stupefaction" signifies solely "when the

[381] *Contra Cels.* 7.3-4 (PG 11, 1424-1425).
[382] Jean Daniélou, *Origène* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1948), p. 296; Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 70; Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, The Presence of God : A History of Western Christian Mysticism (London: SCM, 1992), p. 128.
[383] Yochanan Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik*, (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1929), pp. 119-120.
[384] *Jo. Com.* 1, 30 (GCS 10, p. 37).
[385] Lewy, pp. 121-123. See *Hom Lev* 7,1 (PG 12, 475-478).
[386] *Hom. Nom.* 27.12.7 (PG 12, 796, B).

dazed mind is astonished by recognition of wonderful and marvellous things."[387] Again, he sees the term describing human emotional *response* to revelation rather than a state that prompts it. In none of these instances, does Origen state these phrases to involve a Philonic evacuation of human reason. More importantly, at no point does Origen regard ecstasy to be an epistemic prerequisite of divine vision or revelation, as Tertullian does.

5.2.2 Temple and Tabernacle Motifs

Having examined Origen's understanding of the ecstatic experience Peter undergoes at the Transfiguration, we now turn to how Origen explores a number of High Priestly motifs he sees as present in the Transfiguration, and especially in Luke's version of the narrative.

Jesus as High Priest

Origen describes on two occasions the transfigured Jesus as a "High Priest." Both references are very similar in wording and make, broadly speaking, the same point. In *Frag. Luc.* 140, continuing his analogy between ascending the mountain and human apprehension of the divine, he speaks of the person who metaphorically climbs the mountain with Jesus. If that person is taken up with him, "he sees the Word transfigured in glory, and sees him as the very Word and as the High priest who converses with the Father and also prays to him."[388] Origen makes a similar point in *Com. Mat.*, though here it is particularly connected with Jesus' *prayer*. He announces it is necessary to examine "the passage given in Mark, 'And as he was praying he was

[387] *Hom. Nom.* 27.12.7 (PG 12, 796, C).
[388] *Frag. Luc.* 140 (GCS Origenes 9/49, 283-284).

transfigured before them.'"[389] In very similar words to the Luke fragment, Origen says if we ascend the mountain with Christ we see "the Word transfigured before us if we have done the things mentioned above, and have ascended the mountain, and seen the Word himself talking with the Father and praying to him for such things as a true High Priest would pray for to the one true God."[390] For Origen, Jesus' exalted status points to his being the Eternal Word, but the special fellowship with the Father displayed in the Transfiguration, and his act of praying to the Father reveal him as a High Priestly figure, something perceived by those who are advanced in the spiritual life. Origen would appear to see a correspondence between the High Priest's role and that of the eternal Word as both representing mediation of the divine, signalled here by the action of prayer mentioned by Luke.

However, assessment of this second quotation is made problematic by the fact that the reference to Jesus praying is usually seen as a solely Lucan detail, whereas Origen seems to see it present in Mark. It would seem two explanations for the origin of these unknown Marcan words are possible. One could be that Origen has mistakenly conflated the Lucan and Marcan texts. In favour of this verdict would be the absence of any mention by Origen of Luke also having this detail of prayer. Origen frequently brings in details from Luke elsewhere in his Matthew commentary to strengthen or expand an interpretation, so the absence of a mention here that Luke also mentions prayer might point in the direction of some sort of mistake on Origen's part. Alternatively, and possibly more likely, Origen could be using a variant of Mark 9.2 similar to that attested in P45, W and *f*13, that states that it was "ἐν τω προσευχεσθαι αὐτους" that Jesus was transfigured. However, this variant presumably speaks of all

[389] *Com. Mat.* 12.39 (PG 13, 1072).
[390] *Com. Mat.* 12.39 (PG 13, 1072).

four of those present on the mountain praying, rather than Jesus on his own. A further variant exists in some Q manuscripts from the ninth century that changes "αὐτους" to "αὐτον", but is listed as being very weakly attested ("pauci") in NA26.

It is difficult, therefore, to prove conclusively that Origen sees the mention of prayer as a distinctly Lucan element. However, even if working from a text of Mark that contained a mention of prayer, he certainly comments on its presence in Luke's narrative in *Frag. Luc.* 140. Origen interprets this as showing Jesus' High Priestly status is something revealed by faithful Christians' reading of the Transfiguration. Those who through ascetic growth and maturity are able to encounter the transfigured Christ in the scriptures see him as a High Priest. Origen does not explicitly say Jesus was revealed as a High Priest at the Transfiguration itself, but rather when this is allegorically experienced by faithful Christians, seeing him as such is a consequence of their understanding.

Cloud as Tabernacle

A further interpretation offered by Origen is the significance he gives to the overshadowing cloud as a tabernacle for the presence of God. He notes in *Com. Mat.* the inappropriateness of Peter's suggestions, and concludes that Peter was fixated with living on the mountain in earthly huts, rather than perceiving the experience as a revelation of God's presence: "He [God], therefore, shows a better tabernacle, a more excelling one, the cloud." [391] Origen reads the cloud, just as Tertullian, and the writer of *Ap. Pet.* do, as a dwelling for the presence of God, concluding that in sending it,

[391] *Com. Mat.* 12.42 (PG 13, 1081).

God "made, so to speak, a more divine tabernacle..."[392] In addition to high priestly motifs, therefore, a significant background to Origen's reading of the Transfiguration is also one in which he sees entry into the overshadowing cloud as comparable with entry into the heavenly dwelling of God. In the light of the presence of these priestly, temple, and tabernacle motifs, I attempt in the next section a more speculative examination of ways in which Origen possibly links the Transfiguration with events recounted in the Temple in Luke 2.22-52.

5.2.3 Temple events in Luke 2 and the Transfiguration

In *Hom. Luc.* 20 Origen makes what seems to be a very simple comparison between the Finding in the Temple and the Transfiguration. He describes being in the Temple as being "above", whilst living in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph, whose faith had not come to full fruition, as involving a "going down."[393] This, he says, is like the Transfiguration, where Peter, James and John could cope with being above on the mountain with Jesus, but the crowds remained below, "in another place."[394] The comparison Origen seems to be making is between the spiritual immaturity of the disciples who remained behind - and by extension Mary and Joseph – on the one hand, and the maturity of Peter, James and John, who are capable of bearing lofty revelation on the mountain top on the other. The question I wish to speculate about is whether this forms part of a broader analogy which Origen sees between the temple narratives of Luke 2.22-52 and the Transfiguration. In such an analogy these two series of events are comparable not just because they involve "going down" from a

[392] *Com. Mat.* 12.42 (PG 13, 1081).
[393] *Hom. Luc.* 20.4 (SC 87, 282-284).
[394] *Hom. Luc.* 20.4 (SC 87, 284).

place of revelation, but also because this descent is seen in both cases to take place after experiences in a temple like place.

Use of Philippians 2.7

Origen uses Phil 2.7 to link and explain both Luke 2.22-52 and the Transfiguration. In *Hom. Luc.* 18, Origen describes the Presentation as the point at which Jesus was filled with what he had lost in the kenosis of the incarnation. He quotes Philippians 2.7 when he points to the moment the two doves are offered for Jesus as the instant at which he is filled with the Wisdom mentioned at Luke 2.40: "Scripture was able to say, 'He grew, was strengthened, and received the Spirit.' But since, 'He had emptied himself by taking the form of a slave,' as soon as sacrifice was offered for his purification, he recovered in its fullness that which he had been emptied of."[395] We see here in the sacrifice a corollary to Phil 2.7, in which the lowly state of Jesus' emptying is reversed. McGuckin has pointed to Phil 2.7 also lying at the heart of Origen's very similar interpretation of the Transfiguration, particularly of his notion of Jesus' changing appearance. McGuckin asserts, "Origen appears to be the only patristic commentator in the whole tradition of the exegesis of the Transfiguration narrative who connects the metamorphosis of Philippians with the metamorphosis mentioned in the Gospels."[396] Origen employs Phil 2.7 as part of a hermeneutic which sees the Presentation and the Transfiguration as an exalting reversal of the kenosis experienced by the divine Word in the incarnation.

[395] *Hom. Luc.* 18.1 (SC 87, 264).
[396] John McGuckin, "The Changing Forms of Jesus," in *Origeniana Quarta: die Referate des 4. internationalen Origeneskongress, 1985*, ed. Lothar Lies, (Innsbrück: Tyrolia-Verlag, 1987), p. 217.

The Presentation in the Temple and the Transfiguration

This connection between Origen's interpretation of Luke 2.22-52 and Luke 9. 28-36, found in *Hom. Luc.* 20 raises questions about a number of other interpretations which Origen brings to Luke 2, which make tantalising hints at further connections being made between the two narratives. One such is Origen's conviction that the reason Mary and Joseph searched anxiously for Jesus in the Temple was not because they feared he had perished, because they knew him to be divine, but rather they feared that, being in the Temple, he might have momentarily entered into heaven. Origen states, "In just this way, his parents sought Jesus, lest perhaps he withdraw from them, or leave them and pass over to some other realm, or – what I consider more likely – lest he return to heaven to come down again when it pleased him."[397] Could it be that Origen sees parallels between the Temple as a natural place for such an event and the way in which the Transfiguration might also represent a momentary entry into heavenly space? *Homily 19* only exists in Jerome's Latin translation, so it is impossible to know what Origen's original Greek was. However, Jerome's "recessiset ab eis" certainly echoes the Vulgate's rendering of the Ascension in Luke 24.51 as, "*recessit ab eis* et ferebatur in caelum." At the very least, Jerome's translation evokes comparison between Luke 2 and Jesus' entry into heaven in Luke 24, something which may have been present in Origen's Greek text. It may be, therefore, that Origen links a series of occasions which he sees as parallel entries into the heavenly presence of God: the possibility of Jesus popping into heaven from the Jerusalem Temple; experience of a "better tabernacle" at the Transfiguration; and Jesus' final entry into heaven at the Ascension. His seeing a range of priestly,

[397] *Hom. Luc.* 19.5 (SC 87, 276).

tabernacle and temple motifs present in the Transfiguration forms a crucial part of this comparison.

5.2.4. Origen: Conclusion

Interpreting the Transfiguration in the light of ecstatic, Temple, high priestly, and tabernacle motifs forms an important part of Origen's exegesis, and is one particularly focussed on Luke's narrative. We have shown where Origen's interpretation hinges on the overshadowing cloud being seen as a tabernacle for God's presence, on those meditating on the narrative experiencing the transfigured Christ as a high priestly figure, and on Peter being seen as experiencing an ecstatic state. Origen sees in Luke's description of Peter evidence of ecstasy but judges it negatively as the result of demonic possession. Origen also draws an analogy in which the Transfiguration becomes a paradigm for God's self-revelation in the words of scripture to the Christian believer, in which Jesus is encountered as a High Priest. For him, the Transfiguration is significant as a model of the participation in Jesus' transfigured presence which the most spiritually and ascetically advanced experience in their meditation upon the New Testament.

We have shown that Origen's interpretation of the Transfiguration prompts him to read Luke 9 in parallel with incidents from Luke 2.22-52, a reading which turns on a use of Phil 2.7. Origen uses this interpretation to describe a dynamic of kenosis followed by exaltation present in both narratives. Further possible connections might exist between Luke 2 and Luke 9 through their mutual comparison with entries into heaven. I have pointed here to Origen as an interpreter whose apprehension of the significance of visionary, tabernacle, high-priestly, and temple themes in the

Transfiguration, and of the distinctive character of the Lucan text in emphasising them, produces a distinct exegesis of the Transfiguration.

5.3. Tertullian and Origen: Conclusion

I have shown through comparison of Tertullian's and Origen's interpretation of the Transfiguration the importance of a series of visionary motifs particularly present in Luke's narrative. This focus on the Transfiguration as a visionary experience leads Origen and Tertullian, in different ways, to see Luke's version as indicating Peter being in a state of ecstasy.

Both Tertullian and Origen see the Transfiguration as an incident dependent on the visionary ability of the disciples to see it. This allows Origen to use the Transfiguration as a broad analogy for human vision of God, and especially for the processes whereby the faithful believer encounters God in the scriptures. This *theoria*, which the Transfiguration exemplifies, is conceived by Origen in noetic terms, as referring to the activity of the intellective faculties, which move human vision beyond the physical to vision of the divine in the rational realm. For Tertullian, by contrast, it is seen as a justifying example of visualisation in the prophetic imagination of the revelation God wishes to communicate to his faithful, an experience akin to dreaming.

A further element of the visionary character which Tertullian and Origen recognise in the Transfiguration is their both seeing in Luke 9.33 evidence of Peter being in ecstasy. Tertullian sees this as a crucial justification for parallel visionary phenomenon in the Church which he seeks to defend. Indeed, he holds ecstasy to be a

moment of great epistemic privilege, and an important part of how the mind visualises the things God wishes to communicate. Origen, by contrast, is more suspicious of ecstasy and judges its presence here in Peter to be a sign of demonic possession. He is more ambivalent in his verdict on the significance of ecstasy. Whilst not necessarily always judging ecstatic states negatively, Origen certainly does not see them as the epistemic prerequisite which Tertullian does.

In both interpreters we see the presence of a reading which draws on a range of temple and tabernacle imagery. We have shown this to be more pronounced in Origen's interpretation, but that it is not absent from Tertullian's, who sees the Transfiguration as typologically connected to Moses' experience of the Tent of Meeting, and who reads the Transfiguration in the light of the very cultic imagery of Zecharaiah 4. Origen creates a series of "cultic" analogies. Those who mediate on the Transfiguration, for example, experience Jesus' as a High Priest, entering God's presence to pray. He also likens the overshadowing cloud to a tabernacle dwelling for God which the disciples enter.

It is notable that both Tertullian and Origen use their very different understandings of the Transfiguration's visionary and ecstatic motifs as a means for interpreting other parts of the scriptures. Tertullian sees the Transfiguration foreshadowed in the Hebrew Scriptures, and uses the Transfiguration to reconcile the Old and New Testaments, and particularly to see ecstatic utterance in Habakkuk and Zechariah. Origen exploits the temple motifs we have outlined to read the Transfiguration side by side with Luke 2 in the light of Philippians 2.7.

To conclude, we see in Tertullian and Origen two readings of the Transfiguration highly sensitised to the consequences of seeing the incident as a visionary experience and to perceiving Luke's version as especially emphasising this. Although they draw very different conclusions, both their interpretations are rooted in questions appertaining to ecstatic vision, and analogies concerning how humans see God and understand the divine. Both see the Transfiguration as evoking a series of temple, priestly, or tabernacle motifs and exploit both these and the Transfiguration's visionary status to interpret other portions of the scriptures in the light of the Transfiguration. For both Tertullian and Origen, the Transfiguration represents an important hermeneutic nexus that raises questions concerning human apprehension of God, the prophetic inspiration of the Hebrew Scriptures, the coherence of the Old and New Testaments, and the paradox at the heart of the incarnation concerning the kenotic humbling of God's divine word, as well as his exaltation.

Chapter 6: Interpretation of the Transfiguration in the Greek East after Origen

In this chapter,[398] I examine interpretation of the Transfiguration narratives after Origen in the Greek speaking East. I point to a number of unresolved complexities concerning the way in which commentators understand the language used by the New Testament to describe how the disciples "see" the Transfiguration, and how this relates to humankind's ultimate eschatological vision of God. This chapter is not intended, therefore, to be an exhaustive summation of every word written on the Transfiguration in Greek. I have shown in Chapter 3 that others have accomplished that task already. What distinguishes this chapter is its focus on the gaps I identified in that existing scholarship. These revolve around how the New Testament texts were interpreted by Greek speaking commentators as expressing *vision*, and specifically how motifs present in Luke's narrative have contributed to this, and were variously interpreted.

I point to the significance of two Eastern commentators, Anastasius of Sinai, and John Chrysostom, whose comment stands out as very different from the majority of their contemporaries. Anastasius of Sinai sees Peter as gripped by an ecstasy, which prompts a direct, dream-like vision of heaven. In addition, I argue Chrysostom is the only Greek commentator to see the Transfiguration in terms of a version of the imaginative vision that we have already noted in Chapter 5 in Tertullian. Chrysostom's distinct emphasis on the sensible nature of the Transfiguration sets him apart from much Eastern comment and causes him to see in the Transfiguration a prompt to imaginative visualising of God's heavenly Kingdom in a way different

[398] All translations of primary texts in this chapter are my own unless otherwise stated.

from any other commentator I have encountered in this period. Elements found solely in the Lucan narrative play an important part in the way both these theologians construct their distinct understandings of the disciples' vision. To make sense particularly of Chrysostom's thought, and to distinguish it from Anastasius', I use the language and conceptual framework Mary Carruthers[399] has established in her examination of memory in the Medieval period to describe the processes Chrysostom sees at work when the faithful meditate on the Transfiguration.

6.1 Transfiguration as Vision in the Greek Fathers

I aim to explore in the first section of this chapter one specific aspect which few modern commentators have focused on, namely exactly how Greek-writing commentators understood the vision which the disciples underwent on the Mountain of Transfiguration. This is in order to explore later in this chapter the relationship between how the disciples were understood to *see* the Transfiguration and the way in which this affects interpretation of certain elements of the Lucan narrative such as the disciples' sleepiness, their entry into the cloud, and Peter's not knowing what he said.

Ways of understanding the disciples' vision of the Transfiguration

McGuckin states that, amongst Greek writers, Basil, Cyril, Andrew of Crete, Anastasius of Antioch, and John of Damascus all propose an interpretation which sees the Transfiguration as a foretaste of the Parousia.[400] However, it strikes me that connections made between the Transfiguration and Christ's return are more complex

[399] Mary J. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[400] McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, pp. 120-122.

than McGuckin asserts. At the heart of this complexity lies the question of how the Transfiguration is understood as *vision*, and therefore, how elements, which one might understand to be connected with the disciples' vision, are interpreted. The interpretation of these elements, in turn, influences how the eschatological gap between seeing now and seeing in the Age to Come is understood to be overcome. None of the Fathers McGuckin lists as equating vision of the Transfiguration with vision of the Parousia is able to say they are unequivocally the same experience for the disciples.

A recurring assumption at the heart of much Greek Patristic comment on the Transfiguration, and outlined at length by Lossky,[401] is that one of the characteristics of Resurrection life will be the reconciliation of the intellective faculties of the mind with the sensible faculties of physical sight. This will involve a beholding of God which will be embodied, but capable of apprehending eternal, immortal realities by virtue of the incorruptibility which will be bestowed on the human subject in the Kingdom of God. The putting on of incorruption not only reconciles the faculties of perception and understanding, but alters them so that the mind is capable of apprehending divine, supernatural realities, in a way which mortal humans are unable to. As the disciples cannot experience that incorruptibility until after the Resurrection of Christ, no matter how similar or close the vision they experience at the Transfiguration is to the eschatological vision of the Kingdom, there will always be ambiguity concerning whether their vision can be wholly identified with that fully integrated, direct vision which will characterise heaven. There will always be a disjuncture between the imperfect vision possible for fallen mortals, and the more

[401] Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God*, Library of Orthodox Theology (London: Faith Press, 1963).

perfect vision possible in the Kingdom of heaven. The precise similarity between vision of the Transfiguration and the eschatological vision of God is perhaps not as simple a connection as McGuckin suggests.

I undertake in this chapter an examination of the several ways which emerge in Greek-speaking commentators of relating the disciples' vision of the Transfiguration to the Parousia. I have divided them into three broad categories. I then show how, in the work of Anastasius of Sinai and John Chrysostom, we see two very different views, one rooted in the need for ecstatic rapture, the other rooted in a mortal, sensible understanding of the disciples' vision.

6.1.1. Category 1: The Transfiguration as an episode in which the disciples' mortal vision is transformed so as *not* to be overwhelmed.

The last figure mentioned by McGuckin as asserting a close connection between the Transfiguration and the Parousia is Anastasius I of Antioch (d. 599). Indeed, McGuckin claims his interpretation, "becomes established exegetical tradition in the Greek Fathers."[402] Anastasius I of Antioch describes the Transfiguration as an, "enigmatic revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven,"[403] and, "a vision that had been called 'the Kingdom of Heaven' by the one who was revealed as transfigured with the prophets in front of them."[404] However, Anastasius throughout his *Homily on the Transfiguration* speaks repeatedly of the disciples' minds and vision being *transformed* so they could witness it: "The spiritual life is all of one kind. Taking them high up from low down does not mean according to local topography but in

[402] McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, p. 122.
[403] *Serm. 1*, 9 (PG 89, 1376).
[404] *Serm. 1*, 5 PG89, 1869).

divine terms. That is to say, he enables them to receive his exalted illuminations."[405] He also speaks of the apostles having their souls "enlightened" and their minds "formed according to his [Jesus'] divinity".[406] He seems to hold the glory of the Transfiguration and the Parousia to be substantially the same. As a consequence, however, Anastasius teaches their vision needed to be transformed so as not to be overwhelmed, and that this vision's most significant character is that it is a perceiving with the renewed and changed mind.[407] Indeed, he describes it as a pointless question to ask how or why the disciples recognised the physical attributes of Moses and Elijah, emphasising instead the transformation of their minds and souls as the thing which enabled them to recognise the prophets.[408]

Maximus the Confessor (580 - 662) and Andrew of Crete (c. 650 – c. 712/740) hold similar positions. Maximus argues the disciples passed from the flesh to the Spirit, which Veniamin interprets as meaning, "they were transported from the plane of the physical and human to that of the spiritual and divine."[409] Maximus sees them as experiencing in a moment the purification which the faithful Christian can take years to attain, and indeed which is not fully consummated until after death. This transformation meant the Spirit altered their sensible faculties, and the "veils of the passions were removed from their intellect."[410] For him, the most important way in which the Transfiguration is "seen" is by the mind, as the radiance witnessed by the disciples overwhelms the eyes. However, even this is in a way which will only be perfected in the Age to Come, and the radiance which the disciples see is a mere

[405] *Serm. 1*, 4 (PG, 1368).
[406] Ibid.
[407] Ibid.
[408] *Serm. 1*, 5 (PG, 1869).
[409] Veniamin, p. 189.
[410] *Amb. Lib.* (PG 91, 1127).

"symbol of his divinity, something exceeding all mind or sense or essence or understanding".[411]

Andrew of Crete also sees the glory revealed in the Transfiguration as overwhelming to human sense but in a positive and transforming way: "Not being able to bear the magnificence of this irreproachable flesh, a magnificence which emanated through the divinity of the Word hypostatically united with the flesh, they fell upon their faces. What a marvel!"[412] Andrew argues with Cyril of Alexandria (376 - 444), that the glory of the Transfiguration is the same as that witnessed at the Parousia. Andrew sees this glory as supernatural, and that the disciples, being mortal, were overcome by its immensity, and in this life were unable to apprehend it with physical vision. However, Andrew goes beyond Cyril, and, as Veniamin has pointed out, interprets the overshadowing cloud and the overwhelming nature of the light as completely *removing* the apostles from the realm of sense perception, leaving them with an entirely noetic vision.[413] For Andrew, the overwhelming of the disciples' sensible sight represents a positive transforming of their perception to behold with the mind. In certain respects, Andrew's view of the Transfiguration emphasises, through this transformation of "vision," what the disciples do not see with their eyes more than what they do see.

For most of the commentators who see in the Transfiguration a transformation of the disciples' vision, the Transfiguration is apprehended by virtue of renewal of the mind, as sensible vision is either overwhelmed or rendered useless. The disciples'

[411] Ibid.
[412] *Orat. 7* (PG 97, 949).
[413] Veniamin, p. 223.

perception is altered so as to behold with the mind and not the physical eyes, and is focused on the glorious light revealed in the vision. This increasingly becomes a majority position from the sixth century onwards among Greek speaking commentators. However, even this intellective vision is still frequently held to be an imperfect version of that which is experienced most perfectly at the Eschaton.

6.1.2. Category 2: Transfiguration glory as eschatological glory which *is* overwhelming to mortal vision

Although the commentators described in Section 6.1.1 above see the disciples' vision as transformed during the Transfiguration, and speak of a change effected in the disciples' noetic "vision", Cyril chooses to emphasise the way in which that overwhelming of the disciples' mortal vision results in an *inability* to see and perceive.

Cyril sees the glory witnessed in the Transfiguration to be identical to that of the Parousia. However, by contrast with Anastasius, Maximus, and Andrew of Crete, he emphasises the disciples' mortal vision being *overcome* rather than *transformed*. Cyril directly equates the Kingdom Jesus speaks about in Luke 9.27 with the Parousia when he says, "The Kingdom of which he spoke was that vision of glory in which he will be seen at that time when he will shine out upon all the earth."[414] In fact, he explains Peter's suggestion concerning tents by saying he must have thought the "consummation of the age"[415] was happening, and presumably that Jesus, Moses, and Elijah needed heavenly dwelling places. In his *Commentary on Luke*, Cyril argues the glory of the Transfiguration also to be that which will be experienced at the

[414] *Hom. Div. 9* (PG 77, 1011).
[415] *Hom. Div.* 9 (PG 77, 1014).

Resurrection: "And so we see that the Transfiguration was an example of that future glory, conferred on the disciples, and revealed in a bodily way to fall under the scope of mortal eyes, even though they were unable to bear the greatness of the splendour."[416] For Cyril, the role of mortal, sensible, sight is emphasised. Although it is an example of future glory, it is somehow fitted to mortal sense vision, yet also overwhelming to it.

However, Cyril has a distinct understanding of precisely how the Transfiguration glory relates to that of the Resurrection.[417] He asserts in his *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*[418] that the Transfiguration is a vision of Resurrection glory such as was seen by the disciples *after* the Ascension. He argues the apostles were only capable of seeing Jesus' resurrected glory once they had received the Holy Spirit on the Day of the Resurrection. It is because the disciples have not yet received the Holy Spirit, and their vision has *not* yet been transformed, that they are overwhelmed on the day of the Transfiguration by the glory, in a way that is not the case at the Ascension or in their encounters with the Resurrected Lord.

For Cyril, the vision witnessed at the Transfiguration is a preview of the glory of the ascended and glorified Jesus, and of the glory humanity will experience in the resurrection. Although Cyril sees the glory of the Parousia and that of the Transfiguration as closely linked, he is unable to say the disciples' viewing of that glory operates in the same way at the Transfiguration as it does in the Resurrection. For him the Transfiguration is an experience in which mortal vision is overwhelmed

[416] *Explan. in Luc. 9* (PG 72, 655).
[417] See also, Veniamin, pp. 125-130.
[418] *Com. in Ioh.* 20.19,20; (Pusey 3.1091e-1092c).

rather than transformed, because the Transfiguration took place before the bestowal of the Spirit. For him, an important motif is the way in which the disciples' sight is overwhelmed, and they are *unable* to see.

6.1.3. Category 3: Transfiguration as a divine vision paradoxically seen by mortal faculties by virtue of being a *partial* vision of eschatological glory.

Cyril argued there was something about the Transfiguration which was fitted to mortal sense in a way that allowed it to be apprehended by human sight. A similar argument can be discerned in Basil of Caeserea's (329 – 379) view that there was something *partial* about the revelation witnessed at the Transfiguration. Basil states, "For he who is good is above all human intelligence or power and can be beheld only by the mind. The disciples knew his beauty when he explained the parables to them on their own; but Peter and the Sons of Thunder saw his beauty on the mountain brighter than the splendour of the sun, and they, with their eyes, were found worthy to witness the beginnings of his glorious Parousia."[419] Basil draws here a distinction between God being contemplated in mind only, and the disciples being given the privilege of seeing with their eyes that which in eternity is seen with the mind. He would seem to regard the Transfiguration as apprehended by mortal faculties of sense, something which later at the Eschaton will become principally a viewing of God with the mind. Basil's comments do not exclude the idea that the Transfiguration was perceived, at least in part, by the mind, but he asserts the vision was entirely susceptible to mortal vision with the eyes. Basil's description of the Transfiguration as the "beginnings" or "preliminaries" (τὰ προοίμια) of the Parousia also implies there is something incomplete about the vision which accounts for why it is visible to

[419] *Hom. in Ps. 44*, 5 (PG 72, 400).

mortal sense. It is unclear exactly what Basil means by "beginnings." One possibility is that the Transfiguration is a preliminary in a chronological sense, i.e. a first glimpse in time of something ushered in by Jesus' life and ministry, which will be revealed more fully later. Alternatively, it could be a beginning in the sense of a reduced version, a modified glimpse of something greater. Veniamin argues Basil sees the Transfiguration as a principally intellective vision, which the disciples were given the ability to see with transformed eyes.[420] It seems to me entirely possible that Basil may imagine some sense in which the disciples' vision is transformed. However, his use of τὰ προοίμια also seems to describe something partial or initial in the Transfiguration which for him also contributes to its being able to be witnessed. It possibly makes better sense to say Basil sees in the Transfiguration a notion of anomaly or paradox: that which should principally be seen with the mind is strangely, and by grace, partially seen by mortal faculties of sense as a preliminary or foretaste.

The writer of the *Commentary on Luke* often ascribed to Eusebius seems to hold a similar conception. He argues the Transfiguration represents a partial revelation of something to be revealed fully at the Eschaton. Comparing the two events, he comments, "And then [i.e. at the Parousia] his divinity will not shine like the sun but will rather be a light greater than any light which has been created and can be apprehended either by the senses or the intellect."[421] By contrast with Basil, he sees a distinction between the vision experienced on earth as susceptible to mortal apprehension, be that sensible or intellective, and the vision in heaven as *beyond* mortal human vision of any sort. There seems to be a similar sense of paradox in his thinking concerning the fact that the Transfiguration reveals itself in a form

[420] See, Veniamin, pp. 125-130.
[421] *Comm. in Luc.* 9 (PG 24, 549).

susceptible to mortal vision, which at the Eschaton will be beyond all mortal sense or understanding.

John Chrysostom also holds a similar view as Basil and this Eusebian author. He uses the language of *condescension* to describe the partial character of the revelation witnessed at the Transfiguration. His comment will be explored at greater length in section 6.4.

6.1.4. Transfiguration as vision: conclusion

We see in this initial examination of Greek writing commentators a wide range of opinion and emphases concerning the way in which the Transfiguration should be understood as vision, and how the disciples' experience relates to human vision of the divine on the Last Day. Some see the Transfiguration and the Eschaton as substantially the same phenomenon. However, few regard the disciples' experience of it as the same. Cyril and Andrew of Crete, for example, emphasise the disciples' physical vision as being overwhelmed by the Transfiguration. By contrast with this, Anastasius I of Antioch points to the importance of their vision receiving transformation. Basil, however, sees the Transfiguration's relationship to the Eschaton being that of a mere "preliminary." It would appear the consensus, which McGuckin sees in comment on the how the disciples' vision is to be understood, is not as widespread as he argues, and that many differing emphases can be detected in Greek comment.

In the next sections of this chapter, I point to the presence of further complexity in the comment of two theologians who specifically read Luke's narrative as giving

particular insight into the nature of the disciples' vision, namely Anastasius of Sinai and John Chrysostom.

6.2. Anastasius of Sinai: Transfiguration as ecstatic vision of the heavens.

Anastasius of Sinai's (d. post 700) seventh century homily on the Transfiguration[422] marks a departure from most of the Greek speaking comment we have reviewed in this chapter so far, in that he is the only homilist I have encountered, since Origen and Tertullian, unequivocally to see Peter as experiencing a form of ecstasy. This is described as plucking him away from the mountain top and giving him the altered perception necessary to see into heaven and witness a vision of the End Time. Although Veniamin notes the intense state of rapture Anastasius claims Peter falls into, he fails to appreciate how rare and distinct this interpretation is.[423] I outline in this section Anastasius' interpretation of the Transfiguration narratives, and show how important certain elements of the Lucan narrative are in the argument he offers concerning the disciples' vision. In addition, I also reveal how his reading of the Transfiguration prompts him to see a number of temple and priestly motifs present in the narrative.

His homily begins by seeing the Transfiguration as a model for the transformation of the faithful Christian's vision and understanding. Such renewed faculties place the faithful in the company of the redeemed in heaven, who gaze on Christ perfectly. However, Anastasius then admonishes his hearers to follow the example of Peter and

[422] Edited by, André Guillou, "Le Monastère de la Théotokos au Sinaï: Origènes; Épiclèse; Mosaïque de la Transfiguration; Homélie inédite d'Anastase le Sinaïte sur la Transfiguration (Étude Critique)," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 67, (1955).
[423] See, Veniamin, pp. 212-219.

to remove themselves in ecstasy from the physical vision of the Transfiguration, and be transported beyond this mortal world:

> Like Peter, be taken up in this vision and divine apparition, and be transformed by this beautiful transformation. Be transported out of this world, and away from the earth, leave mortal flesh, abandon creation, and approach the Creator, to whom Peter says in ecstasy, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here.'[424]

Anastasius encourages his hearers, through ecstatic vision, to join Peter who is in heaven. He sees Peter's experience of the Transfiguration as parallel to the celestial vision of God. In a similar way, for Anastasius, the transformation of the faithful Christian results in a vision of God in this life, in which, like Peter, "Each one of us who possesses God in our hearts and is transfigured into his divine image cries out, 'It is good for us to be here.'[425]

Anastasius them embarks on a description of Peter's vision of the Transfiguration. He seems to envisage a Platonic movement from physical sense vision to intellective vision by the mind:

> …Peter trembled inside his soul and rejoiced, completely raptured away from the things of this world. He sensed in himself, like a divine illumination, a wonderful power, he sensed a strange and unaccustomed joy, a divine trembling. He saw, to the degree that he could see, forms and natures superior to those which we are used to seeing, incorporeal ideas; he saw beauty, incorruptibility, and the absence of passion, the sparkling glory of immortality. Obscurely, as if in a dream, he saw the beauty of incorruptibility, and the absence of passion, the scintillating glory of immortality. Obscurely, as if in a dream, he saw the divine twinklings of future regeneration, and also the kingdoms and cities of the beyond…[426]

Anastasius understands Peter's looking at the Transfiguration to have moved from physical sight of the mountain to an ecstatic vision of the future Kingdom of heaven. It bears a resemblance to seeing, in that it is experienced as an interior visualising,

[424] Guillou, p. 243.
[425] Ibid., pp. 243-244.
[426] Ibid., pp. 244-245.

like a dream. However, this "seeing" is also intended by Anastasius to be understood as an apprehending of immaterial realities with the mind. Anastasius then proceeds to recount at some length the glories of this future Kingdom of Heaven which Peter sees, with its endless rejoicing, feasting, and constant beauty.

However, Anastasius then describes Peter actually entering into heaven as part of this ecstatic dream-like vision:

> Having been able to open the Kingdom of Heaven up by virtue of possessing the keys of this Kingdom, Peter entered into this vestibule. His spiritual eyes having been opened and illuminated, he saw (to the degree that he could see) heavenly dwellings and tents, carefree nuptual chambers, and the souls espoused to Christ, the unmarriable bridegroom, he saw summons to the incorruptible banquet, thrones of invisible glory, crowns completed with incorruptibility, immortal lights, fountains bubbling with light and unchanging delights. Having touched them as if with his hands, and having tasted, this chief, St Peter, passed with all his soul towards the beyond, his heart being completely transformed.[427]

Anastasius presents this entry into heaven by Peter as the internal dream-like vision he experiences in ecstasy during the Transfiguration. It is unclear whether Anastasius conceives of this vision being separate from that of the events described in the New Testament, or whether it is simply part of the same vision. Although Anastasius specifically focuses on Peter, in later parts of the homily he understands the other two disciples to experience with Peter his ecstatic vision of heaven.[428] Anastasius describes the Transfiguration in these later sections as prompting a vision of the Eschaton yet to happen. He understands the Mountain to provide a temporary opening up of the heavens, allowing those with transformed vision a glimpse of the future Kingdom of Heaven:

> And just as if someone who glanced down from the heights of heaven would see all earthly things, plains, mountains, hills, seas, rivers, the streams, men,

[427] Ibid., p. 245.
[428] Ibid., pp. 251-252.

> cities, villages, farms, animals and reptiles, in sum, the whole of earthly creation; in the same way, the apostles, who found themselves on the mountain with their spiritual eyes opened saw at a glance, (for as much as they were able to see - at least it was a better seeing than they had experienced before), the Kingdom of Heaven to come.[429]

Anastasius says nothing of how the disciples see the events that took place on the mountain, that is, the arrival of Moses and Elijah. The events described in the gospels either prompt or accompany an ecstatic dream-like revelation in which Peter's mind, freed from physical passions, experiences eternal, incorporeal realities and gazes into heaven on the future glory in which Jesus will come. Although this involves Peter's mind being transformed, there is something about this experience of Peter's that is akin to mortal seeing, and which involves the mind visualising what it experiences and describing what he observes as if they were physical objects, and his entry into heaven as if it involved physical movement.

Anastasius and Luke

Evidence for Peter's being in ecstasy is nearly all drawn by Anastasius from details only to be found in Luke's narrative. He connects Luke's assertion that Peter did not know what he was saying with his being out of his mind and enraptured. He comments:

> He was completely raptured out of himself, departed towards God, and far from himself. Completely consumed by an intoxication, he was enveloped by glory and revested in truth, and, having forgotten the world and everything in it, he addressed this laudable blessing, crying out in a loud voice, 'It is good, Lord, for us to be here,' 'not knowing,' it is added, ' what he was saying.'[430]

Anastasius proceeds to see in Luke's description of the disciples' sleepiness evidence of ecstatic rapture. He understands it as a sort of tiredness that came over their exhausted corporeal body as a result of their minds seeing incorporeal realities:

[429] Ibid.
[430] Ibid., pp. 245-246.

> They were, in effect, seized at the same time by ecstasy and sleep, as the corruptible nature of their body could not contemplate incorruptibility, and their mortal body could not contemplate immortality. Moses and Elijah must have appeared to them in their more exalted bodies. They appeared 'in glory' as it says, and so appeared without fear or trouble on the mountain; whereas, the disciples fell down, seized as if by numbness and ecstasy. Again, Luke says, 'Peter and the disciples were weighed down by sleep.'[431]

Anastasius sees the disciples' tiredness to be a consequence of their mortal faculties being involved in the seeing of immortal realities. However, because Moses and Elijah return with more exalted bodies, the prophets have no trouble in experiencing God's glory, and are capable of standing and seeing the Transfiguration perfectly happily.

It is also intriguing that Anastasius uses very specific language of entry into an *enclosed space* to describe Peter's vision of heaven. He describes it as Peter entering a *vestibule* or *porch*.[432] I have argued in Chapter 1 of this thesis that Luke exploits the language of movement and distance to create a stronger sense of divine space into which the apostles enter. It must be admitted that Luke does not use the language of vestibules or porches. In addition, Anastasius hardly mentions at all the cloud into which the disciples enter. However, I suggest it might be worth wondering whether this stronger sense of entry into an enclosed space, which Anastasius creates, might be influenced by the feeling of movement and special awareness present in the Lucan narrative. It may not be entirely coincidental that Chrysostom, who also finds the Lucan Transfiguration narrative prompts a vision of heaven, speaks of this vision as entry into the enclosed space of a *theatre*, and also a *law court*.

[431] Ibid., pp. 252-253.
[432] Ibid., p. 242.

Anastasius and temple readings

A characteristic of Anastasius' ecstatic interpretation of the Transfiguration as an entry into heaven is the re-emergence of temple and priestly motifs. Anastasius addresses a long apostrophe on the part of Moses to Jesus, in which he compares the Transfiguration with a number of Old Testament revelations and theophanies. Indeed, Moses himself is portrayed as a great seer, for whom the Transfiguration marks the culmination of his visionary experience. Speaking in Moses' voice, Anastasius compares the way the Transfiguration reveals the life of heaven with the Feast of Tabernacles and points to Jesus as himself the new Christian temple:

> For you are yourself the Feast of Tabernacles for all people, renewed by immortality and incorruptibility. You are in truth the temple, the son of David and of Solomon, you who have established and made the temple in the heavenly Jerusalem. You are the spotless expiation made to the Father for the sins of the world. You are the true laver and washing basin, and saviour, which the laver prefigured in the law.[433]

In Anastasius' analogy, Jesus himself is the heavenly temple, giving the faithful Christian access to God. However, he is also the sacrifice for sin, and himself, typologically, makes up elements of the temple prefigured in the Law, such as the laver. The view of Jesus as priest, such as we find in the Epistle to the Hebrews, also informs Anastasius' thinking, for whom access to Jesus, present in heaven, points to him as a priestly figure able to make sacrifice for humanity. Indeed Anastasius echoes the language of Hebrews 12 and Genesis 28 in his description of the Transfiguration:

> For this is a wonderful place, it is nothing less than the House of God and the gateway to heaven. For we need to hasten to it – I say this boldly – like Jesus, who there and in the heavens is our precursor and guide, who prepares us…[434]

[433] Ibid., p. 249.
[434] Ibid., p. 242.

Present in Anastasius' interpretation is a view that the Transfiguration reveals Jesus as a priestly figure and as one who himself constitutes the heavenly temple. The Transfiguration, as an opening of the heavens, echoes for Anastasius, the way in which Jesus makes access to God possible, analogous to entry into the earthly temple, or visionary entry into the heavenly temple.

Anastasius: Conclusions

Anastasius' interpretation seems to be a more exaggerated version of that Origenist impulse we have recognised in a number of Greek commentators which sees the disciples' vision needing to be transformed in order to perceive the Transfiguration, and in which their physical vision is overcome and gives way to a clearer vision provided by the mind in the sphere of immortal realities. However, Anastasius goes far beyond any commentator we have encountered since Origen and Tertullian in insisting Peter enters into an ecstasy which takes him out of his body and beyond physical reality to give him direct vision of heaven. However, for Anastasius, this ecstasy is not of demonic origin, as Origen had argued. In fact, the way in which he describes this ecstasy as involving a sort of seeing which is dream-like seems to place his understanding of the disciples' vision remarkably close to the ways, which we explored in Chapter 2, in which Tertullian explains ecstatic vision as involving the same processes of visualising within the mind as take place during dreaming. Anastasius' interpretation of the Transfiguration also prompts him to see connections with a number of passages from scripture that emphasise entry into God's heavenly presence, such as Genesis 28. In addition, he uses priestly and temple paradigms, echoing the language of Hebrews 12 and Revelation 21 in a way which points to Jesus both as priest and temple.

The question remains, however, whether Anastasius describes here one vision or two. In other words, does he see the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mountain with Jesus as a first vision, which anyone could see, but which prompts in Peter (and the other two disciples) a second, esoteric experience? Or does Anastasius see the whole experience as one vision, in which Anastasius fills in gaps not described by the biblical Transfiguration narratives? It is very difficult to judge. Anastasius' description of Moses and Elijah being present in their "stronger" or "more exalted" bodies[435] would imply they are corporeally present and would be visible to anyone not in a visionary rapture. However, much in Anastasius' description points to the disciples needing their vision and understanding transformed to see the whole event. For, although Anastasius starts by talking only about Peter's ecstasy, it is clear by the end of the homily, that he envisages all three disciples glimpsing into heaven with him. The way in which his additional visions are woven into the text of the New Testament narrative implies Anastasius probably sees the episode as involving one extended vision. This has all the disciples seeing Jesus in glory, with Moses and Elijah, and then glimpsing into heaven and seeing the End Time. In addition, his description of the disciples hearing "noetic sounds"[436] as part of their experience might imply he understood the voice from heaven to be audible only to those in a state of ecstasy with transformed mind. Anastasius sees evidence for his ecstatic understanding in Luke's mention of Peter not knowing what he said, and in the disciples' sleepiness.

[435] Ibid., pp. 252-253.
[436] Ibid., p. 254.

Anastasius' understanding of the Transfiguration stands out as distinct from the majority of Eastern commentators. He interprets it as a glimpse of the opened heavens by describing ecstatic vision on the part of the disciples, and also by alluding to several other biblical texts which speak about access to the heavens and to God's heavenly temple.

6.3. John Chrysostom: Transfiguration as mortal vision.

In the next section of this chapter I wish to explore Chrysostom's (349 – 407) interpretation of the Transfiguration, which shares many similarities, but also considerable differences, with Anastasius' reading. By contrast with Anastasius, he emphasises the Transfiguration as a vision principally seen by mortal eyes, and makes little mention of change or alteration to the disciples' vision. However, he, like Anastasius, sees the Transfiguration as capable of prompting vision of the heavens and of the Eschaton. The difference is that for Chrysostom, rather than being the product of an ecstatic state of altered consciousness, this involves the use of the imaginative faculties by those meditating on the Transfiguration as a way of visualising the reality to which the narrative points.

Chrysostom states in his *Homily on the Transfiguration*, "Although the disclosure was made in a more *corporeal way* (σωματικώτερον), it contained, nonetheless, much to be desired."[437] There is in this comment a strong implication that the corporeal faculties of sense play the principal role in apprehending the Transfiguration. One cannot claim Chrysostom sees no role whatsoever for the mind's noetic faculties in perceiving the Transfiguration, but he emphasises the role played by mortal vision in

[437] *Hom. 56* (PG 58, 550).

the disciples' witnessing of the Transfiguration. He sees this "more corporeal" vision as possible by virtue of insisting, like Basil, that the Transfiguration was only a partial revelation of God's glory. He uses the language of *condescension*[438] (συγκατάβασις) to describe the way in which God reveals only so much of his glory as the disciples' eyes are capable of receiving. In *Ad Theodorum Lapsum*, Chrysostom describes the Transfiguration thus:

> The glory of incorruptible bodies does not give out such light as this corruptible body, nor such as mortal eyes can see. But incorruptible and immortal eyes are what is needed to see that. On the mountain, however, only so much was revealed to those who looked on, as they could see without damage to the eyes. Furthermore, even then they could not bear it and fell on their faces.[439]

We see here the same worry that Tertullian displayed, that the light was dangerous to the disciples' vision. However, by contrast with Tertullian, Chrysostom's concern appears to be with the danger posed to their physical eyes and the peril which over exposure to strong light would bring. He comments in *Homily 21* that, "If he shone like the sun, the disciples would not have fallen down, as they saw the sun every day and did not fall down. But because he shone more than the sun or snow, this is why they could not bear the brightness and fell down."[440] Although Chrysostom sees the light as very bright indeed, and as overwhelming the disciples, he says nothing to imply he sees it as anything other than a light which may be apprehended by mortal humans without any alteration to the faculty of sight.

Chrysostom's understanding of the Transfiguration as only a partial revelation of glory makes him emphasise the *dissimilarity* that exists between the Transfiguration and the direct vision of God available in the Eschaton. Chrysostom comments, "He

[438] See, for example, *Ad Theo Laps,* 1.11 (PG 47, 292).
[439] Ibid.
[440] *Hom. 21* (PG 63, 700).

did not show forth [at the Transfiguration] the full splendour of the age to come. The splendour here was a condescension rather than a demonstration of what the true event will be like…"[441] Moreover, in his *Commentary on Matthew's Gospel*, he writes that the vision of God in heaven will be, "Not as these [i.e. the disciples] saw him on the mountain, but in a much greater brightness. For he will not come like this in time to come. Whereas, to spare the disciples, he revealed then only so much of his brightness as they could bear, in the future, he will come in the very glory of the Father..."[442] In a further homily, he explains he understands the word, "transfigured," to mean, "that he opened out a little of the godhead and showed them the indwelling God."[443] Firmly rooted, therefore, in Chrysostom's understanding is a notion of the Transfiguration as a *partial* revelation of God's divine life, an opening out of only "a *little* of the godhead," so as to be visible to human sight, and an emphasis on the dissimilarity between the Transfiguration and the Eschaton.

Chrysostom on the disciples' sleepiness

This emphasis on the disciples' mortal vision prompts Chrysostom to interpret in a distinct way the sleepiness of the disciples recounted in Luke. Chrysostom links the sleepiness closely with the mortal nature of the vision experienced at the Transfiguration by describing it as a consequence of the blinding physical light, and as a sort of sleepy, stunned state brought about by it:

> He [i.e. Luke] refers to this great torpor which came upon them from the vision as 'sleep.' In the same way that the eyes are darkened by overwhelming light, so it happened to them at that time. It was not, I suppose, night but day, and the greatness of the light pressed down heavily on the weakness of their eyes.[444]

[441] Ibid.
[442] *Hom. 56*, 17.4 (PG 58, 554).
[443] *Hom. 21* (PG 63, 700).
[444] *Hom. 56*, 17.3 (PG 58, 553).

Chrysostom sees the disciples' tiredness not as sleep in the usual sense, but as a sort of exhausted, stunned state, almost a momentary case of sun-stroke, or dazzled disequilibrium brought about by the intense light. Whereas for Anastasius this was because the disciples' corruptible faculties were overcome by incorruptible light, Chrysostom makes no mention of this. There is also a hint that Chrysostom wishes to deny the possibility hinted at solely by Luke[445] that the Transfiguration took place by night. The blinding nature of the light, therefore, is to be found in the fact that it is very strong light indeed, and not because it is a momentary example of brightness in an otherwise dark night, or some sort of uncreated light.

He uses here the word κάρος (translated above as "great torpor"), to describe the disciples' sleep, a term which can refer to, "heavy sleep, torpor, unconsciousness."[446] For Chrysostom, this sleepy, stunned state comes about as an accompaniment to Peter's agonised state of mind, which he sees indicated by Luke's comment that he did not know what he was saying:

> In fact, the other Evangelists, to show this, and to demonstrate that the confusion of his mind with which he spoke these things arose from that terror, said: Mark, "He did not know what to say, for they were afraid;" but Luke added, "not knowing what he said," after his comment, "Let us make three tabernacles." Then to show that he and the rest were gripped by great fear, he said, "They were heavy with sleep, but waking, they saw his glory…[447]

Chrysostom displays here a sensitivity to the consequences of the vision on the state of Peter's mind as described by Luke. By using the language of ἀγωνία he points to Peter as in a state of considerable mental confusion and intense fear as a consequence of his vision. However, this ἀγωνία does not represent any sort of ecstatic altered

[445] Lk 9.37 speaks of the disciples descending the mountain of Transfiguration the next morning, as if they had spent the night there.
[446] s.v. κάρος, A Patristic Greek Lexicon.
[447] *Hom. 56*, 17.3 (PG 58, 552-553).

state of consciousness, such as we find in Origen, Tertullian, or Anastasius. This, in turn, results in the stunned state described by Luke as being weighed down by sleep. Chrysostom sees in this detail of Luke's, therefore, confirmation of his understanding of the Transfiguration as a vision seen principally with mortal eyes. Peter is presented in a state of considerable agitation, but one which involves no ecstasy or altered sense of perception.

"an obscure image of things to come."

I now wish to explore the way in which Chrysostom's view of the nature of the disciples' vision results in a very distinct understanding of the way in which it relates to that eschatological vision of God which the faithful Christian can hope for. I wish to explore precisely what Chrysostom means when he describes the Transfiguration in *Ad Theodorum Lapsum,* as, "an obscure image of things to come,"[448] and exactly what he understands the link to be between vision of the Transfiguration, and that eternal vision of God which will characterise the life of the Age to Come. For Anastasius, the ecstatic vision the disciples had of heaven and the Eschaton is simply a direct vision of the future. Chrysostom, however, proposes a more complex paradigm for the faithful who wish to meditate on the Transfiguration narratives.

In his letter, *Ad Theodorum Lapsum*, Chrysostom compares the Transfiguration with vision of heaven, and argues that vision to be like looking into a theatre:

> On the mountain [of Transfiguration], however, only so much was revealed to those who looked on, as they could see without damage to the eyes. Furthermore, even then they could not bear it and fell on their faces. Tell me then, if someone brought you into a splendid place in which everyone sat adorned with golden clothes, and in the middle of the crowd showed you someone whose clothes and the crown on his head were made solely from

[448] *Ad Theo. Laps.,* 1.11 (PG 47, 292).

> precious stones, and then he promised you that you would be enrolled in the number of that people – would you not do all you could to attain such a promise? Open now the eyes of your mind and look into that theatre [Ἀναπέτασον οὖν καὶ νῦν τῷ νῷ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ βλέψον εἰς ἐκεῖνο τὸ θέατρον], not that frequented by normal people, but by those who are more worthy in gold, in precious gems, bright sun-rays, and all manner of visible splendour; and not just humans, but those who are far more worthy than they, angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers.[449]

This looking into a theatre which Chrysostom urges is not the vision actually seen by the disciples, but is rather the eschatological reality which he understands the Transfiguration to signify. A similar comment is made by Chrysostom in the homily on the Transfiguration to be found in his *Commentary on Matthew*. There, he likens the future vision of the Eschaton of which the Transfiguration is a foretaste to a court room, in which the curtains before the judge are pulled back:

> "So it is with the judges; when they give judgments in public, their assistants drawing back the curtains show them to everyone, so, in a similar way, all people shall see him sitting, and all the human race shall stand around…"[450]

Here, the Eschaton is said by Chrysostom to be analogous with the visible revealing of a judge sitting in court. In other words, this comparison with the judge does not give a direct vision of the Last Judgment, but it affords the viewer a vision which is similar, and somehow comparable with it. Both the unveiled judge in real life, and the transfigured Jesus are mortal visions which may be compared with the Eschaton. Neither is identical with it, but both share similarities, in that they reveal visibly a judging figure who was previously unseen.

It is important to note the nature of the link Chrysostom makes between the Transfiguration and the vision of the "theatre" of heaven which he urges his audience to imagine. He tells his reader to open the "eyes of the mind" (Ἀναπέτασον οὖν καὶ

[449] *Ad Theo. Laps.*, 1.11 (PG 47, 292).
[450] Hom. 56.4 (PG 58, 552, 555).

νῦν τῷ νῷ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς) in order to look into this theatre. This vision of heaven as a theatre is an image conjured up by the imagination which the Transfiguration prompts. Chrysostom envisages, therefore, hearing or reading the Transfiguration narrative to cause the imagination to visualise what the Transfiguration *represents*. Hearing the account of Christ appearing with two prophets in glory causes the mind to imagine a greater vision of God's heavenly kingdom, in which there are thousands of angels and saints. Indeed this imaginary process results in an envisaging of Christ, whose "beauty, maturity, brightness, glory, greatness, and magnificence entirely exceed all description and thought."[451]

The connection is unlike that which we have seen in any other commentator reviewed so far in this chapter. In the majority of comment we have encountered, the eschatological vision of God relates to the disciples' vision of the Transfiguration in terms of the mind's noetic, transformed "vision" of God. For Anastasius, this was understood to be made possible by ecstasy. The other commentators we have explored all try to explain how the human subject is enabled to witness essentially the same reality before and after the Eschaton. For Chrysostom, however, meditating upon the Transfiguration also triggers an *imaginary* process which causes the mind to *visualise* the reality the Transfiguration represents, but is *distinct* from. In other words, the Transfiguration acts as an imaginative *spring board* which allows the mind to imagine a vision entirely distinct and different from that seen at the Transfiguration.

Indeed, one might interpret Chrysostom as arguing by contrast with Anastasius that the faithful Christian meditating on the Transfiguration narrative sees *more* than the

[451] *Ad Theo. Laps.* 1.11 (PG 47, 292).

disciples did. What they witnessed on the mountain top was solely apprehended by mortal senses. By contrast, Chrysostom urges the faithful Christian who hears the same narrative with mortal ears to see beyond it by visualising the heaven it pointed to. For Chrysostom, this imaginative vision is capable of bridging the eschatological divide between the present moment and the life of the Age to Come. Indeed, it links the contemporary reader backwards in time to the events on the mountain top, and forwards to the Eschaton.

Carruthers and memory

The dynamic Chrysostom suggests here is remarkably close to many of the mechanisms Mary Carruthers has suggested accompany imaginative memory in the Ancient World and Middle Ages. I now wish to use some of her ideas as a tool for ordering and analysing the material we have just examined. Carruthers covers in her works a period which extends later than the scope of my thesis. However, many of the sources she draws from are those of the ancient Greek and Latin world.

Carruthers argues for two key ideas: first she emphasises the previously underestimated *visual* nature of memory for the ancient and medieval mind and asserts all memorialising, recalling, and thinking to be conceived in the Middle Ages as involving the visualising of image, and the use of the imaginative faculties;[452] secondly, she argues memory to have been conceived of as a remarkably *creative* concept, and to be involved in medieval notions of growth in virtue, speculative

[452] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 18-56, 153-95.

thought, meditative prayer, and artistic creativity, in addition to the simple recalling of facts.[453]

A conclusion she draws, which is important for this chapter, concerns the importance of the imaginative, visualising faculties in human thought. She argues that in the ancient world, the memorising of information, ideas, and experiences was thought to involve turning sense data into *phantasmai* which then lodged the information in the brain.[454] This involved turning abstracted ideas, feelings, or thoughts into images to be stored physically in the organ of the brain. Recalling those ideas, therefore, was about the retrieval of things which had been *visualised*.[455] Indeed, thought was conceived of as the creative constructing, bringing together, or collating of visualised memories.

Carruthers and Chrysostom

One of the most intriguing of Carruthers' assertions is that for the medieval mind, the image impressed on the *phantasma*, which stores an experience in the memory, does not have to look like the reality it is designed to recall. It simply has to be able to trigger the necessary emotional connections, referred to in medieval discourse as *intentio*,[456] to allow the brain to recall the information. Chrysostom, in the passages quoted above, similarly points to the Transfiguration as an image which is not identical with the reality it prompts. What it helps the mind to visualise is the eschatological vision of Christ in heavenly glory. However, Chrysostom insists the

[453] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, *pp.* 7-60, 116-170; Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 195-233.
[454] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 18-98.
[455] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, pp. 56-98.
[456] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 27ff.

disciples' vision and their future experience of the Eschaton both evoke a fundamentally similar emotional response, or *intentio.* Speaking of Peter, Chrysostom says, "If, seeing an obscure image of the things to come, he ejected everything from his soul straight away, because of the delight of what he saw being placed in his soul, then what can be said when the very truth of these things comes to pass; when the royal dwellings are opened and the King himself can be seen no longer in enigma, nor through a mirror, but face to face; not by faith any longer, but by direct seeing?"[457] For Chrysostom, Peter's emotional response to the Transfiguration is lesser, but of a similar sort to that which he will experience at the Eschaton.

Carruthers also insists that the mode of visualising as memory she speaks of was conceived as an important part of how the human subject grows in virtue and maturity. Memory and visualising, for Carruthers, had an *ethical* character. Chrysostom similarly argues the character of the *intentio* experienced by the faithful who contemplate the transfigured Christ and his return in glory acts as a spur to moral action. Speaking of the attractiveness of the vision conjured up by opening the eyes of the mind and looking into the theatre he spoke of, he asks, "Tell me, are we going to deprive ourselves of such good things just to avoid a short period of sufferings? Would it not be worth enduring a thousand deaths each day, even Gehenna itself, in order to see Christ coming in his glory, and be reckoned in the assembly of his saints?"[458] Chrysostom's comments cohere closely with the connections Carruthers argues connect vision, memory, and emotion. Thinking about the Transfiguration can prompt the faithful Christian to imagine a scene of Christ in glory which evokes a similar emotional response as that experienced by Peter. That response has

[457] *Ad Theo. Laps.* 1.11 (PG 47, 292).
[458] *Ad Theo. Laps.* 1.11 (PG 47, 292).

significant ethical role in encouraging good action and growth in virtue. This ethical character in turn reveals the *rhetorical* power of Chrysostom's homiletic use of the Transfiguration narrative – i.e. hermeneutic reflection designed to prompt action and change in its hearers.

Carruthers discusses the role of memory, rhetoric, and visualising in Chrysostom's writing, though concerning a very different episode. She examines a controversy Chrysostom was involved in at Daphne where Julian the Apostate attempted to resurrect the cult of Apollo and remove the relics of a martyr called Babylas.[459] Chrysostom recognised the importance of the *sight* of the martyrs' relics as able to prompt a visualising of a greater reality. He comments, "Because the sight of the coffin, penetrating the soul, affects it and prompts it in such a way that it feels as though it sees the one lying there coming close, and joining in prayer."[460] Carruthers concludes, "…here it is important to note that the crucial "power" of the saint lies in the ability of his site/sight to enter the soul, affect it, and so cause one to feel as if one sees the saint himself – both in 'the mind's eye' and 'heartfully.'" I think one could argue Chrysostom conceives of the power of visualising the Transfiguration in a very similar way. Meditating on the New Testament narrative evokes in the imagination both the reality to which the Transfiguration points forward – i.e the eschatological vision of God – but also triggers the appropriate emotional attitude and sentiment which allows the image to be experienced as if the viewer were there him or herself.

This seems to bear all the hall marks of the understanding of vision found in Augustine's *Commentary on Genesis* which Carruthers points to.[461] There Augustine

[459] See, Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 65.
[460] *Bab.*, 65 (SC 362, p. 174).
[461] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, pp. 46-54.

outlines three forms of vision: first, the sensible, mortal vision we experience with the physical eyes; second, the direct vision of God accomplished by the mind, which he describes as true *theoria*, the contemplation of true reality which the saints experience in heaven, and which few experience in this life; but between those two, mediating a third way is what he describes as "spiritual" vision, which involves the use of the imaginative faculties to visualise divine realities. This is the form of vision he argues the prophets had when they saw images and forms, and is very close to the understanding which Chrysostom brings to bear on the faithful's meditation on the Transfiguration narratives.

6.4 Anastasius and Chrysostom: Conclusions

A significant question remains. Although Chrysostom rejects the kind of ecstatic interpretation Anastasius offers, are they both actually talking about a very similar experience on the part of their hearers? Although they conceive of the processes of vision which the Transfiguration brings about very differently, do they both actually see as their goal an interior visualising of the Kingdom of Heaven which is remarkably similar? I argue they could be. They are both involved in the rhetorical encouragement of a group of hearers to engage imaginatively with the Transfiguration narratives. Although Anastasius urges his hearers to embrace the same sort of ecstatic vision which Peter had, and describes it in Platonic terms as a "seeing" of immaterial forms and ideals, he is nonetheless convinced that in certain respects this vision of heaven is experienced as a visualising of image akin to that brought about in the mind by mortal sense vision. Both commentators have radically divergent understandings of how Peter and the disciples see the events on the mountain, and of what they see. However, when it comes to reflection on the Transfiguration by the faithful, both see

room for an overcoming of the eschatological divide which separates them from the life of heaven, in a way which involves a visualising in the mind of a reality different from the Transfiguration. Anastasius talks about this as an esoteric conceiving by the mind in ecstasy of incorporeal realities, yet describes it in terms of image, movement, colour, light, and sense in ways which are comparable to what Chrysostom urges his hearers to imagine. It could be that in terms of what the faithful Christian mediating on this narrative actually experiences, Anastasius and Chrysostom describe an engaging with this text which is very similar, even if they use remarkably different language to describe how it comes about.

6.5. Conclusion

Caruthers' work helps tease out a number of the tensions which I have pointed to in the material discussed in this chapter. The basic paradigm many Eastern commentators work with is one which explains the disciples' vision of the Transfiguration in terms of intellective vision and sensible vision. They see the Transfiguration as a direct, unmediated vision of a reality which mortal human beings are incapable of seeing. They have, therefore, to come up with ways of accounting for the way in which the apostles are conceived of witnessing this. The light either overwhelms them, their sight is transformed, or both. As part of this, emphasis on divine light becomes a useful metaphor for speaking of the direct apprehension of God by the mind, and avoids thinking about the Transfiguration in terms of image.

However, Chrysostom and Anastasius see the Transfiguration as pointing beyond itself in a different way. Anastasius insists that both vision of the Transfiguration, and that viewing of heaven which it prompts in the disciples and his sermon's hearers

are incorporeal viewings of things beyond sight with a transformed mind. He nonetheless conceives of that as a visualising, which he describes as dream like. As a result of the rapturous ecstasy which Anastasius sees as necessary for this vision, the physical eyes play little role. However, the mind's apprehending of the glory of heaven is described as an internal imaging of a future event, which supplements the otherwise incomplete descriptions of the Transfiguration we have in the New Testament, which, for him, describe only part of the disciples' vision.

Chrysostom represents a different way of dealing with this conundrum altogether. He understands the disciples' vision to be more mortal and sense based. However, he recognises the Transfiguration texts as rhetorically able to prompt an imaginative visualising of God's heavenly Kingdom, which allows the faithful to bridge the eschatological gap between now and the Kingdom of heaven. It is also this imaginative viewing which, for Chrysostom, allows the human subject to engage *emotionally* with the reality the Transfiguration represents, an experience with *tropological* consequences. This model seems very close to Augustine's notion of "spiritual vision" as a prophetic form of vision mediating a way between intellective and sense vision. This Augustinian sense will be seen to exercise a strong influence over much Latin interpretation, to be examined in the next chapter.

Although they understand the processes of vision at work in the disciples very differently, and describe it using very different terminology, both Anastasius and Chrysostom see the Transfiguration narratives as having a rhetorical power capable of bringing about an internal visualising of heaven which is different and separate from the Transfiguration. They see part of this rhetorical power to stem from elements

within Luke's account which describe the disciples' vision, especially its mention of the disciples being sleepy and of Peter not knowing what he said. A significant characteristic of Chrysostom's understanding of the Transfiguration is the way in which he understands it as apprehended principally by the disciples' sensible faculties. For him, the disciples' tiredness is a sign that their sense faculties are overcome with bright light. As a result of this, Peter's not knowing is conceived as a state of considerable confusion, but not ecstatic. Anastasius also sees visionary significance in exactly the same details, but interprets their significance very differently. Peter's not knowing what he says is evidence of rapture, for Anastasius, and the disciples' sleepiness a sign that their mortal vision was overcome by a vision of immortal realities. It is significant that both these commentators see these distinctly Lucan elements as proof for their argument. Although they often interpret these elements in a very divergent way, they nonetheless both see them as able to tell us much about the way in which the disciples "saw" the events on Mount Tabor.

I hope to have shown in this chapter that there is great complexity in the way in which many Greek speaking commentators interpret the language used by the New Testament to express exactly how the disciples "see" the Transfiguration. Much modern comment attempts to impose a coherence and consensus on this patristic material which, in many respects, does not exist. I have, in addition, pointed to two very distinct interpretations of the Transfiguration which have frequently been overlooked. It is noticeable that both Chrysostom's "sensible" reading, and Anastasius' "ecstatic" understanding draw on the Lucan narrative as evidence for their interpretation of the disciples' vision. I hope to have shown that, once again,

Luke's version plays a significant, and hitherto undervalued role in the reception of the Transfiguration narratives as descriptions of visionary experience.

Chapter 7: Interpretation of the Transfiguration in the Latin West after Tertullian

In this chapter I examine interpretation of the Transfiguration among Latin speaking commentators who write after Tertullian.[462] As revealed in my review of modern scholarship in Chapter 3, others have summarised the broad contours of Latin comment. This chapter does not seek to replicate that work. Rather, I outline here four areas concerning the disciples' experience as vision where Latin interpretation of the Transfiguration displays a distinctiveness which distances it from the Greek interpretation we have examined in the last chapter. These four areas are: first, the way in which Latin commentators tend to regard the disciples' experience of the Transfiguration as involving principally mortal vision; secondly, Western interpretation of Luke's mention of Peter's sleepiness and not knowing what he said; thirdly, interpretation surrounding the overshadowing cloud; and finally, a series of hermeneutic connections made between the Transfiguration narratives and other portions of scripture, especially Isa 7, Rev 21 and Heb 12.

I show Latin interpretation of the disciples' vision often displays an attentiveness to elements only found in Luke's narrative, such as Peter's not knowing what he said, and the disciples' sleepiness. I reveal the occasional re-emergence of priestly and tabernacle interpretations. In addition, the more corporate understandings of the Transfiguration's significance which we encounter in Latin comment sometimes prompt reflection on the Transfiguration in the light of passages from Rev 21 and Hebrews 12, emphasising the eschatological vision of God as a *communal* experience.

[462] All translations of primary texts in this chapter are my own unless otherwise stated.

The influence of much of the interpretation examined in this chapter will be of crucial significance in the next chapter, where I explicate how Latin written interpretation is found expressed in the earliest Western depictions of the Transfiguration.

7.1. Latin understandings of Vision

One distinguishing feature of much Latin comment is the way in which it emphasises the disciples' vision as apprehended by mortal vision. We have shown in the previous chapter that Greek commentary tends to emphasise the transformation of sight and the intellect required to perceive the glorious light bestowed on the disciples. By describing the disciples' vision as *mortal*, I mean to say that their ability to perceive the physical world around them experienced no change that led to any form of altered epistemological state. In other words, it did not result in any form of ecstasy or dream, and could be seen by anyone present on the mountain.

A consequence of this different understanding seems to be that Western commentators are frequently less concerned with notions of divine light, and more focused on the figurative quality of the scene described by the evangelists. I outline here ways in which Latin comment interprets the Transfiguration as visible to mortal sight.

The influence of Tertullian's and Origen's view of the disciples' vision

The ecstatic interpretation of the disciples' sight, which Tertullian espoused, exercises little influence over later Latin thought. I have not found any Latin commentator who sees the Transfiguration as an ecstatic dream-like visualising of the sort Tertullian

advocates, and indeed, as will be shown below, Jerome expressly denies it. However, Origen is widely recognised as exercising influence on Western Transfiguration interpretation, particularly through Ambrose's *Commentary on Luke* and through Jerome who translated Origen. Both Louth[463] and Gourdain[464] have shown how aware Ambrose and Jerome were of Origen's Transfiguration exegesis, even if they chose to change or develop it differently. Hart-Hasler,[465] has shown, in turn, Bede's comment to be influenced by that of Ambrose and Jerome. Whilst Hart-Hassler is right to see the influence of Ambrose and Jerome, he possibly underestimates how great an influence Origen was on Ambrose's *Commentary on Luke*.[466] Louth shows topoi such as Origen's allegorical teaching concerning Matthew's and Mark's "six days," for example, or Christ's glorious garments being like the words of scripture are all derived from Origen.[467] However, it is notable how later Latin interpreters also display very different opinions from Origen. The main point of Gourdain's article is to show how Jerome *changes* Origen's comment, and reacts *against* it.[468] Both he and Louth wonder, for example, whether Ambrose's and Jerome's more generous verdict on Peter is in reaction *against* Origen's suggestion of demonic possession.[469] Although Orgenist influence is strong in many areas of Transfiguration interpretation in the West, it seems that as far as understanding the precise nature of the disciples'

[463] Andrew Louth, "St Augustine's Interpretation of the Transfiguration of Christ," *Studia Ephemerides Augustinianum* 68, (2000), pp. 377-379.
[464] Jean-Louis Gourdain, "Jérôme exégète de la Transfiguration," *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 40, (1994)365-373.
[465] J.N. Hart-Hasler, "Bede's Use of Patristic Sources: The Transfiguration," *Papers presented to the Eleventh International Patristic Conference held in Oxford, 1991*, (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), pp. 197-204.
[466] See Joseph T. Lienhard, *Homilies on Luke : Fragments on Luke*, Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. xxxii-xxxv.
[467] Louth, "St Augustine's Interpretation of the Transfiguration of Christ," pp. 375-377.
[468] Gourdain, p. 368ff.
[469] Ibid., p. 368; Louth, "St Augustine's Interpretation of the Transfiguration of Christ," p. 378.

vision is concerned, no Latin writer adopts directly either Origen's understanding of the disciples' vision as ecstatic, or Tertullian's view of it as a dream-like visualising.

Hilary on the disciples' vision

In his *Commentary on Matthew*, we see no hint that Hilary of Poiters (300 – 368) understands the vision experienced by the disciples as anything other than unaltered mortal sight. The first point of hermeneutic importance for Hilary is not comment on the glorious light, but rather the assertion that in the episode we find preserved, "ratio et numerus et exemplum."[470] Driscoll renders his words, "a meaning, a number, and an example."[471] He shows how Hilary finds allegorical significance in the six days mentioned by Matthew, the three taken up the mountain as echoing Noah's three sons, and the presence of Moses and Elijah. Driscoll has outlined the significance of the connection between *ratio* and *exemplum* for Hilary.[472] He argues *ratio* signifies the meaning of an event, which is pointed to by the clue of the *numerus*, whilst *exemplum* has a two-fold significance, referring both to a present day confirmation or proof, but also a future reality. So Hilary sees typological connections reaching back in time to Noah, present confirmation of Christ as mediator of Law and Prophets, and a pointing forward to the Kingdom of God signified by mention of six days. We encounter a different hermeneutic focus here from much of what we have seen in the Eastern interpretation we examined in the last chapter. For Hilary, the Transfiguration relates *typologically* to past and future events, rather than being emphasised as a direct vision of future glory.

[470] *Comm. Matt.*, 17.2 (PL 9, 1013).
[471] Jeremy Driscoll, "The Transfiguration in Hilary of Poitiers' Commentary on Matthew," *Augustinianum* 29, (1984), p 400.
[472] Ibid., pp. 400-404.

Moses' *visibility*, moreover, is important for an analogy Hilary makes concerning the resurrection of the dead. He asserts, "At the same time, Moses stands by visibly [conspicabilis] so that we might be shown that the glory of the resurrection will be conferred on human bodies."[473] Driscoll asserts the importance of this argument for Hilary lies in the physicality with which Moses received his body for the Transfiguration as a sign of physical resurrection at the end of time. For him, Hilary understands this standing by *conspicabilis* to refer not just to Moses' presence being notable or remarkable, but as signifying the way in which his being visible to mortal sight indicated a corporeal presence. Indeed Hilary goes on to describe Moses' and Elijah's presence as an, "outline of the future [*ad futuri enim formam*] and proof of the event [*atque ad facti fidem*]." Driscoll points out that Hilary uses the phrase *forma futuri* five times in his commentary, in a way very similar to the connection outlined above between *exemplum* and a future event. Driscoll sums up *forma futuri*, as "something in the present which develops, which becomes more of itself, as it were, in the future."[474] For Hilary, a crucial element of this connection is that Moses is corporeally presented at the Transfiguration and visible to mortal sight in a way which required no alteration of the disciples' vision, as a sign of the corporeal nature which his body will have in the kingdom of heaven.

Jerome and Leo on the disciples' vision

This distinctive emphasis on the Transfiguration as able to be received by mortal sight is also present in Jerome (347 – 420) and Leo the Great (400 – 461). In what McGuckin argues is anti-Origenist rhetoric,[475] Jerome asserts at length that Jesus'

[473] *Comm. Matt.*, 17.2 (PL 9, 1014).
[474] Driscoll, p. 404.
[475] McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, p. 270, footnote 68.

Transfiguration does *not* imply any assuming of a body which was either "spiritual [*vel spirituale*] or ethereal [*vel aereum*]."[476] Whilst it changes in glory, he argues, it does not cease to be the physical body he has at all other points in his earthly life. However, he uses Mark's mention of an earthly fuller to insist that the glory Jesus appears in is entirely visible to mortal sight, and explains what he means by "spiritual and ethereal": "And what a fuller on the earth can make is corporeal and is subject to touch; it is not spiritual or ethereal, evading the eyes and only being caught sight of in dreams."[477] Jerome seems expressly to exclude here the notion found in Tertullian that the vision of the Transfiguration is comparable in any way to the imaginary mechanisms that produce dream.

Leo also shares Jerome's emphasis on the Transfiguration being visible to mortal sight, though for Leo it forms part of an emphasis on Christ's *humanity* being revealed. He claims the glory witnessed by the disciples is the radiance "pertaining particularly to the nature of the assumed humanity. He wanted this to be seen by the three disciples. For the ineffable and inaccessible vision of the divinity itself, which is saved for eternal life for the pure in heart, would not be possible for them to look upon or see while still clothed around in mortal flesh."[478] For Leo, the Transfiguration is a vision appropriate to mortal sight in its natural state, precisely because the radiance Christ reveals is communicated by his *human* nature.

We also see emerge in Jerome a distinct interpretation concerning the falling down described by Matthew. We have seen Eastern comment frequently interprets this as

[476] *Com. in Ev. Mat.*, 3.17.2 (PL 26, 122).
[477] Ibid.
[478] *Serm. 51,* 2 (PL 54, 310).

evidence of the disciples' *sight* being overwhelmed. This interpretation is not absent from Western comment, as Ambrose speaks of Peter not being able to endure the Lord's glory and consequently falling down.[479] However, in both Jerome and Leo, this falling down is interpreted as clear evidence of fear at *hearing* the voice from the cloud, rather that *seeing* Christ's glory. Jerome gives three possible reasons for the falling down: fear at the mistake Peter had made in suggesting three tents; fear of the cloud; or fear of the voice.[480] Leo puts the disciples' falling down to their being overawed by a three fold revelation of the Trinity in the cloud.[481] We see a tendency in Jerome and Leo to disconnect the motif of the disciples falling down from any notion that their sight is overwhelmed by Christ's glory, and a re-connecting of it with the advent of the cloud, and the hearing of the heavenly voice. The presupposition underlying this would seem to be that their vision of the glorified Christ was neither overcome nor transformed.

Gregory on the disciples' vision

We discover in Gregory the Great's (540 – 604) writings a similar interpretation of the disciples' falling down, but with a slightly different focus. He asks, "Why is it that Peter falls down upon hearing the voice resounding with words of such recommendation?"[482] Gregory's verdict is that Peter was, 'weak and yet he saw what he was not capable of seeing. He saw, but because of this seeing, he fell down and signified that he could not attain that which he was given the grace to see, 'For nobody can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.' Peter had not yet received that fullness of the Spirit and so was not able to preach Jesus because he was weak."

[479] *In Ps. 45*, 2 (PL 14, 1133).
[480] *Comm. in Ev. Matt.* 3.17.6 (PL 26, 123).
[481] *Serm. 51*, 6 (PL 54, 312).
[482] *Prim. Reg. Expos.*, 5.30 (PL 79, 466).

Although many Eastern commentators associate the disciples' need of the Holy Spirit with the transformation of their vision, Gregory associates it here with the courage needed *post eventum* to proclaim the Resurrection. The principal problem is that Peter realises he cannot attain the wonder he sees without the Holy Spirit and lacks the courage to proclaim what he saw. This is, in fact, an interpretation we encounter first in Hilary, who explains Christ's ordering of silence concerning the Transfiguration until he was raised was to reward genuine faith rather than the unthinking following of commands such as were heard from the cloud. Hilary argues, "Christ had sensed the disciples were weak upon hearing the voice, so it would not be until after they were filled with the Holy Spirit that they would be witnesses to spiritual events."[483] Both Hilary and Gregory assert the paradox that Peter felt overcome because he saw with mortal vision a sight which pointed beyond that mortal vision and which will later require the assistance of the Holy Spirit to attain, understand and proclaim. However, what he saw on the mountain of Transfiguration was nonetheless susceptible to mortal vision.

Bede on the disciples' vision

The Venerable Bede (672 – 735), with Ambrose, reads the disciples' sight as overcome by the Transfiguration. He comments, "Since the disciples' eyes were still mortal and corruptible, they could not bear what the whole Church of the saints will be able to look at once it is incorruptible through the resurrection…"[484] Although few Latin commentators see in the vision something the disciples could not bear, Bede seems to understand the vision they experience as involving no alteration of sight, precisely because he contrasts it with the later transformed vision that humans will

[483] *Com. in Mat.*, 17.3 (PL 9, 1015).
[484] *Hom. 24* (CC 122, 171, line 57ff.)

have in the Resurrection. So whilst he differs from other Latin writers in seeing the disciples as overcome, he is of one mind with the majority of Latin comment in seeing the Transfiguration as perceived with mortal eyes.

Ambrose Autpert on the disciples' vision

Ambrose Autpert (730 – 784) also understands the disciples' vision as an experience of mortal sight. In offering four explanations why Jesus' face is compared with the physical light of the sun, he remarks:

> But it appears to me there may be four reasons why this might be the case. Maybe it was because he was still mortal and the very mortality of the flesh did not permit the glory of his divinity to be shown. Perhaps, in order that the eyes of the beholders would be capable of gazing upon it, he tempered the magnitude of his splendor. Maybe he only put forth that form, which he foreknew would be shown on the Day of Judgment to both the elect and to the cursed. Surely, though, and this is more true and saving, it was because he was displaying in his own glory what kind of form his members would possess when, as has been said, they will shine in the future.[485]

All these remarks presuppose the disciples' vision of Christ's glory to be something under the scope of their mortal vision, requiring no transformation. Further comments by Autpert cohere very closely with the understanding of memory put forward by Carruthers, outlined in Chapter 6. Autpert talks about the light which was seen on the mountain passing away, but somehow remaining behind in the heart: "But, brothers, I do not know if they even sensed the night, since they had been granted to see such a great light. For even though it was taken away from their fleshly [*oculis carnis, ut erat corporea,*] eyes, which were corporeal, it remained, however, in their hearts where incorporal [*incorporea*] realities do not suffer the shades of sunset."[486] Autpert envisages a sequence of events in which physical vision prompts the heart to retain the incorporeal reality that vision signified. He draws on the Lucan hint that the

[485] *Hom. In Trans.* 6 (PL 89, 1309).
[486] *Hom. In Trans.* 20 (PL 89, 1318-9).

Transfiguration may have taken place at night,[487] to argue the disciples may have retained an inner light after the physical light of the sun had disappeared. This model seems close to that which we outlined in Chrysostom in the last chapter in which the mind envisages and retains a reality prompted by physical vision.

Conclusions: Latin understandings of the disciples' vision

We see a tendency in later Latin comment to emphasise the Transfiguration as an experience visible to natural mortal sight, and to require no transformation of the vision, mind, or understanding in order to be perceived. One consequence of this in Jerome and Leo is an association of the disciples' falling down with their fear at the hearing of a voice, and not as a sign of their sight being overwhelmed. This could be described as a more attentive reading of the Matthean narrative, which makes no connection between the falling down and any mention of vision, but rather ascribes it to the disciples being afraid. Others, such as Ambrose and Bede conceive of a sense in which the disciples' sight is overwhelmed, but do so presupposing the reason for this to be because it is mortal. Both Gregory and Hilary emphasise the transforming action of the Holy Spirit with Peter's expereince, but associate it *post eventum* with his proclamation of the gospel and not with any alteration of sight, or change in intellective vision.

Having established this general tendency within Latin interpretation, I now wish to explore some of its consequences, and particularly the way in which it relates to the reception of Luke's narrative. In the next section of this chapter, therefore, I look at two motifs within the Lucan narrative which receive a distinct interpretation at the

[487] Cf Luke 9.37. Only Luke speaks of Jesus and the three disciples descending from the mountain early the *next morning*, as if they spent the night on the mountain.

hands of several Latin commentators, namely Peter's not knowing what he said, and the sleepiness of the disciples. I reveal ways in which elements from the Lucan narratives prove, yet again, to be pivotal to how questions appertaining to the visionary nature of the Transfiguration are explored. I then seek to suggest that much of the transformation of the intellect and sight, which the East associates with the first moments of the disciples' vision, is transferred in Latin comment to experience of entry into the overshadowing cloud. For Western commentators, it is the Lucan insistence that the disciples all enter the cloud, and not their vision of light, which often signifies the transformation of their mortal understanding.

7.2. Peter's sleepiness and not knowing what he said

We have noted in previous chapters how Luke's distinct assertion that Peter did not know *what he was saying* (as opposed to Mark's insistence that Peter did not know *what to say*) has frequently been the focus of interpretations pointing to his being in some state of ecstasy. I argue in this next section that later Latin interpretation, especially Ambrose of Milan's, rejects this understanding, and tends to see Peter's not knowing almost exclusively in terms of simple delight, rather than an ecstasy which produces a different epistemological state. I want to conjecture this is, in part, the consequence of the Latin conviction that the Transfiguration was visible to unaided mortal sight.

Peter's not knowing what he said

A complication in examining Ambrose of Milan on Peter's ignorance is establishing how much the ambiguity in the Greek of Luke 9.33, indicating Peter did not know what he was saying, was preserved in Latin translations before the Vulgate. The

Vulgate translates Luke 9.33 as "nesciens quid diceret," "not knowing what he should say," which seems to change the verse's meaning and give the Lucan passage more the sense we encounter in Mark. In comment on Psalm 45, Ambrose echoes the Vulgate translation very closely in his description that Peter, "nesciebat quid diceret."[488] In his commentary on Luke he also seems to quote the gospel with the words, "Et quamuis nesciret quid diceret…"[489] It is certainly possible, therefore, that this wording may have been in Old Latin versions of Luke known to Ambrose. A further problem is that we cannot say with any certainty whether Ambrose's principal focus of reference was the Greek or an early Latin translation. Although most of his commentary may have started out as homiletic material, it could presumably also have been the fruit of reflection on the Greek text. It is certainly the case that we know Origen's *Homilies on Luke* excercised a significant influence over Ambrose's Luke commentary, as a result of Jerome's unsparing criticism that large amounts of Ambrose's work were plagiarised from Origen.[490] We must consider it highly likely, therefore, that Origen's understanding of Peter as possessed by a demon will almost certainly have been known to him. It must be wondered, therefore, whether Ambrose's insistence that Peter was experiencing an intense sense of delight rather than ecstasy is, in fact, a reaction against Origen's ecstatic interpretation.

It is also far from clear precisely what "nesciens" might be intended to mean. "Not knowing" can imply the sense that Peter was not able consciously to judge what he ought *best* to say, in other words that he misjudged his speech, or, to use modern American parlance, that he "mis-spoke". However, it could also imply Peter was

[488] *In Ps. 45,* 2 (PL 14, 1133).
[489] *Expos. in Luc.* 17.18 (PL 15, 1704).
[490] See Lienhard, pp. xxxii-xxxiv.

gripped by some sense of mental confusion which impeded thought, so that his not knowing was an inability to *understand* the words he uttered. As will be shown below, Ambrose's meaning seems to reside somewhere between these two poles. He sees Peter's not knowing both in the sense of having got the answer wrong, but also as an indication of mental disturbance as a result of intense emotion.

Ambrose of Milan on Peter's not knowing

In Ambrose of MIlan's *Commentary on Luke's Gospel*, we see a more extended exploration of the state of Peter's mind described by the third evangelist. Ambrose describes Peter as being somehow beside himself at the sight of the Transfiguration:

> Peter was enraptured. The grace of the resurrection captured him rather than the charms of the present age.
> [**delectatus** est Petrus, et quem saeculi huius illecebrosa non caperent, gratia resurrectionis illexit.][491]

A key question would seem to be precisely what Ambrose means by *delectatus*. Does it refer to delight, in the simple sense of emotional excitement or enjoyment, or does it imply some sort of ecstatic state in which Peter is transported to a very different state of awareness or vision? It strikes me the former is more likely in the light of further remarks made by Ambrose in this commentary. Ambrose's principal criticism of Peter's comment is that it was made as the result of a mistaken wanting to remain on the mountain, and that he, with corruptible body, was unable to remain there or build a tabernacle for Moses, Elijah and Jesus:

> Even though he did not know what to say, he offered this service. It was not a rash petulance, but rather a premature devotion, to multiply the fruit of his piety. His not knowing was the result of his condition; his promise sprang from devotion.[492]

[491] *Expos. in Luc.* 7.17 (PL 15, 1704).
[492] *Expos. in Luc.* 7.18 (PL 15, 1704).

Ambrose sees here in Peter's being "delectatus," rather than any hint at visionary ecstasy, a premature delight in witnessing moments of the life of heaven which he, as a mortal, can only experience in the Age to Come. Although not ecstatic, it is nonetheless such an intense sense of joy that this "condition" confuses Peter's mind and prompts him to speak inappropriately.

This rapturous "condition," however, is linked by Ambrose to the disciples' sleepiness. He sees the Lucan motif of sleepiness as a sort of physical exhaustion brought about by beholding divine splendour with mortal senses:

> "Peter saw this grace; those with him also saw it, even though they were burdened by sleep. This was because the incomprehensible splendour of divinity weighs down the senses of our body."[493]

The exhausted sleepiness would seem to be the consequence both of the extraordinary glory of the vision, and a concomitant of Peter's being *delectatus*. Ambrose points quite consistently, therefore, to both of these things as the consequence of strained, but nonetheless mortal, vision. It would seem, from both the thread of Ambrose's surrounding argument in his *Commentary on Luke,* and his understanding of the disciples' sight as mortal, that we should interpret Peter's being *delectatus* as not knowing what he says in terms of simple delight and joy. If this is an attempt on his part to counter Origen's teaching concerning Peter being possessed by a demon, then Ambrose may be trying to say two things about Peter: first, he seems to be aware of an ambiguity in Luke 9.33's description that Peter did not know what he was saying, which points to his being in a state of such considerable mental disorientation and emotional disturbance; second, he wants, at the same time, to resist the idea that the disciples' vision was anything other than mortal, and counter Origen by insisting that

[493] *Expos. in Luc.* 7.17 (PL 15, 1703-4).

Peter was neither in an ecstatic state, nor possessed by a demon. He wants to push the meaning of Peter's not knowing what he said to indicate the highest degree of mental agitation, without implying any sort of ecstasy, altered vision, or heightened consciousness.

Leo on Peter's not knowing

This interpretation of Peter's not knowing what he said as a form of delight which borders of the ecstatic, but which does not brim over into an altered state of consciousness or vision, is found in Latin writers after Ambrose. Leo echoes Ambrose in describing Peter in such a state of joy, that he experiences a sort of forgetful lack of awareness of earthly realities.

> So moved by these revelations of mysteries and wishing to scorn worldly things, Peter the Apostle's mind was seized by a kind of elated distraction in his desire for eternal things [in aeternorum desiderium quodam mentis rapiebatur excessu]. He was filled with the joy of this whole vision [gaudio totius visionis impletus] so that he wanted to remain with Jesus in this place where his manifested glory made him joyful.[494]

Some have translated Leo's use of *excessus*, as "ecstasy,"[495] However, I have rendered it here as, "elated distraction," because Leo defines it solely in the emotional terms of an intense desire to remain on the mountain which consumes Peter and prompts him to say the wrong thing. There is no mention here of altered vision, or a change in the ability of his mortal sight to apprehend the vision before him. Leo appears, like Ambrose, to point at a strong sense of emotional disturbance, which may *appear* to border on some sort of ecstasy, but which affects neither Peter's vision nor is the result of any kind of dream or demonic possession.

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[494] *Serm. 51* 5 (PL54, 311).

[495] Translated, "seized by some sort of ecstasy" in, Jane Patricia Freeland, and Agnes Josephine Conway, *Sermons* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), p. 221; translated, "ravi en exstase" in Jean Leclercq, and Rene Dolle, *Sermons*, 4 vols., Sources Chretiennes (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1949), p. 18.

Bede on Peter's not knowing

Bede also sees Peter is a state of intense joy. Following Leo's insistence on the Transfiguration as a revelation of Christ's humanity, he comments on Peter's suggestion concerning three tabernacles,

> But if, when blessed Peter had contemplated the glorified humanity of Christ, he was overcome with such great joy that he never wants to be separated from the sight of this vision, then what should we imagine, my dear brothers, is the happiness of those who have been found worthy to see the immensity of his divinity?[496]

Bede does not use here the language of ecstasy or *excessus*, but conceives of Peter's being overcome simply in terms of intense joy. He draws on Leo's interpretation by describing it as a joy which prompts a certain forgetfulness:

> The more fully one tastes the sweetness of heavenly life, the more fully one will turn away from everything that used to please here below. When Peter has seen the majesty of the Lord and his saints, at once he rightly forgets all the earthly things that he knew and he delights in clinging uninterruptedly only to those things which he sees.[497]

Bede, following Leo, sees Peter's state of mind dictated by an intense emotion of joy which, although it causes forgetfulness, and Peter's inappropriate comments, does not effect a change in his vision.

Augustine and Ambrose Autpert on Peter's not knowing

It is important not to underestimate the importance of this distinct Western interpretation of Peter's state of mind. I wish to suggest that it lies, at least in part, behind the Latin interpretative tradition which directs a prolonged address to Peter, criticising him for wanting to dwell too long on the mountain as a result of his being in an elated mood of joy, and therefore, preventing Jesus from descending to suffer the Passion. A notable first example is to be found twice in Augustine's comment on

[496] *Hom. 24*, (CC 122, 175, line 187ff.).
[497] *Hom. 24*, (CC 122, p. 174, line 166ff.).

the Transfiguration, where he upbraids Peter for wanting to keep Christ on the mountain and prevent the revelation of his light being taken into the world.[498] The most elaborate example of this Latin tendency is to be found in Ambrose Autpert's Transfiguration homily. He similarly chides Peter, but starts making up suggestions concerning what Peter should have said as part of an imagined alternative conversation. Autpert, however, also connects Peter's state of mind with the sleepiness mentioned by Luke, and offers this as a mitigating consideration as he addresses him:

> You are allowed indulgence, since you experience sleep when you say these things. The evangelist says the following about you and those with you: 'But Peter and those who were with him were weighed down with sleep.' It was a sleep, evidently, of the mind, rather than of the flesh [somno videlicet, non carnis, sed mentis].[499]

This rather curious notion of sleepiness of the *mind* is described by Autpert as involving a sort of forgetfulness:

> From this it comes that your companions forgot the Lord and were more concerned with Moses and Elijah saying, 'Let us make three tabernacles…[500]

Autpert would seem to be describing a sort of forgetful befuddlement which befell Peter's mind as a result of his delight at the Transfiguration vision. The forgetful befuddlement prompts him to think too much about Elijah and Moses, rather than Jesus.

Peter's not knowing: conclusions

We see in Autpert a bringing together of a number of interpretations which we have encountered in Ambrose, Leo, and Bede, all focused on Peter's state of mind. Although Peter's mind may be gripped by considerable confusion, befuddlement, and

[498] *Hom. 78.* 3 (PL 38, 401).
[499] *Hom. in Trans.* 16 (PL 89, 1316).
[500] Ibid.

overwhelming joy, all seem to reject the idea that Peter experiences an ecstasy in the sense that he is sent mad, out of his mind, possessed by a demon, enters a dream world, or has his sight altered. However, they do detect some degree of significance both in Luke's description of his not knowing what he said, and also his description of the disciples' being sleepy. Peter's joyful state of mind is described as having a distracted inability to focus on earthly things in Ambrose and Leo, and as lapsing into forgetfulness by Bede. Two writers connect this joyful forgetfulness with Luke's mention of sleepiness: Ambrose sees it as an exhaustion of the senses; whilst Autpert interprets it as a sleepiness of the mind. It is important to note here a number of the ways in which the Latin understanding of the Transfiguration as a mortally apprehended vision prompts a focus on a number of Lucan details in order to describe Peter's state of mind, and the way he sees the vision.

7.3. Interpretation of the cloud

The next section of this chapter focuses on ways in which interest in the overshadowing cloud present at the Transfiguration becomes a particular interest of Latin interpretation. Much of this comment draws heavily on elements only present in Luke's narrative or emphasised by him.

Cloud as revelation of the Spirit

Many Latin commentators associate the overshadowing cloud with the Holy Spirit, and describe the cloud as a place of revelation, especially of the Trinity. In the Greek interpretation we examined in the last chapter, the experience of divine light is often seen as the principal revelation of God's presence. In Latin comment, however, a

parallel status is sometimes afforded to the cloud, with an emphasis on the disciples' entry into it.

The association of the cloud with the Holy Spirit is one which begins in Hilary and Ambrose. Hilary comments: "But whilst he was still talking, white clouds overshadowed them and they were enveloped by the Spirit of divine power."[501] The principal character of the revelation made to them is, for Hilary, the voice of the Father pointing to Jesus as Son and Beloved. Ambrose also takes up this theme. He remarks of the cloud, "It is from the Holy Spirit that this cloud comes, which does not obscure the heart, but reveals to it hidden things."[502] Ambrose, however, brings an intriguing interpretation to bear on the cloud, by then describing it as being made up, not of vapours or smoke, but of light itself: "It is a luminous cloud. It does not wet us with downpours of rain, or flooding storms, but like the dew of faith sent out by the voice of God almighty, it speaks to the minds of men." For Ambrose, it is *in the cloud* itself that the mind is transformed so that mysteries otherwise unknowable are revealed to the human mind through faith. It must be noted that this interpretation requires an assumption that all the disciples enter the cloud as Luke asserts, which is the text Ambrose is commenting on.

Cloud as heavenly tabernacle

We also see interpretation emerge amongst Latin writers concerning the cloud as a tabernacle for God's presence. Jerome, for example, points to the cloud being a *single* tabernacle dwelling for God in response to Peter's suggestion of *three* tabernacles. Jerome comments:

[501] *Comm. Matt.* 17.3 (PL 9, 1014).
[502] *Expos. in Luc.* 7.19 (PL 9, 1704).

> Because [Peter's] request was an imprudent one, he did not deserve an answer from the Lord. So the Father replied on behalf of the Son…The cloud appears bright and overshadows them so that those who were looking for a material tabernacle of leaves, or a tent, might instead be enveloped in the shelter of a bright cloud.[503]

Jerome seems to draw a contrast here between the physical shelter offered by the earthly tabernacles Peter could build, and the heavenly shelter afforded by the cloud.

Augustine continues this theme and also holds the cloud to be akin to a *single* tabernacle:

> Peter wanted three tabernacles but the heavenly reply showed him that we have just one, which human thinking desired to divide…As the cloud overshadowed them, and in this manner made one single tabernacle for them, 'a voice came from the cloud saying, 'This is my beloved Son.'[504]

Augustine's emphasis here is on the singleness of the tabernacle represented by the cloud, as a reproof to Peter for suggesting three shelters. For him, out of the multiplicity represented by Moses and Elijah, the gospel represented by the single tabernacle presents us with a unity of revelation in Christ.

Bede sees the cloud as a heavenly tabernacle, and as a criticism of Peter's suggestion:

> Because they wanted to make tents, a covering of bright cloud admonished them that houses are not necessary in the habitation of the life of heaven, where, under the eternal shade of his light, the Lord protects everything. Whilst the people journeyed through the desert, he spread a cloud out for their protection for forty years, in case the sun might scorch them by day or the moon by night.[505]

Bede points to the difference between the earthly dwellings the disciples would have constructed and the heavenly nature of the overshadowing cloud. Earthly dwellings are inappropriate precisely because the cloud embodies entry into a space signifying

[503] *Com. in Ev. Mat.* 3.17.5 (PL 26, 122-123).
[504] *Serm. 78*, 3 (PL 38, 401).
[505] *Hom. 24* (CCSL 122, p. 175).

the "habitation of the life of heaven." Bede sees this experience of "the life of heavenly" as a sort of *protection* parallel to that enjoyed by the People of Israel as they were journeying to the Promised Land.

We find a version of this emphasis in Ambrose Autpert's comment. However, he is the only Latin commentator I have encountered who does *not* see the disciples as included in the cloud. He sees the singleness of the overshadowing cloud as a correction of Peter's suggestion. However, he points to the way in which the bright cloud also *hides* or *removes* Moses and Elijah, so that only the voice of the Father is the focus of attention:

> We also note how this bright cloud takes and cloaks Moses and Elijah, snatches them away and conceals them. And once it takes Moses and Elijah and conceals them, it is not Moses and Elijah who call out from the cloud in which they are concealed, but rather only the Father speaks through the cloud.[506]

Autpert sees Moses and Elijah as removed or taken away from the scene by the cloud so there is no confusion as to whose the voice is. His comment presumes the disciples are not in the cloud:

> Think upon this, blessed Peter, your concern to construct tabernacles is taken away from you. Moses has departed, Elijah has withdrawn, for whom you wanted to make tabernacles…he who remains alone is Lord.[507]

It is crucial to his argument that the disciples are not included in the cloud. Autpert does not say where the prophets are snatched away to, though the fact that Moses and Elijah are not seen again would seem to imply this snatching away involves their return to heaven. This interpretation may be based on the Vulgate's rendering of Luke 9.33. I have pointed in Chapter 1 to the ambiguity present in the Greek of Luke 9.33. However, the Vulgate interprets the verse with a definite sense that Moses and Elijah

[506] *Hom. in Trans.* 18 (PL 89, 1317).
[507] *Hom. in Trans.* 18 (PL 89, 1317).

are beginning to depart when Peter spoke: “et factum est cum discederent ab illo.” Although Autpert takes a view very different from the reading we find in many Latin commentators and sees the disciples as excluded from the cloud, his conviction that only Moses and Elijah were covered by it is dependent on a reading of Luke’s version in the Vulgate in which they are described as on the verge of departing. For Autpert, therefore, the cloud is a place of revelation, but it also reveals Christ as attested by the Father’s voice by hiding Moses and Elijah, and could be the means through which they return to heaven.

We see that much Western patristic interpretation displays interest in the idea that the cloud represents some sort of single tabernacle dwelling for God’s divine presence. The cloud either places the disciples in God’s presence, protects them with it, is a place of divine revelation, or in the case of Autpert, is a means of hiding Moses and Elijah, and possibly returning them to heaven.

Who enters the cloud?

In the light of the Latin emphasis we have noted on the cloud being not just a single tabernacle space, but also a place of revelation and protection, one finds a greater degree of agreement amongst Latin commentators concerning the question of who is found within the cloud, and a more pronounced fidelity to Luke’s insistence on this detail.

No Latin commentator explicitly states the disciples enter into the overshadowing cloud. Gregory comes closest when he remarks upon Peter’s being enveloped with cloud:

> The apostle Peter, not just prophet but also supreme patriarch, also saw the indescribable light pouring down from above as the cloud overshadowed him and the Father's voice resounded, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'[508]

However, an *implicit* understanding of the disciples as being found within the cloud is to be found in a wide range of Latin writers. Hilary seems to assume this reading. He speaks of "them" being overshadowed by the cloud in a passage in which every other third person plural verb clearly refers to Peter, James, and John.[509] Ambrose is one of the few specifically to be writing on Luke's Gospel, and although he doesn't actually comment on the distinctly Lucan wording of the disciples' entry, his discussion of the cloud as a place where the Spirit is encountered in order that "hidden things"[510] might be revealed to the disciples assumes they entered the cloud. Jerome, too, presupposes a Lucan understanding of the scene when, commenting on Matthew's text, he points to those who had wanted to build earthly tabernacles, presumably the disciples, being "enveloped in the shelter of a bright cloud."[511]

A number of writers retain a certain ambiguity concerning whether the disciples are to be found within the cloud. Augustine emphasises the singleness of the cloud-tabernacle as a sign of the Kingdom and the Church.[512] He never clearly states that the disciples enter the cloud and his language retains the ambiguity found in the New Testament narratives. The logic of his argument, however, points in the direction of the disciples being included, if they are seen as fit to enjoy the Kingdom with God's saints and are part of his Church.

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[508] *Prim. Reg. Expos.* 5.30 (PL 97, 466).
[509] *Com. in Mat.* 17.2 (PL 9, 1013-4).
[510] *Expos. in Luc.* 7.19 (PL 15, 1704).
[511] *Com. in Ev. Mat.* 17.3.5 (PL 26, 123).
[512] *Serm 78* 3 (PL 38, 401).

A fifth century Pseudo-Augustinian source, *Tractatum Contra Quinque Haereses,* also seems to presuppose the disciples are found within the cloud, by continuing the Latin tradition of seeing it as the place of revelation and learning. The author uses language appertaining to entry and being inside and outside in the analogy he draws. In a passage commenting on hearing the heavenly voice, he remarks,

> Why are you standing outside murmuring, you heathen? Enter into the school of God here, open the ears of your hearts, hear the voice of the Lord, and learn to know the Son of God.[513]

Again, it is never explicitly stated that the disciples enter into the cloud, but this author clearly sees entry by his readers into the analogous metaphorical cloud of the "school of God" as a desirable thing.

It is also probable that Bede sees the disciples within the cloud from the logic of his argument. The comparison he makes, outlined above, between the Transfiguration cloud and the *protecting* cloud that covered the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings, mentioned in Psalm 105.39, would seem to assume the disciples were included as the heavenly figures of Moses and Elijah wouldn't need protection of any sort.

It would seem a consensus exists across a range of Latin comment on the Transfiguration concerning the entry of the disciples into the overshadowing cloud. Although few make this explicitly clear, a majority seem to presuppose this more Lucan reading. Only Ambrose Autpert espouses a radically different understanding, and appears to countenance the possibility of only Moses and Elijah being overshadowed, as a way of hiding them or snatching them away. This emphasis on

[513] *Tract. Adv. 5 Haer.* 7 (PL 42, 1114).

the disciples' entry into the cloud seems to go hand in hand with a more pronounced interest in Latin thought in the cloud being a single tabernacle and a place of revelation or of transformation of the mind, which requires the disciples to be *inside* it to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. In this respect, the influence of the Lucan narrative on Western comment is more pronounced.

Cloud interpretation: conclusions

Latin commentators frequently display interest in the overshadowing cloud and associate it with some sort of encounter with the divine. In Hilary and Ambrose, the cloud is associated with the Holy Spirit, and with the revelation of "hidden things" to the disciples' transformed minds. Jerome and Augustine emphasise the cloud as a single tabernacle, which is entered by the disciples, whilst Bede associates it with the divine protection afforded by the pillar of cloud during the wilderness wanderings. Autpert sees it as a mechanism which hides Moses and Elijah, and snatches them away to heaven. Luke's narrative exerts a strong influence over all this speculation, as Gregory, Augustine and Bede all assume with Luke that the disciples enter the cloud. Although Autpert reads Luke differently and decides the disciples do not enter the cloud, his reading of the cloud as a vehicle of separation draws strongly on different elements, which are nonetheless solely present in Luke's version of the narrative in the Vulgate. Although we see a range of differing interpretation, most of the commentators we have examined see the cloud in some way as a single tabernacle or place of encounter with the divine. These tabernacle interpretations form a crucial foundation of many of the more ecclesial and corporate descriptions of the vision of God which we see in interpretation, which compares the Transfiguration with Hebrews 12 and Revelation 21, and which will be explored in the next sections of this

chapter. This will then be shown in Chapter 8 to play a particularly important role in early visual depiction of the Transfiguration in the West.

7.4 Latin hermeneutic connections

We noted in Chapter 3, in our survey of modern patrologists' comment on Latin Transfiguration interpretation, that many see within Western commentary a series of hermeneutic connections being made with a number of scriptural passages. The rest of this chapter explores examples of this.

7.4.1. Interpretations connected with Isaiah 7 and the Annunciation

Referring to Luke, Ambrose comments,

> And then Moses and Elijah appeared. That is, Law and Prophecy with the Word, for Law cannot exist without the Word, and one is not a prophet except by prophesying about the Son of God. Indeed, the Sons of Thunder gazed on Moses and Elijah in bodily glory, but we also see Moses every day with the Son of God because we see the Law in the Gospel when we read: 'Love the Lord your God.' We see Elijah with the Word of God when we read: 'Behold a virgin shall conceive in her womb.' Luke adds to this appropriately that, 'they were talking about his departure that he was to accomplish in Jerusalem.'[514]

Ambrose's comment has usually been interpreted as meaning that in the same way that Moses represents the Law, which finds its fulfillment in the Love command of Mt 22.37, so Elijah represents prophecy, signalled by the way in which Isaiah 7.14 finds its fulfillment in the incarnation.[515] Despite the fact that Elijah is not the writer of a body of prophetic text, in the way that is attributed to a prophet like Isaiah, he is held to embody the reconciliation of prophecy in Christ, and the prophecy which exemplifies this *par excellence* is held by Ambrose to be Isaiah 7.14. So in this

[514] *Expos. in Luc.* 7.10 (PL 15, 1702).
[515] See footnote 54, McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, p. 319; also footnote to section 10, Ide M. Ni Riain, *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on the Gospel According to Saint Luke* (Dublin: Halcyon Press, 2001), p. 195.

comparison, Moses and Elijah stand as representative figures in a metaphorical encounter between the faithful Christian and Christ, in which they embody the Law and the Prophets. However, Ambrose also goes on to make a very different connection with the Annunciation. He comments,

> 'And while he was speaking a cloud came and overshadowed them.' It is from the Holy Spirit that this cloud comes, which does not obscure the heart, but reveals to it hidden things. This is also found in another place when the angel says, 'And the power of the Most High shall overshadow you.' Its result is shown in the voice of God which says, 'This is my beloved son; listen to him.'[516]

Here, Ambrose would seem to be making a simple connection with Luke's Annunciation narrative through the shared use of the verb to *overshadow*. He also sees a parallel action by the Holy Spirit, which enlightens the heart of the disciples at the Transfiguration, and in some sense also reveals "secret things" to Mary at the Annunciation. It could be that both are revelations of Jesus' divine sonship: here through the words of the Father's voice; and in Nazareth through Gabriel's word that Mary's son will be, "called Son of the Most High."[517]

This connection to Isaiah, and the birth narratives is then developed by Jerome, but in a more complex way. He, too, uses Isaiah 7 to explain the presence of Moses and Elijah, but using the Lord's instruction to Ahaz:

> When the scribes and Pharisees wanted to tempt him by demanding signs from heaven, he would not give them any. But he frustrated their wicked request with his wise response. But by contrast, in order to increase the faith of his apostles, he gives here a sign from heaven. So Elijah comes down from whence he had ascended, and Moses rises up from Hades. This was anticipated through Isaiah when Ahaz asked for a sign for himself either from the heights or from hell. It is written, 'There appeared to them Moses and Elijah speaking with him.' In another gospel it is reported that they recounted to him all that he would suffer in Jerusalem. The Law and the prophets are

[516] *Expos. in Luc.* 7.19 (PL 15, 1704).
[517] Luke 1.32.

> shown, therefore, whose words so frequently announced the Lord's Passion and Resurrection.[518]

In essence, Jerome makes the same point as Ambrose, namely that the Law and Prophets point to Christ. However, Jerome sees here in the Transfiguration a very particular embodiment of the Lord's word to Ahaz at Isaiah 7.14. Elijah is the sign as high as heaven, corresponding to his having been assumed into heaven, and Moses is the sign as low as Sheol, he having died and come up from Hades. Isaiah 7 is not just an example of the *sort* of fulfillment which Elijah represents, as Ambrose taught, but rather, for Jerome, the Transfiguration is itself a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, in which the Lord gives the sign which Ahaz refused to ask for.

It is unclear whether these three references have some common origin or inspiration. They do, however, bear some comparison with the description of Jesus' birth found in the *Protoevangelium of James*, and it has to be wondered whether this apocryphal text might, in part, be the source of connections made between the Transfiguration and the Lucan birth narratives.

7.4.2. Possible connections through the *Protoevangelium of James* and the *Ascension of Isaiah*

The *Protoevangelium of James* describes Jesus' birth in a way which clearly echoes elements from the New Testament Transfiguration narratives:

> And they stood at the entry to the cave. A bright cloud overshadowed the cave. And the midwife said, 'My soul has been magnified today, for my eyes have seen marvellous things, for salvation has been born to Israel.' And immediately the cloud started to withdraw from the cave and a great light appeared in the cave, so that it was not bearable for the eyes. After a little,

[518] *Com. in Ev. Mat.* 3.17.3 (PL 26, 122).

> that light began to withdraw until a new born child appeared and it came and took the breast of Mary, its mother.[519]

In addition to clear connections with the Transfiguration through the motif of light and overshadowing clouds, we also see here the splicing together of a number of scriptural echoes from the Lucan birth narratives, including the Presentation and the Magnificat. The writer uses the Transfiguration in two ways. First, he employs it to occlude any vision of the miraculous birth. The light appears and prevents those watching from seeing how Jesus is born, precisely to draw a veil over the tricky biological conundrum of Mary's virginity *in partu*, an idea this text has frequently been connected with. Once the light has withdrawn, the baby has already been born, but the mechanics of how have been kept from our sight. Secondly, we hear echoes of the filling of Solomon's temple with God's glory recounted in 2 Chronicles 5. Christ emerges into the world as the embodiment of God's glory as the cave in which this takes place is turned into a temple space, and Joseph and the midwife wait outside, like the priests who could not enter the Temple in 2 Chron 5. We see in this passage a connecting of the Transfiguration with the Lucan Nativity narratives along with the presence of temple ideas as a way of interpreting them both. There does seem to be some overlap with the ideas we encountered in Origen, concerning his comparison of the Presentation and the Transfiguration. In both the *Protoevangelium* and Origen, the glory which Christ embodies is not usually seen during his earthly life, apart from a small number of special revelations, which are described as temple-like scenes, or are compared with episodes set in the temple.

Is it possible that the influence of the *Protoevangelium's* account of the Nativity can be found in these comments of Ambrose's and Jerome's which emerge in the fourth

[519] *Protoevangelium of James* 19.2, Elliott and James, p. 64.

and fifth centuries? Indeed might the *Protoevangelium of James* in part be the source of Origen's connecting of the Transfiguration with Luke's infancy narratives?

The reception of the *Protoevangelium of James* in the Latin West is a complicated question, principally because of the complete lack of any early Latin translations of it. Jerome wrote strongly against the authenticity of the *Protoevangelium* because of its assertion that the gospels' mention of Jesus' "brothers" refers to children Joseph had by a first marriage.[520] This essentially led to its prohibition in the West. We can be sure, therefore, that Jerome knew the *Protoevangelium* because of his documented hostility to it. Origen also knew the *Protoevangelium*, as there is reference to it in his *Commentary on Matthew* in the discussion of the idea of Joseph having a first marriage.[521] Origen also makes clear in *Against Celsus*, that he is aware of the notion that Jesus was born in a cave.[522] Origen is widely held to be a significant influence on Ambrose's *Commentary on Luke,* because of Jerome's accusation that large portions of it were cribbed from Origen,[523] and it is from his *Commentary on Luke* that Ambrose's comments concerning Isa 7 come.

Although there seem here to be a series of allusive similarities, it is very difficult indeed conclusively to prove documentary reliance by Ambrose and Jerome on the *Protoevangelium*. In the first place, the points being made by Ambrose and Jerome are quite distinct and different from each other. One sees Elijah as a representative of prophecy which is exemplified by Isa 7.14. Another is highlighting shared use of the verb "to overshadow", and a third sees the Transfiguration as a fulfillment of Isa 7.14.

[520] Ibid., pp. 48-49.
[521] *Com. Mat.* 10.17 (PG 13, 876-877).
[522] *Contra Cels.* 1.51 (PG 11, 756).
[523] See, Lienhard, pp. xxxii-xxxiv.

Although all three are closely connected with the broad theme of the Nativity, they are not specifically focused on the birth, and do not describe it as a small Transfiguration in itself, as the *Protoevangelium* seems to. It is far from clear we can prove any connection between Ambrose and Jerome's comments and the *Protoevangelium of James* other than to say we know Jerome knew the *Protoevangelium* and that we see here a coming together of three interpretations of the Transfiguration loosely connected by their use of Isaiah 7.14, and Luke's Annunciation. There does seem to be a closer connection between Origen's ideas concerning the Presentation and Finding in the Temple, and the Nativity account we read in the *Protoevangelium of James*, in that both draw on temple and transfiguration motifs. However, that doesn't really seem to be the point Ambrose and Jerome are making.

It must also be wondered if Ambrose and Jerome's comments can be illuminated by reference to the *Ascension of Isaiah*, as this text is itself frequently held to be influenced by the *Protoevangelium of James*. In *Ascension of Isaiah* 11, Isaiah has a vision in which Christ's life, which he will prophecy, is revealed to him. The principal influence of the *Protoevangelium* on this portion of the *Ascension of Isaiah* most clearly resides in the fact that here too, Mary does not undergo a real human child birth. Christ miraculously appears in the house Mary is living in with Joseph as her pregnant womb deflates, and her virginity *in partu* is preserved. Faint echoes of the Transfiguration are present, as a voice instructs them to tell nobody of the vision in a way reminiscent of Mat 17.9. Later on in the same chapter, Jesus' ascension is described in terms of an ascension through seven heavens which results in a glorification at his session at the right hand of the "Great Glory." Although there still

seems to be a latent connecting of elements of the Transfiguration narrative with Christ's birth, there is no connection made with Elijah through Isa 7, nor through the Annunciation.

It seems we can not claim there is here anything like a coherent, systematic, or frequent connecting of the Transfiguration with Isa 7 and Luke's birth narratives, which can be pinned down to one particular source, or in which an identical hermeneutic can be discerned. However, we have outlined throughout this thesis a series of sporadic, unpredictable, but nonetheless persistent connections made in different ways between the Transfiguration and the Nativity accounts. These are found in Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, and the *Protoevangelium of James*, along with the *Ascension of Isaiah*. It is difficult to argue these are entirely coincidental and take place in complete isolation from each other. It is equally difficult, however, to prove where Ambrose's and Jerome's interpretation comes from. It could be original to them, or be influenced by earlier thought stemming from Origen and the *Protoevangelium of James*. However, it would be foolhardy to dismiss their comment as insignificant or inconsequentially random, especially as I show in the next chapter the continuing persistence of their ideas in the Transfiguration mosaic found at Ss. Nereo e Achilleo in Rome, the earliest surviving depiction in that city. In this mosaic dating from the ninth century, an image of the Transfiguration is placed side by side with depictions of the Annunciation and of the Virgin Mary sitting with her divine child. Comparing the Transfiguration with Luke's birth and infancy narratives, though not particularly common, is nonetheless a repeated hermeneutic strategy deployed by a number of commentators in the reception history of the Transfiguration.

7.5. Communal, ecclesial and corporate readings: Revelation 21 & Hebrews 12

I now wish to point to the way in which the disciples' vision is frequently interpreted in Latin thought in much more communal, or ecclesial terms than is seen in Greek reflection. I wish to conjecture that the way in which the Transfiguration is seen as pointing forward to *corporate* eschatological vision of God is a very important factor which contributes to the way in which Latin commentators and artists much more frequently seek to interpret the Transfiguration in terms of the corporate vision of the heavenly Jerusalem described in Rev 21 and Hebrews 12. This is a dynamic which I explore further in the next chapter in artistic depiction of the Transfiguration, especially in the Church of S. Prassede in Rome.

7.5.1. Corporate interpretations: Augustine

We see a distinct ecclesial character to much of the interpretation given by Augustine, the importance and originality of which Louth[524] has pointed to. Augustine is the first, for example, to describe Jesus' shining garments not as representing the words of scripture, following the widespread Origenist interpretation, but rather the Church.[525] He argues that just as garments only hold together and stand up when someone is wearing them, so the Church must have Christ at its centre.[526] However, Augustine also develops a further argument through his *Homily on the Transfiguration* concerning the location of the Kingdom of God. At the beginning he seeks to establish how the mountain top vision could be that seeing of the Son of Man in his Kingdom which Jesus predicts.[527] "This is not an insignificant question, however, for

[524] Andrew Louth, "St Augustine's Interpretation of the Transfiguration of Christ," *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 68, (2000), pp. 379-382.
[525] *Serm. 78*, 2 (PL 38, 490).
[526] Ibid.
[527] Mt 16.28; Mk 9.1; Lk 9.27.

that mountain does not take in the whole of his kingdom."[528] In answer to this conundrum, Augustine concludes, "In numerous places, he calls 'his kingdom' what he describes as 'the kingdom of heaven'. Moreover, the kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of the saints."[529] So, for Augustine, the Transfiguration is a revelation of the Son of Man's Kingdom by being a revelation of "the Kingdom of the saints," a place where God reigns with the "apostles and all the faithful preachers of the Word of God."[530] In a later section of the same homily, Augustine concludes that, because a single tabernacle cloud overshadowed Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, "the Kingdom of God, is revealed to us in the Church."[531] Augustine sees in the Transfiguration both a revelation of the life of the Kingdom of the saints, and also an image of the Church, which is the place where, for his hearers, that Kingdom is to be found. The vision of God that it reveals is one in which God is to be found in the company of his saints, and which speaks of the mystery of the Church as the embodiment of God's Kingdom.

5.7.2. Ecclesial interpretations: Bede and Ambrose Autpert

Further "ecclesial" readings have been pointed to in Bede, and Ambrose Autpert. Bede for example, emphasises the Transfiguration as displaying what the Resurrection will be like, with an Augustinian emphasis on Christ's garments signifying the Church.[532] However, Bede is the first Latin writer explicitly to connect the Transfiguration with the Heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation 21.22, and does this

[528] *Serm. 78*, 1 (PL 38, 490).
[529] Ibid.
[530] Ibid.
[531] *Serm. 78*, 4 (PL 38, 491).
[532] *Hom. 24* (CC 122, line 100ff, p.173).

through using Luke's detail that Peter did not know what he was saying. He explains Peter's not knowing in terms of his having mistaken the need for three tabernacles:

> A house will not be necessary in the glory of the life of heaven, where the light of divine contemplation, pacifying everything, leaves no fearful wind of adversity. This was testified by the Apostle John, who, describing the brightness of that lofty city, says, among other things, 'And I saw no temple in it. For the almighty Lord and the Lamb are its temple.'[533]

In addition to this, Bede also draws an analogy with Hebrews 12.22. Following Leo's interpretation, he argues if merely seeing the glorified humanity of Christ on the mountain makes Peter not want to be separated from the sight of Christ, how much more alluring will be the final vision of God:

> …what kind of discussion is capable of explaining, or what sense can understand what will be the joys of the just when they come to, 'Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, Jerusalem, and to the throng of many thousands of angels,' and when they gaze upon God, the builder and founder of this very city, not through a glass darkly now, but face to face?[534]

For Bede, the Transfiguration is a mortal vision of three people on a mountain, which prefigures the greater vision of God surrounded by all his saints which the faithful Christian will experience in the future, and which he sees described in Rev 21.22 and Hebrews 12.22. Although the vision the disciples experience is one in which only six people are present, when the faithful Christian experiences it in the Kingdom of Heaven, it will be a corporate and communal vision of God which is shared with many angels and saints.

Ambrose Autpert also brings a similar ecclesial reading to bear on the Transfiguration, seeing the narrative pointing to the future corporate life of the Church in heaven:

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[533] *Hom. 24* (CC 122, 175, line 176ff.).
[534] *Hom. 24* (CC 122, 175, line 191ff.).

> …but in this transformation, there is also shown what the future of the Church in its heavenly homeland will be like for the saints. [535]

He later picks up Augustine's interpretation, just as Bede does, seeing Christ's garments signifying the Church, but argues this is the Church of the future, purified and free from sin in heaven: "It is like this with God's elect, for when they reach this and obtain the glory of God, they shall attain the splendour of purity…"[536] He also criticises Peter's instinct for wanting to build three tabernacles as too isolationist, saying, "Say, therefore, I ask you, were you brought up the mountain just to build tabernacles and have the Lord to yourself, with just a few others?" [537] The Transfiguration points for Autpert, away from isolated, individual experience of the Lord's presence, and towards corporate enjoying of the divine vision with the whole company of heaven.

7.5.3 Priestly motifs in Ambrose Autpert

In addition to Revelation 21 and Hebrews 12 being used in conjunction with communal understandings of the Transfiguration, it is notable that Hebrews is also used as a way of bringing priestly understandings of Jesus' role to interpretation of the Transfiguration. In Autpert's *Homily on the Transfiguration*, for example, we see a series of priestly interpretations drawn from the Epistle to the Hebrews woven around the Lucan motifs of the disciples' sleepiness and Jesus' going up the mountain to pray. He uses Luke's mention of sleep to begin a section commenting on the importance of perseverance in prayer, and the number of times Jesus sought out a private place to pray. He then contrasts this spending of nights in prayer with the Lucan sleepiness of the disciples on the mount of Transfiguration. For Autpert, this is

[535] *Hom. in Trans.* 2 (PL 89, 1306).
[536] *Hom. in Trans*. 8 (PL 89, 1310).
[537] *Hom. in Trans*. 16 (PL 89, 1313).

simply an exemplary lesson in which Jesus displays how to pray well, persevering against tiredness. However, this then leads to a prolonged description of Jesus as a priestly figure, in a passage which draws on the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews. As part of his exposition of the Transfiguration, Autpert points to Jesus as a figure who ceaselessly prays on humankind's behalf:

> With frequent lamentation, full of tears, and on bowed knee, he often spent the night as if he were guilty of mortal vices, though it should not surprise us that he might be subject to human frailty, for he did all this and approached death for our sakes. It was our sins he carried, and interceded for us with the Father, even as if he himself were a sinner. In doing this, he offered himself as an example for us to learn from, for he intercedes with the Father on our behalf, and never ceases from prayer. For he himself, now present before the face of God, intercedes continuously for us all. Let us therefore, cast aside laziness and torpor, and let us follow the example of the Lord. As his blessed Passion approached, as we have said, completely innocent as he was, he prayed all the more often and at length and struggled so that instead of bodily sweat, there flowed forth drops of blood.[538]

We hear in this passage echoes of Hebrews 5.7, with its mention of Jesus offering up prayers and supplications in the day of his flesh, and also of Hebrews 12.1, with its encouragement to lay aside what holds us back and run the race set before us. Autpert also, however, employs here a second argument from Hebrews, namely that Jesus' priestly status is revealed by his being innocent of all sin, and therefore able to offer the perfect sacrifice of himself, which is also made continuously effectual by the fact that he is now in his Father's presence. All these connections concerning Jesus' priestly office drawn from Hebrews are connected with the Transfiguration narratives through the solely Lucan details of Jesus going up the mountain to pray, and the disciples falling asleep.

[538] *Hom. in Trans.* 5 (PL 89, 1308).

7.6 Conclusion

Although many common threads of interpretation are shared between West and East, especially in their shared reliance on Origen, I have outlined in this chapter a number of ways in which distinct hermeneutic traditions evolve in Latin comment which display a considerable degree of creativity and originality. I hope the significance of much of this Latin interpretation will be shown in the next chapters, when I come to demonstrate how it influenced the earliest examples of depiction of the Transfiguration in Rome, Ravenna, and France.

I have shown the Latin West departs from the traditions of Greek interpretation which we outlined in the last chapter particularly concerning how the disciples are considered to have seen the Transfiguration. Whereas much Greek comment emphasised the transformation of the eyes of the mind, Latin commentators tend to see the Transfiguration as a vision solely apprehended by the mortal faculty of sight in an unaltered state. Indeed this conception is made clear in the way in which many Latin commentators interpret elements of the Lucan narrative, such as Peter's not knowing what he said as a form of joy, and the disciples' sleepiness as the physical symptom of overwhelmed mortal vision.

Latin comment also displays a much greater interest in the overshadowing cloud, which is frequently associated with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the transformation of the mind and senses, which Eastern comment tends to associate with the seeing of divine light, is frequently associated in Latin comment with the entry into the cloud, which is so emphasised by Luke. This is frequently interpreted

as an entry into a single tabernacle dwelling in which God is found, and in which hidden mysteries are revealed.

A more ecclesial, communal, and temple-influenced interpretative lens is also brought to bear on our texts by Augustine, Bede and Autpert, especially in connection with Rev 21 and Hebrews 12. We have also noted priestly interpretations emerge in connection with Luke's mention of sleep and prayer in Autpert. In the next chapter I draw on these priestly interpretations in connection with the depiction of the Transfiguration in S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna. I also hope to show the influence Rev 21 and Hebrews 12 continued to have on the depiction of the Transfiguration we see in the Basilica of Santa Prassede in Rome.

I have also shown a number of distinguishing hermeneutic traditions in which the Transfiguration is interpreted in the light of other passages from scripture, such as interpretation found in Jerome and Ambrose concerning the birth narratives, and Isaiah 7. These traditions will play an important role in our examination of Transfiguration images in the church of Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo in Rome. I hope this and the following chapter reveal Latin reception of the Transfiguration narratives to be capable of significant creativity, and displays an appreciation of the distinct character of Luke's version.

SECTION 3: VISUAL RECEPTION

Chapter 8: the earliest depiction of the Transfiguration

I explore in this chapter the ways in which the Transfiguration narratives were interpreted in the earliest visual depictions which emerge from the sixth century onwards. Having surveyed large quantities of written commentary, I now aim to show many of these readings can be found expressed in a number of depictions of the Transfiguration. Many of the earliest images of the Transfiguration attempt to express the ambiguities and complexities which I have shown exist in the New Testament narratives concerning vision, they evoke priestly and temple themes, and are frequently influenced by the distinctive characteristics of the Lucan version. This chapter is not intended as a simple history of early depiction of the Transfiguration. Rather, it focuses on the ways in which many of the visionary motifs we have examined come to be expressed by artists, especially in Western depictions, and the influence of the Lucan narrative on them.

This chapter begins with a rationale for the material chosen to be examined. My aim is for it to be as exhaustive an appraisal as possible of early images within our period. This will then be followed by an examination of the first two major monumental mosaics of the Transfiguration created in the sixth century in S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, and in the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. I hope to show how important elements from the Lucan narrative are for both depictions. Many themes which we have found in written comment come to be expressed in image, especially notions of visionary entry into heaven, and a presentation of the transfigured Christ as a priestly figure. This will be followed by an appraisal of images of the

Transfiguration produced in the wake of the Carolingian Renaissance in Rome, and a revealing of the complex hermeneutic used to interpret the Transfiguration in the light of other scriptural texts, especially the Book of Revelation, Luke's birth narratives, and passages from Isaiah. We will finish by examining two further Western depictions of the Transfiguration in the Utrecht Psalter, and in a ninth century ivory held at the Victoria and Albert Museum. I show these, too, evoke connections with Revelation 22, and ideas concerning entry into the heavenly Jerusalem.

This chapter will conclude with reflection on the ways in which visual depiction of the Transfiguration allows new facets of its character as a visionary incident to be expressed, and how important elements within Luke's narrative become for artists. I will suggest that there may be something characterising artistic depiction which is particularly suited to the exploration of an incident which claims to be visionary in nature. This dynamic allows artists to draw out different understandings of what it might mean to see God. The fact that many of these depictions are to be found in churches points to the liturgical context in which they were seen, and to the way in which what they depict was frequently held to be enacted through the liturgy of the Church. In many of these liturgical contexts the priestly and temple interpretations which we have sometimes found in written comment come frequently to the fore and are particularly pronounced.

I hope this final chapter will reappraise the sometimes underrated iconographic tradition of Latin Christianity concerning the Transfiguration in our period. My concern in this chapter is not principally an outlining of various images' history, though that will sometimes be necessary. Rather, it is an attempt to show how

different images may have been read, interpreted and used by those who saw them. In other words, my principal concern is hermeneutic, and an attempt to show how visual depiction was used as a way of interpreting the synoptic Transfiguration narratives, and especially how important Luke's narrative is within these processes.

8.1 Scope and choice of material

This chapter aims to be exhaustive in its examination of the earliest Transfiguration images created in the period up to 900AD. This is made possible by the simple fact that very few images indeed survive from this period. No images earlier than the sixth century have survived in either East or West. The East experienced periods of iconoclasm from the sixth century onwards, during which many images were destroyed, and the creation of new ones hampered. The earliest extant non-mosaic Transfiguration images in the East date from the tenth century onwards. The earliest two images unequivocally held by a majority of historians to be of the Transfiguration are those found in Sinai and Classe, which will be examined in this chapter. We then see a gap of three hundred years or so before evidence of a second proliferation in the West of Transfiguration images in the ninth century, principally those created in Rome under the reign of Pope Paschal I, also to be examined in this chapter. In the East, production of Transfiguration images only recommences from the tenth century onwards, with the decline of iconoclasm.

Two small and highly contested Western images predate the great apses of Sinai and Classe, which, some have argued, might be Transfigurations. One of these images is found on the fourth century *Brescia Casket*, a North Italian ivory box possibly used as a reliquary. The other is on the third century doors of Santa Sabina in Rome.

Although Stuhlfauth and Kollwitz identified these images as Transfigurations in the nineteenth century, modern comment has been much more ambivalent in its attestation. Wiegand,[539] for example, argued the Santa Sabina image might depict the Emmaus encounter. Jeremias,[540] and Spieser[541] held it to be a depiction of the *tradito legis*, whilst Delbrück[542] and Dinkler[543] see it as representing a conflation of imagery from Christ's saying concerning the Pearl of Great Price[544] with *traditio legis* imagery. Catherine Brown Tzacz has brought a complex interpretation to bear on the Brescia casket, arguing its many images to be a typological meditation on the unity of the Old and New Testaments, with the alleged Transfiguration image corresponding to a series of "fiery manifestations of God".[545] Although many commentators identify the image as a Transfiguration,[546] a considerable number have different suggestions concerning this image on the Brescia Christ including that it depicts Christ with Peter and Andrew,[547] or indeed, the calling of Peter and Andrew,[548] a glorification of Christ

[539] J. Wiegand, *Das altchristliche Hauptportal und der Kirche der Hl. Sabina* (Trier: 1900), p. 77.
[540] Gisela Jeremias, *Die Holztür der Basilika S. Sabina in Rom* (Tübingen: E. Wasmut, 1980), pp. 77-80.
[541] Jean-Michel Spieser, "Le programme iconographique des portes de Sainte-Sabine," *Journal des Savants*, (1991), pp. 63-69.
[542] R. Delbrück, "Notes on the Wooden Doors of Santa Sabina," *Art Bulletin* 34, (1952), pp. 139-145.
[543] Dinkler, pp. 32-34.
[544] Matthew 13.45-46.
[545] Catherine Brown Tkacz, *The Key to the Brescia Casket : Typology and the Early Christian Imagination*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press; Institut d'Etudes Augustiennes, 2002), esp. pp. 63-107, pp. 169-185, p. 221.
[546] Carl Maria Kaufmann, *Handbuch der christlichen Archäologie* (Paderborn: F. Schoningh, 1913), p. 555; J. Kollwitz, *Die Lisanothek von Brescia*, pp. 28-29; s.v. Brescia, *DACL;* Gaetano Panazza, *I musei e la Pinacotecca di Brescia* (Bergamo: Instituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1959), p. 57; A.C. Soper, "The Italo-Gallic School of Early Christian Art," *Art Bulletin* 20, (1938), p. 177; H.G. Stuhlfauth, *Die altchristliche Elfenbeinplastik* (Freiburg-Leipzig: 1894), p. 41; Ludwig von Sybel, *Christliche Antike: Einführung in die altchristliche Kunst*, vol. 2 (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1909), p. 247; J.O. Westwood, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Fictive Ivories in the South Kensington Museum* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1876), p. 37.
[547] Franz Kraus, *Geschichte der christlichen Kunst* (Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 1896), p. 503; Frederico Odorici, *Antichita cristiane di Brescia* (Brescia: 1845), p. 67, pp. 76-78.
[548] Carolyn Watson, "The Program of the Brescia Casket," *Gesta* 20, (1981): p. 286, p. 295.

before Matthew and Philip,[549] or an apocryphal appearance of the resurrected Christ.[550]

A third possible image of the Transfiguration dating to 580 is that found in the Syriac Rabbula Gospels. The problem with this image of three men is that it appears on one side of a canon table, with a scratched out image on the other side. Opinion is divided as to whether the image of the three men might be Moses, Elijah and Jesus,[551] whether it depicts the three disciples,[552] or whether it might be part of a split scene, with the scrubbed out patch on the other page showing the other half of the Transfiguration scene.[553]

The highly contested nature of these three equivocal images, which a majority of commentators no longer hold unequivocally to be Transfiguration depictions has prompted me not to include them in this study other than to acknowledge their presence and their contested status. The only two other images from our period I have found mentioned in scholarly literature not dealt with elsewhere in this chapter are a ninth century illumination found in a Codex of Gregory Nazianzen's works, and a very small depiction found in the Chludov Psalter, both of which have been widely recognised as playing an important role in the development of the increasingly

[549] Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. 1 (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1901), p. 460.
[550] Richard Delbrück, *Probleme der Lipsanothek in Brescia* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1952), p. 24, pp. 32-34.
[551] Schiller, vol 1, p. 147.
[552] Dinkler, pp. 34-36; Gabriel Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux xiv, xv, Et xvi siècles: d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1960), p. 219.
[553] Carlo Cecchelli, *The Rabbula Gospels, Facsimile Edition of the Minatures of the Syriac Manuscript Plut. 56 in the Medicaean-Laurentian Library* (Olten: Urs Graf Verlag, 1959), p. 58.

stylised character of the Eastern Transfiguration icon, a verdict which, in the light of this present study, I have nothing more to add to.[554]

8.2 Apse Mosaics: Sinai and Ravenna

In the next two sections, I will explore the interpretation of the Transfiguration which we find in the great monumental apse mosaics found in the monastic church at St Catherine's Monastery on Mt Sinai, and in the Basilica of S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, both of which were built under Justinian's imperial patronage at about the same time in the sixth century. The significance of these two mosaics resides in the fact that they are the earliest unequivocal depictions of the Transfiguration to survive from the First Millenium.

8.2.1 The apse mosaic of St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.

See Figure 1 in appendix.

The mosaic in the sanctuary apse of the monastery church on Mt Sinai dates from between 548 and 565. It is regarded by many commentators as exercising considerable influence over later Eastern depiction of the Transfiguration, and as providing a template for the presentation of the Transfiguration within later Orthodox iconography.[555] The apse itself is located on the location traditionally held to have been the place where Moses encountered the Burning Bush, and for many years until the Medieval period, a shrub grew on the other side of the apse wall which was held to be that very bush. The Transfiguration mosaic is surmounted by two further images of Moses receiving the Law on Sinai and his discovery of the Burning Bush.

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[554] Andreopoulos, pp. 171-173, pp. 194-197; Dinkler, p. 44.
[555] E.g., Andreopoulos, p. 127; Christa Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1960), p. 69ff.

Elsner's [556] interpretation of the mosaic has been of particular importance in integrating the importance of the particularity of its location, the surrounding images of Moses experiences on Sinai, and the liturgical space in which the apse is found. He sees the apse mosaics as a meditation on what it means to see and encounter God, through the processes of what he calls "mystic viewing" in the ancient world . He understands this to refer to a pre-modern way of viewing art and image, in which the distance between viewer and viewed is broken down, in an experience which involves union with the reality depicted in a way that overcomes the duality of the object and subject of viewing. For Elsner, the artist's choosing of the Transfiguration as the subject of this mosaic exemplified the way in which an image can lead to experience of the reality it depicts through this process of "mystic viewing."

Sinai and tabernacle themes

I want, however, to elaborate on Elsner's ideas and to make two further points. The first point is to underline the importance of the way in which this mosaic's reading of the Transfiguration through the lens of the Moses narratives shows its creator to be bringing a series of ideas connected with God's heavenly tabernacle and earthly temple to bear on his interpretation of the Transfiguration.

Elsner argues that the "mystic viewing" he speaks of was also connected in the ancient world with a number of analogies linked to earthly temples. He points to a comparison drawn by Plotinus in his sixth *Ennead* in which the processes of human contemplation are compared with a man entering into a temple, and walking past

[556] Jas Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 99-124.

earthly statues and images in the outer precincts until he comes face to face with the true divinity residing in the sanctuary.[557] Elsner points to ways in which the Sinai image could be evoking not just entry into an earthly sanctuary, but also entry into its celestial counterpart, God's heavenly tabernacle. Elsner[558] reads the whole mosaic as a series of revelations of God's presence, leading from the summit of mystical vision in the Old Testament to a new and ultimate summit in the New Testament in which God is seen face to face. He does this by interpreting the images against the background of Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*. Gregory points to these theophanies as a paradigm for the processes of human reception of revelation, and speaks of Moses' reception of the Tablets of the Law as like entry into a Holy of Holies, or a heavenly tabernacle.[559] Elsner's work shows the Moses imagery used to surround the apse was capable of evoking a range of analogies which pointed to Moses' experience, and that of the disciples, as being akin to entry into the heavenly tabernacle of God.

I wish to argue Elsner underestimates the strength of his own argument. When his conclusions are placed in the context of the wider survey of reception we have undertaken in this thesis, in which I have shown the recurrence of interpretation associated with temple and priestly themes, these temple echoes which Elsner sees take on greater significance. The crucial insight his work brings is the possibility that the Sinai Transfiguration image with its surrounding depictions of Moses is capable of evoking a range of ideas connected with entry into a temple. It is more than

[557] Ibid., 91 (6.9.11.18ff).
[558] Ibid., 88-124.
[559] Ibid., 108-109.

possible that this temple orientated interpretation of the Transfiguration is, in fact, intended to be richly evoked by the surrounding Moses imagery.

The second point I want to make concerning the Sinai image touches the largely overlooked debt the apse mosaic owes to the Lucan narrative. One notable feature is the lack of any other features such as the landscape of the mountain, the approaching cloud or a hand symbolising the Father's voice.[560] The mosaic makes more sense if seen as depicting the series of events as recounted in Luke's gospel. Elsner has recognised the presence of several Lucan motifs, but doesn't realise the full import of their presence.[561] It is possible we see in this mosaic the six figures *in the midst of the cloud* as Luke describes at 9.34. The gold background could represent the divine glory perceived from *within* the overshadowing cloud, making this a depiction of that moment of entry, which Luke describes. This would seem to be confirmed by the fact that the disciples are depicted in and amongst the heavenly three, between Jesus and the two prophets, sharing the same space. This is in contrast to the later Eastern artistic tradition of presenting them on a lower level than the three who appear in glory, and outside the immediate mandorla with the surrounding countryside visible.

A further detail indicating reliance on the Lucan text is the fact that the disciples are looking up, and waking from sleep as described by Luke, rather than falling "on their faces," as described by Matthew.[562] It would seem reasonable, therefore, to point to the Lucan narrative as a significant influence in this image. If this is so, then the Sinai image is possibly less of the direct template for later Orthodox images of the

[560] See, Andreopoulos, pp. 138-139.
[561] Elsner, pp. 111-114.
[562] Elsner interprets Peter to be waking from sleep in the Sinai image, as described by the Lucan narrative, ibid., p. 114.

Transfiguration than some have asserted.[563] It presents a distinct moment from the Lucan narrative, and argues the disciples to have entered into the cloud and to be encircled by divine glory. This is different from the assertion of later Orthodox iconographic tradition which places the apostles falling on their faces as Matthew recounts, and *outside* the mandorla of glory. If the image presents a view from within the cloud, then the viewer is being afforded a perspective on the incident which is identical to that of the disciples who were present. Several elements of Luke's narrative are crucial to the way in which this mosaic's viewers are drawn in to the incident and invited to see the same thing that the disciples see.

Sinai: Conclusions

A number of Elsner's conclusions take on new weight and importance in the light of evidence I have marshalled in previous chapters, especially concerning the Transfiguration as an entry into a temple or tabernacle space. In addition to this, I have conjectured that the Lucan narrative exercises more influence over this image than many commentators have noticed, including Elsner. I contend that we see here in Sinai a depiction of the Transfiguration which focuses on the Lucan moment of entry into the cloud, showing the three disciples actually within the cloud sharing in Jesus' heavenly glory. If these two conclusions are correct, then we see Luke's narrative being paired with an interpretation of the Transfiguration that emphasises the episode as an entry into the divine presence in heaven.

8.2.2 The apse mosaic in S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna

[563] Andreopoulos, p.127; Ihm, p. 69ff.

See Figure 2

Built in 549, around the same time as Justinian's monastery on Sinai, Sant'Apollinare in Classe also contains an apse depiction of the Transfiguration, but which, in certain respects, could hardly be more different from Sinai. Classe presents the scene in a much more allusive symbolic idiom, with Christ represented by a huge cross on a background of blue stars with a small medallion of his face in the middle. In many ways this image has remained an enigma to commentators, who have found it difficult to explain the origins of the imagery it uses, and have been uncertain about its later influence. I wish to make three broad points about it. First, I want to make a renewed argument for the influence of the *Ap. Pet.*, and of the Lucan version of the Transfiguration, on this mosaic. Second, I aim to prove that a number of temple and priestly motifs are present in this image. Thirdly, I aim to show the Classe image has had a significant impact on later Transfiguration images in Rome.

Modern Interpretation of the Classe image

A clear tendency on the part of many who have commented on this image is to interpret it in eschatological terms, as a fulfillment of the words concerning the return of the Son of Man which precede each Transfiguration narrative,[564] and as a depiction of the Transfiguration revealing the Parousia of Christ.[565] However, many have also argued the mosaic, especially the Cross, operates as a multivalent symbol, capable of communicating several theological themes, motifs and events at once in one image, such as the Passion, the exaltation of the Cross, the Ascension, and the Second

[564] Matthew 16.28; Mark 9.1; Luke 9.27.

[565] Andreopoulos, pp. 119-121; Dinkler, pp. 106-117; André Grabar, *Martyrium: recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Collège de France, 1946), pp. 193-195; Krüger, pp. 95-99; Nes and Moi, pp. 74-84; Carl Otto Nordström, *Ravennastudien; ideengeschichtliche und ikonographische Untersuchungen über die Mosaiken von Ravenna* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1953), pp. 129-132; Erik Peterson, *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis; Studien und Untersuchungen* (Rom: Herder, 1959), pp. 15-35.

Coming.[566] Andreopoulos sees the image as so complex, and interprets it in such resolutely eschatological terms, that he denies Classe ought properly to be classified as a Transfiguration scene at all.[567] Others, such as Kurth[568] and Picherle[569] seek explanation for the mosaic's allusive imagery in local legend by suggesting unconvincingly[570] it might be the depiction of a vision which Apollinaris himself may have had whilst strolling in a nearby wood. It must be suspected that the lack of consensus concerning so many of the mosaic's elements has contributed to the notion, voiced by Andreopoulos[571] and Küger,[572] that the Classe apse has had little influence on later depictions of the Transfiguration and that it stands almost as an isolated fossil with, in artistic and theological terms, no progeny at all. Andreopoulos' sense of baffled puzzlement in the face of this image is evident when he states, "Although impossible to ignore because of its beauty, magnitude, and bold visual experimentation, it did not set a pattern for subsequent images, and even if this majestic work had never been made, the history of the Transfiguration iconography would not have been different."[573] I aim to challenge this verdict, and demonstrate that Classe exercised considerable theological influence over later depictions of the Transfiguration.

Possible connections between Classe and the *Apocalypse of Peter*

[566] Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1958), esp., pp. 251-254; Claudia Müller, "Das Apsismosaik von S. Apollinare in Classe: eine Strukturanalyse," *Römische Quartalschrift* 75, (1980): esp. pp. 49-50.
[567] Andreopoulos, p. 118.
[568] Julius Kurth, *Die Mosaiken der christlichen Ära* (Leipzig; Berlin: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1902), pp. 210-211.
[569] Alberto Pincherle, "Intorno a un celebre mosaico ravennate," *Byzantion* 36, (1966), pp. 491-534.
[570] Deichmann shows how unlikely this theory is by pointing to the fact that no record or legend exists of Apollinaris having a vision in any of the extensive hagiography written about him. See, Deichmann, p. 247.
[571] Andreopoulos, p. 117.
[572] Krüger, p. 100.
[573] Andreopoulos, p. 117.

The first point I wish to make is a renewed argument for the influence of the *Ap. Pet.* upon the apse mosaic in Classe. Andreopoulos,[574] Dinkler,[575] Krüger,[576] and Nes[577] countenance the possibility of some degree of influence, though several commentators, such as Bovini, [578] Gaddoni, [579] Simson, [580] Ihm, [581] Uehli, [582] and Nordström[583] do not mention the *Ap. Pet.* at all in their extensive treatments of the Basilica at Classe. Indeed, Pincherle and Deichmann explicitly reject the idea that the *Ap. Pet.* has any influence on the Classe image.[584] Although the *Ap. Pet.* does not resolve all of the conundrums present in this remarkable mosaic, I argue it makes at least slightly more coherent sense when read in connection with that text.

I have shown in Chapter 3 the reception history of the *Ap. Pet.* to be a complex question made very difficult to assess by a paucity of evidence. The hesitancy which Dinkler displays in asserting the *Ap. Pet.* was undoubtedly known in Ravenna in the sixth century is probably well placed. He rightly raises a range of questions concerning uncertainties in making a connection between the *Ap. Pet.* and Classe, such as the possibility of influence from other texts, or lack of clarity concerning

[574] Ibid., p. 119.
[575] Dinkler, p. 90-95.
[576] Krüger, p. 95.
[577] Nes and Moi, p. 78-81.
[578] Giuseppe Bovini, *Ravenna, Art and History* (Ravenna: Longo Publisher, 1991), pp. 94-106.
[579] Vanda Frattini Gaddoni, *The Basilica of St Apollinare in Classe, an Illustrated Art Guide*, trans., Annie Vancini (The Vallombrosian Benedictine monks of the monastery of St Apollinare in Classe).
[580] Otto Georg von Simson, *Sacred Fortress: Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 40-61.
[581] Ihm, pp. 70-74.
[582] Ernst Uehli, *Die Mosaiken von Ravenna: mit 45 Abbildungen*, (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1954), pp. 70-73.
[583] Nordström, pp. 120-132.
[584] Deichmann, p. 252; Pincherle: p. 508, p. 515.

which version of the *Apocalypse* was available to the artists.[585] However, even taking these caveats into account, he rightly concludes some influence by the *Ap. Pet.* is very difficult indeed entirely to discount, and would seem to be likely. The only evidence, however, we have to judge by is a comparison of the text with the mosaic itself. This cannot, in itself prove my argument, but can at least offer a possible hypothesis, which I argue explains much which commentators find perplexing about this mosaic.

The similarities between the Classe image and *Ap. Pet.* are striking. The most frequently remarked upon connection is the similarity between the background scene in Classe of plants, flowers and birds, and the paradisal garden revealed in the *Ap. Pet.* Both the Ethiopic and Akhmim versions make mention of lush vegetation in the vision of heaven revealed to the apostles:

> And he showed us a great garden, open, full of fair trees and blessed fruits and of the odour of perfumes. The fragrance was pleasant and reached us. And of that tree…I saw many fruits.[586] *Ethiopic, Ap. Pet 16.*

> And the Lord showed me a very great region outside this world exceedingly bright with light, and the air of that place illuminated with the rays of the sun, and the earth itself flowering with blossoms that do not fade, and full of spices and plants, fair-flowering and incorruptible, and bearing blessed fruit.[587] *Akhmim Ap. Pet. 15*

Andreopoulos,[588] Dinkler,[589] and Nes[590] all see distinct similarities with the Classe image. This paradisal garden stands out in contrast to the later Eastern tradition in which the mountain is portrayed as a bleak, craggy place bereft of vegetation. This later tradition would seem to infer from Mark's and Matthew's description of the mountain as "high," that the summit was characterised by the arid, rocky vista one

[585] Dinkler, pp. 90-95.
[586] Elliott and James, pp. 610-611.
[587] Ibid.
[588] Andreopoulos, pp. 119-120.
[589] Dinkler, p. 95.
[590] Nes and Moi, pp. 78-81.

finds at higher altitudes. It has to be wondered whether there is any connection between Luke's removal of the adjective "high" from his description of the mountain and the conception of the mountain as verdant here in Classe. If the paradisal garden is evidence of influence by the *Ap. Pet.*, then the Classe image is not just presenting the Transfiguration as a foretaste of the Eschaton, but could be specifically evoking the heavenly journey which Peter experiences in the *Ap. Pet.*, and the vision of Paradise he has there. This understanding of the mountain as not being found at an elevated altitude and as a lush place could also, in part, stem from interpretation of Luke's distinct assertion that the mountain was not "high."

A second point of possible contact between the *Ap. Pet.* and the Classe image concerns the large cross depicted in the centre of the apse. This bejeweled cross has been explained variously. Art historians have compared it with an extraordinarily wide range of other jeweled and glorious crosses depicted in mosaics and apses elsewhere.[591] Some commentators see it simply as a figurative symbolising of Jesus.[592] Others have read it as evoking the triumphal cross Constantine saw in the heavens,[593] or as reference to the Cross as gateway to Paradise.[594] However, others have also seen it as an eschatological reference to the sign of the Son of Man[595] mentioned at Mt 24.30. The *Ap. Pet.* appears to interpret this as the Cross of Christ when it describes Jesus asserting,

> …so I will come upon the clouds of heaven with a great host in my majesty; with my cross going before my face will I come in my majesty; shining seven

[591] See especially, Dinkler, pp. 50-72.
[592] Nordström, p. 122; Uehli, pp.71-72; A. de Waal, "Zur Ikonographie der Transfiguratio in der älteren Kunst," *Romische Quartalschrift* 16, (1902) p. 27.
[593] Nes and Moi, pp. 75-76; Simson, p. 43.
[594] Ihm, p.72.
[595] Andreopoulos, pp. 120-122; Dinkler, pp. 75-87; Krüger, p. 98.

> times brighter than the sun will I come in my majesty with all my saints and angels.[596]

Whilst all three synoptic gospels precede the Transfiguration with prediction of his eschatological return by Jesus,[597] none so explicitly connects it with the image of a cross, as does the *Ap. Pet.* It seems more than possible that this enigmatic cross with a small image of Christ's face at the centre could be an attempt to evoke the *Ap. Pet.'s* description of Jesus' Cross going "before my face" at the Eschaton.

A third connection between the *Ap. Pet.* and the Classe mosaic concerns the evocation of Christ's Ascension. Some commentators have seen hints at various heavenly ascents in Classe's depiction of the Transfiguration. Both Grabar[598] and Nordström[599] do not mention the *Ap. Pet.* at all, yet see Apollinaris' place modeled on the traditional role taken by the Blessed Virgin Mary in Assumption scenes. They suggest the image's origins are to be found in Palestinian depictions of heavenly ascents. Nordström also wonders whether the depiction of Moses and Elijah might be influenced by images showing the two angels who escort Jesus into heaven in Acts 1.[600] It is noteworthy that these two commentators who seem otherwise to be unaware of the *Ap. Pet.*, see the Classe mosaic as evoking precisely the sort of ascension which the *Ap. Pet.* elaborates in detail. It has been noted already in this thesis, that Luke's narrative draws connections between Moses and Elijah, and the two angelic men present at the Ascension through use of the words, "ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο."[601] This might explain why the mosaic's creators felt it necessary to label Moses and Elijah with

[596] Elliott and James, 600.
[597] Mt 16.28; Mk 9.1; Lk 9.27.
[598] Grabar, esp., pp. 193-196.
[599] Nordström, pp. 125-130.
[600] Ibid., p. 127.
[601] Luke 9.30 c.f. Acts 1.10.

their names. This could indicate fear on their part of the possibility of confusion with the two angelic men of Acts 1, and represent an attempt to distinguish the scene from the Ascension. Alternatively, it could represent the exact opposite, and be an attempt to present the two men of the Ascension as the eschatological prophets Moses and Elijah, and to elide the two narratives. If that were the case, the mosaic's creators could be reading Luke's "exodus," the going out or departure which Jesus was to accomplish in Jerusalem, as fulfilled in the Ascension. The image could both present the Transfiguration's discussion of the exodus, and also show it happening, by alluding to the Ascension.

A fourth similarity between the *Ap. Pet.* and the apse mosaic in Classe is the presence of twelve lambs at the bottom of the hill. It could be that this detail echoes the *Ap. Pet.'s* insistence that all the Twelve were present at the Transfiguration/Ascension scene it describes. Little consensus exists surrounding the exact significance of the sheep depicted in the image. Some commentators hold them to represent the Twelve,[602] whilst others see them standing for the whole Christian community, petitioning Apollinaris for intercession.[603] Dinkler compares them with a wide range of other ancient depictions of lambs and finds it difficult to come to any unambiguous conclusion as to the identity of the Classe ones.[604] An obvious complexity associated with seeing these lambs as the Twelve is the presence of lambs representing Peter, James, and John higher up in the apse, though those who see them as the Twelve tend simply view them as being depicted twice. I have been unable to find any commentator refer to the *Ap. Pet.* in an attempt to identify these twelve lambs. Is it

[602] Andreopoulos, p. 123; Nes and Moi, p. 76.
[603] Grabar, p. 194; Nordström, pp. 127-128.
[604] Dinkler, pp. 72-75.

possible their presence is further evidence of an attempt to depict the Transfiguration in the light of Christ's Ascension into heaven akin to the way in which the *Ap. Pet.'s* vision of Paradise is followed by the disciples' witnessing of Christ's Ascension? The three lambs around Christ clearly represent Peter, James and John, but the twelve at the bottom of the apse could represent the Apostles witnessing his Ascension as described in the *Ap. Pet.* Only the *Ap. Pet.* asserts *twelve* apostles to be present at the Ascension, as Judas is not part of the group of Eleven who witness it in Acts, and Matthias had not been selected as an apostle yet.

The question remains how we are to evaluate these four connections which I have drawn between the Classe image and the *Ap. Pet.* In all four cases, the only evidence I can provide is that offered by a simple comparison of the mosaic with the *Ap. Pet.*. By no stretch of the imagination have I decisively proven a documentary link between the two. However, there is some weight in the cumulative argument I have made, showing how not just one, but several elements of this mosaic might be more satisfactorily explained by reference to the *Ap. Pet.* Even so, there remain distinct problems in working out the precise nature of any possible link with the *Ap. Pet.* First, did the artists who designed this apse actually have access to a copy of the text of the *Ap. Pet.*, or was their knowledge of its narrative mediated by some other source or tradition? This is almost impossible to establish. Second, is the apse image intended as a simple presentation of one theological idea or text, which we can definitely identify, or is it intended as an evocation of a whole series of narratives, allusions, and motifs, of which the *Ap. Pet.* is but one? Some of the four connections I have outlined refer to concrete details shared by both *Ap. Pet.* and the mosaic, such as the twelve sheep, the jewelled cross, and the paradisal garden, but some of the

connections are more the assumption of shared background influences, such as the evocation of heavenly ascent scenes.

At the very least, we may conclude that those who made the Classe image did not see the synoptic narratives and the sort of apocalyptic theological outlook embodied by the *Ap. Pet.* as mutually exclusive. Indeed they saw them as complementary to each other, and that this complementarity frequently revolved around the Lucan narrative. It is noteworthy how frequently both the Classe image and the *Ap. Pet.* draw upon details from the Lucan narrative. Reading the Lucan narrative as embodying the kind of apocalyptic interpretation which we find in the *Ap. Pet.* was possibly a far more frequent occurrence in the sixth century than some have realised. This coheres not just with many examples I have pointed to in the survey of patristic comment in previous chapters, but also with the sort of argument Deichmann has offered.[605] He argues the mosaic presents at once, in one image, a range of theological ideas and motifs which the artist understands the Transfiguration to touch upon and represent. In the light of that kind of interpretation, I argue Classe presents Christ's Transfiguration as an entry into heavenly glory, embodying the "exodus" Luke says Jesus was to accomplish in Jerusalem. In other words, the glorious cross evokes not just Christ's return, but the "exodus" which enabled that, his death, resurrection and ascension, through which he leaves his disciples and returns to the Father.

Priestly motifs

Having made a renewed argument for the influence of the sort of thinking expressed in the *Ap. Pet.* on the Classe Transfiguration, I now want to explore a series of priestly

[605] Deichmann, p. 253.

and temple connected themes which it appears to embody. These priestly and temple themes become more pronounced when the role of St Apollinaris within the mosaic is taken into account.

A number of commentators have seen the figure of Apollinaris as the key to interpretation of the whole mosaic. Grabar, for example, places Classe within the context of a number of other Palestinian locations where the presence of martyrs' remains is connected with theophanies of Christ.[606] Nordström develops some of Grabar's ideas and sees the central figure of Apollinaris pointing forward echatologically to the Last Day.[607] Müller similarly sees the composition's presentation of the Transfiguration as a meditation on the last Judgement, with Apollinaris as the pivotal interceding figure.[608] One of the most convincing and sustained arguments focusing on the importance of Apollinaris, however, has been offered by Otto von Simson.[609] He sees Apollinaris, whose relics were found below the altar under the mosaic, as the key figure in the whole composition, a figure who links the Transfiguration with the notion of martyrdom, sacrifice and priesthood. Simson argues it is through his martyrdom, that Apollinaris comes to participate both in Christ's self-sacrifice and also his glory, from which position he is able to offer intercession. Simson also recognises the importance of the mosaic's eucharistic setting. He sees this as the liturgical context in which the miracle of transfiguration is experienced in the life of the faithful, as bread and wine, along with the lives of those participating in worship, are transformed. For Simson, the Mass links closely the idea of transfiguration with notions of sacrifice. He argues the place where this is seen

[606] Grabar, esp., pp. 193-196.
[607] Nordström, pp. 127-132.
[608] Müller: esp., pp. 43-50.
[609] Simson, pp. 45-47, p. 53.

particularly clearly is in the life of the martyrs, and in Apollinaris' life in particular. Apollinaris as a bishop and high priest mirrors the transfigured Christ. They are both priestly figures who attain glory through self-sacrifice, according to von Simson.[610] It should be noted that reflection on the apse in the light of eucharistic and sacrificial ideas continues to be a characteristic of the way in which the apse is decorated in later years. An image of the three archetypal sacrificing figures of Melchizedek, Abel and Abraham mentioned in the Roman Canon, for example, is placed below the image in the seventh century.

Simon's reading of the apse mosaic in Classe is in many respects highly convincing. However, I wish to add to Simson's ideas by suggesting that recognition of the influence of ideas such as we see in the *Ap. Pet.* strengthens his argument. He does not mention the *Ap. Pet.* at all in his treatment of the basilica. However, I have shown in Chapter 4 of this thesis a number of tabernacle and priestly motifs to be present in *Ap. Pet.'s* presentation of the Transfiguration. It strikes me the priestly motifs Simson sees emerge from the liturgical context of the mosaic's setting draw on and develop a conceptual background of priestly and temple themes associated with the Transfiguration, which were already present in the tradition of interpretation. These themes are embodied in the *Ap. Pet.*, and frequently draw on details from Luke's version of the Transfiguration narrative.

Influence of the S. Apollinare in Classe mosaic

I wish to challenge the opinion voiced by Andreopoulos and implicitly present in much comment on the apse mosaic in S. Apollinare in Classe that it stands isolated

[610] Ibid., pp. 45-47.

from the main traditions of Transfiguration interpretation. I hope my discussion of the apse mosaic has shown that many ancient traditions of Transfiguration interpretation can be detected in this image, especially the sort of priestly and temple motifs embodied in the *Ap. Pet.* and in other commentators whom I have surveyed in previous chapters. The image is far from disconnected from the traditions of interpretation which precede it. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I will show it continues to influence depiction of the Transfiguration long after its creation in ways that many art historians have overlooked. It is far from being the case that the Classe apse is an orphaned image with no parents, and no progeny.

8.3 S. Stephania, Naples

No unequivocal images of the Transfiguration survive in the West from the period between the construction of the Basilica in Classe and the renaissance in Carolingian artistic creation at the beginning of the ninth century.[611] A characteristic of this spate of mosaic construction is the frequent presentation of the Transfiguration narratives in the light of other portions of scripture, especially the Book of Revelation. It is possible, however, that artistic interpretation in the light of Revelation 21 may have characterised the first images of the Transfiguration, which emerged earlier in the sixth century. In addition to the great mosaics found in Sinai and Classe we know of two other apse images of the Transfiguration, created in the sixth century in Naples and Constantinople, both now lost, but one of which, S. Stephania in Naples, may have contained imagery from the Book of Revelation.[612]

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[611] Schiller, p. 150, lists only two other known Transfiguration images apart from those discussed in this chapter dating from the ninth century: a largely destroyed depiction in the church of St Johann, Mustair, dating from the early ninth century; and an image which is supposed to have formed part of the mosaic cycle in Old St Peter's, Rome, now lost.

[612] One was in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. Literary evidence from the twelth century writer Nicolaos Mesarites describes what seems to be a Transfiguration image

Between 535 and 555, Bishop John of Naples rebuilt his Cathedral of the Saviour after a fire, and there is inscription evidence[613] that the new cathedral contained an image of the Transfiguration, which has now been either lost or covered. Ihm is convinced it was probably modelled on that found at Sinai.[614] However, it is also likely that the image was somehow married with images from the Book of Revelation. She points out that comments made by a seventeenth century observer, Cesare Carraciolo, indicate the reason the Cathedral of the Saviour was known as St Stephania was because of the images found in it of the 24 elders casting their crowns before the Lord.[615] A neighbouring church of S. Restituta was built onto S. Stephania as part of an extension replacing it as the cathedral in the thirteenth century. We know S. Restituta definitely contained imagery of the 24 Elders and lampstands of Revelation 1 and 4. This has prompted Ihm to wonder whether Carraciolo is, in fact, confusing the two physically connected churches. Ihm's theory, although perfectly plausible, by no means represents conclusive evidence that S. Stephania definitely did not contain such imagery. One might argue it to be equally plausible that the newer church of S. Restituta might have been echoing the internal decoration, already established, of the older S. Stephania. It is unclear, therefore, exactly how these two sets of images related to one another. All we know for sure is that S. Stephania contained a monumental image of the Transfiguration, and that S. Restituta contained imagery from Revelation 1 and 4 of unknown date. It is possible, though not certain,

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in the north dome of the Church, which was built in Justinian's time. All that can be gleaned from this description is that the disicples all had a different pose, that Moses was distinguished by holding the Law, and Elijah by his camel skin mantle, and that John was shown asleep. It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from Mesarites' devotional meditation concerning precisely what the image may have looked like. See, ibid., p. 147.

[613] For original text, with German translation see, August E. K. Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche, zwei Basiliken Konstantins* (Leipzig: 1908), p. 32ff.

[614] Ihm, p. 70.

[615] Ihm, p.177.

that the now lost Transfiguration image in S. Stephania was also surrounded by, or connected to, images from Revelation 4.

We see in these tantalising hints at what the original Transfiguration image in S. Stephania was like, possible evidence of the sort of Transfiguration interpretation focused on comparison with portions of the Book of Revelation, which we noted in Chapter 7 as particularly characteristic of more "corporate" Latin interpretation. It is far from easy to draw any definite conclusions from the fragmentary evidence that exists concerning S. Stephania. However, we can say it is possible there existed a sixth century monumental Transfiguration mosaic in Naples which also drew on imagery from the Book of Revelation.

One of the first comparisons in the West between the Transfiguration and the Book of Revelation, which still survives, is the decoration added to the apse mosaic in Classe some time after 804, by Leo III, after he visited the Basilica.[616] Over the apse image, he added in the archway a medallion depicting the face of Christ surrounded by the four creatures of Revelation 4. This frieze surmounted an image of two walled cities, out of which stream lambs ascending a hill to Christ, which may have already existed. These images have been the focus of much discussion and debate, especially concerning the identity of the lambs, their dating and the relationship they have to the image of Christ and the Four Creatures above them.[617] However, the most important element for the purposes of my argument, here, is the evidence the upper frieze offers concerning association of the Transfiguration with the description of the heavenly

[616] For further details of Leo's visits, see Rotraut Wisskirchen, "Leo III und die Mosaikprogramme von S. Apollinaris in Classe in Ravenna und Ss. Nereo Ed Achilleo in Rom," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 34, (1991), pp. 139-141.
[617] For a good summary of this debate, see Deichmann, p. 279

throne room in Revelation 4. Wisskirchen convincingly shows this addition by Leo III is intended to echo the depiction above the apse of St Paul's Outside the Walls in Rome of Revelation 4, in which Christ is surrounded by the Four Creatures, and the 24 Elders.[618] She sees this as an attempt by Leo to show the relationship of the see of Ravenna to Rome to be sisterly, but subordinate, by imposing imagery from one of Rome's greatest churches on the Basilica in Classe. The creatures depicted here in Classe are not directly identical with the scene described in Revelation, and the fact that they each carry a book points to them also being depicted representing the four evangelists. The frieze in Classe also lacks any depiction of the 24 Elders. However, at least partial evocation of Revelation 4 seems highly likely, especially in the light of the well argued case proposed by Wisskirchen.

If evocation of Revelation 4 can be detected in this frieze, then Leo III could be making a comparison between the Apostle John's experience of the Transfiguration and his being taken up in the Spirit through a heavenly door into heaven to witness the heavenly throne room of God in Revelation 4.

8.4 Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo, Rome

See Figures 3a, 3b, 3c, & 3d.

The placing by Leo III of this Revelation 4 archway scene over the apse mosaic is also linked with a proliferation of Transfiguration images which takes place in early ninth century Rome. Wisskirchen has pointed convincingly to connections between the mosaic programmes in Classe and those found in the Church of Ss. Nereo e

[618] Wisskirchen, "Leo III und die Mosaikprogramme," p. 141.

Achilleo, Rome.[619] Ten years after his adorning of the basilica in Classe, the earliest known depiction of the Transfiguration in Rome was created at Leo III's behest, during his rebuilding of the church entitled the *Titulus Fasciolae*, which had also been known as Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo. All that is left of Leo III's decoration of the apse of Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo is the archway Transfiguration mosaic over the apse. The apse mosaic was replaced by Cardinal Baronio in the sixteenth century with the fresco we see there today, but a sixteenth century image found by de Rossi[620] still exists of the original apse, giving some idea of what it looked like before Baronio's alterations.[621] Wisskirchen[622] has shown the considerable number of similarities between Leo's new Roman image and that which he had seen and further adorned in Classe. It appears Leo's apse displayed a large cross against the background of a huge veil being approached by Lambs on both sides. Wisskirchen[623] also points to the way in which Leo's assembling of the relics of various martyrs under that image replicates the presence of Apollinaris' remains in Classe, and argues this creates a similar dynamic to that found in Classe, in which the martyrs are seen sharing the victory of Christ through their martyrdom.[624]

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[619] Ibid., pp. 139-141.

[620] See, Giovanni Battista de Rossi, *Musaici cristiani e saggi dei parimenti delle chiese di Roma anteriori al secolo xv., tavole cromo-litografiche con cenni storici et critici, con tr. francese* (Roma: 1872), Vol 1, "Mosaico dell'arco della basilica urbana dei SS. Nereo ed Achilleo."

[621] Ugonio's image is reproduced in, Richard Krautheimer, Spencer Corbett, and Volfango Frankl, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae: le basiliche cristiane antiche di Roma (sec. iv-ix)*, vol. 3 (Città del Vaticano; New York: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana; Institute of Fine Arts, 1937), p. 149; drawing on Rossi's evidence, Wisskirchen, "Leo III und die Mosaikprogramme," p.142, also contains a sketched impression of what the sanctuary apse probably looked like after Leo's decoration.

[622] Wisskirchen, "Leo III und die Mosaikprogramme," pp. 141-144.

[623] Ibid., pp. 143-144.

[624] It was not, however, until Baronio's restoration of the church in sixteenth century that the relics of Nereus and Achileus themselves finally made their way to the church which bore their name by the Baths of Caracalla, from the earlier basilica which bore their patronage by the Catacomb of Domitilla. See Umberto M. Fasola, *The Catacomb of Domitilla and the Basilica of Saints Nereus and Achilleus*, The Churches of Rome Illustrated (Rome: Marietti), pp. 19-20.

However, there are also some considerable differences between this mosaic and that found in Classe. The image in Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo adopts a "naturalistic" mode of depiction unlike that found in Classe, and was separate from the apse cross. Whereas the image in Classe proposes the apse cross itself as representing the transfigured Christ, the incident here is presented over the apse. The Classe mosaic evokes a series of events and theological motifs as well at the Transfiguration. This contrasts with the arch image found in Ss. Nereo e Achilleo which unequivocally presents solely the Transfiguration of Jesus. The connection between these two churches' apses is complex, and possibly impossible to establish precisely, because the apse mosaic in Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo has been destroyed. At the very least, the iconographic and theological parallels pointed to between Classe and Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo by Wisskirchen significantly undermine the overly simplified view of Classe as an image exerting no influence at all on later Transfiguration imagery. The more important point I wish to make here focuses on the Transfiguration image itself, and a number of strands of interpretation which emerge when one examines it in the light of the survey of patristic comment I have undertaken in earlier chapters.

The Transfiguration is depicted under the same overshadowing cloud as two other images on either side, one of the Annunciation to the left, (see *Figure 3c*) and a second image of the Virgin and child on the right (see *Figure 3d*). These two marian images have experienced considerable scholarly neglect. Many studies of S. Nereo ed Achilleo make only the most cursory and fleeting mention of their presence. Some do not even describe the marian images at all.[625] What little comment there is simply puts

[625] No mention of the images of the Virgin are mentioned in discussion of Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo in: Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton, N.J.:

the presence of the surrounding images of the Virgin down to marian piety without offering much theological explanation as to how these three images might be connected. Amongst those who do comment on the two marian images, there is a clear focus on the left hand side Annunciation scene, with the right hand scene left a largely unexplained mystery.[626] Many hold the proportions of the Transfiguration mosaic to be infelicitous by virtue of it having been squeezed into the space at the apogee of the arch.[627] Guerrieri describes the archway mosaic as *rozzo*,[628] "rough," and characterised by a certain *barbarie*,[629] or "barbarousness" of style. Indeed, Oakeshott, after describing the Transfiguration image as, "awkward," sees the whole composition as displaying iconoclastic tendencies, and to be the second rate work of incompetents, which, for him, explains why Baronio got rid of the mosaic in the sixteenth century.[630] I want to show these negative views to be misjudged, and to conjecture that these three images are, in fact, intimately related to each other and are the product of complex theological reflection.

One obvious connection which the artist would seem to be making through the Annunciation scene on the left hand side of the arch is with the overshadowing which Mary receives by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have seen in Chapter 7 that a recurrent theme in Western comment, and especially in Ambrose's *Commentary of the Gospel According to Luke*, was to associate the overshadowing cloud with the

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Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 127-130; and Emile Mâle, *The Early Churches of Rome* (London: Ernest Benn, 1960), p. 152.

[626] Krautheimer, Corbett, and Frankl, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum*, p. 149.

[627] Guglielmo Matthiae, *Le chiese di Roma dal iv al x secolo*, (Bologna: Cappelli, 1962), p. 271.

[628] Agnese Guerrieri, *La chiesa dei Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo* (Città del Vaticano: Società Amici Catacombe presso Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1951), pp. 121-122; Matthiae, p. 271.

[629] Guerrieri, pp. 121-122; Ihm, pp. 74-75.

[630] Walter Oakeshott, *The Mosaics of Rome from the Third to the Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1967), p. 200.

activity of the Holy Spirit. It could be that we see here a visual presentation of the connection he made between Luke 9.34 and Luke 1.35,[631] a depiction of two parallel overshadowings under the same cloud. In both the Spirit reveals Jesus' sonship, one through Gabriel's words that Mary's baby will be, "called Son of God,"[632] and in the other through a voice from heaven proclaiming him to be, "my son, my chosen."[633]

It has to be admitted the imagery on the right hand side of the apse (see figure 3d) is more difficult to explain. I wonder whether, when set in the light of the evidence I have surveyed in Chapter 7 we see here a more extended meditation on the incarnation as a fulfillment of Isaiah 7, and possible influence from the *Protoevangelium of James*. I explored in Chapter 7 Ambrose's and Jerome's discussion of the Transfiguration as the fulfillment of Isaiah 7.11. Could it be that we see here the depiction of their discussion? In the middle of the arch we see the sign Ahaz would not ask for (c.f. Isaiah 7.11), as high as heaven (Elijah, who ascended there) and low as Sheol (Moses, who died and whose grave nobody can locate). On either side, however, is the sign the Lord announced he would give instead (cf Isaiah 7.14): a virgin, on the left, conceiving, by the overshadowing of the Spirit, and on the right she sits having borne her son.

In Chapter 7, I showed a number of connections to have been made in the *Protoevangelium of James*, between the Transfiguration and the place of Christ's birth as a temple space overshadowed by God's glory, which may have influenced Origen's, Jerome's and Ambrose's thinking. It strikes me traditions similar to those

[631] *Expos in Lucam* 7.19.
[632] Luke 1.35.
[633] Luke 9.35.

found in the *Protoevangelium of James* may be present in the presentation of the Annunciation here. If one examines carefully the Annunciation scene on the left (see figure 3c), Mary holds two spindles. The idea that she was spinning the veil of the Temple when Gabriel visited her is one we see described for the first time in the *Protoevangelium of James*. In chapters 10 and 11[634] of the *Protoevangelium*, Gabriel appears between her putting down the red yarn, drawing a jug of water, and then taking up the purple yarn. This spinning tradition found in the *Protoevangelium of James* seems to be exerting a strong influence on this depiction of the Annunciation. If there is evidence of influence from the *Protoevangelium of James* on the image on the left, could it be that the seated virgin on the right is also influenced by that text? The *Protoevangelium* recounts the appearance of a blinding light under an overshadowing cloud at Jesus' nativity, which prevents the narrator from seeing Christ's actual birth, but reveals a baby on his mother's knee, feeding.[635] Does the depiction on the right of this apse display the same hesitancy at describing the actual birth, which we explored in Chapter 7 and is seen in the *Protoevangelium of James*, and simply presents the baby having been born?

The more puzzling elements within this series of images make some sense when read in the light of the portions of Ambrose, Jerome and the *Protoevangelium of James* which I examined in Chapter 7. I am aware that much of the theory I propound here can be no more than hypothesis. The weakest part of my argument is the status of the image on the right of the arch. My speculation concerning the *Protoevangelium of James* stems from the fact that it is the only text I have found which associates an overshadowing with the birth of Christ. I am also unable to explain satisfactorily the

[634] Guerrieri, p. 111.
[635] *Protoevangelium of James*, 19.2; Elliott and James, p. 64.

presence of the angel figure who looks like Gabriel. The exact nature of any influence from the *Protoevangelium of James* is also a remarkably complicated issue. It may be more than possible that elements from the *Protoevangelium*, such as the association of the Annunciation with spinning, remained part of iconographic tradition long after the text itself ceased to circulate in a complete form. However, even with all these caveats made, I hope to have shown at the very least that it is possible the Transfiguration is being used here to make a series of hermeneutic connections with texts associated with the incarnation. I certainly suggest the neglect this earliest depiction of the Transfiguration in Rome has suffered is short sighted, and that the scholarly consensus that it is of little note and limited sophistication is misjudged. An examination of the reception history of the Transfiguration in both commentary and artistic depiction has revealed the possibility of a fascinating seam of interpretation, which otherwise could have gone almost entirely unnoticed.

8.5 Paschal I and depictions of the Transfiguration in ninth century Rome

In the next section of this chapter, I examine a number of depictions of the Transfiguration which emerge in Rome under the papacy of Paschal I, a few years after Leo III constructed the first image of the Transfiguration, which we have just examined in the previous section. We see in them readings of the Transfiguration which compare it with portions of the Book of Revelation, and which present the episode as a visionary entry into God's heavenly paradise.

Paschal I's building project

One fruit of the Carolingian Renaissance in Rome was an extensive re-building project undertaken by Pope Paschal I (Pope 817-824), to renew and extend a number

of the city's basilicas, often as a preparation for the translation of saints' relics to new and more imposing shrines. He undertook the re-construction of three basilicas.[636] Goodson[637] and Noble[638] have pointed to the significance of these three churches' location in highly populated parts of Rome, and the political importance of the papal stational liturgies that took place in them. The significance of this period for our study, however, lies in the sudden and frequent appearance in Rome of depictions of the Transfiguration in these restored or rebuilt churches.

8.5.1 The heavenly Jerusalem scene in S. Prassede, Rome.

See Figure 4a

The Basilica of S. Prassede was originally built in 780 by Hadrian I on top of a fifth century structure, the traditional burial site of the sister martyrs Praxedes and Pudentiana. The church was substantially rebuilt by Paschal in 822 in order to rehouse the remains of over 2,000 saints brought into the city from the catacombs.[639] This restoration included the addition of an extensive series of apse mosaics over the altar depicting scenes from Revelation 1, 4, and 21.

The reason these images are significant for the purposes of this thesis is the presence within a walled city depicting the Heavenly Jerusalem of Rev 21, of two figures who

[636] The two titular churches of S. Prassede on the Esquiline Hill, and S. Cecilia in Trastevere, and the diaconia church of S. Maria in Domnica.
[637] Caroline Goodson, *The Rome of Paschal I: Papal Power, Urban Renovation, Church Building, and Relic Translation 817-824* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. pp. 81-159.
[638] Thomas Noble, "Topography, Celebration, and Power: The Making of a Papal Rome in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries," in *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Mayke De Jong (Leiden, Boston, Cologne: Brill, 2001), pp. 45-91, esp. pp. 83-91.
[639] The Liber Pontificalis (LP 100:9) claims 2,000 saints were transferred to S Prassede. A marble inscription in the church itself records 86 saints by name and then lists the total number reinterred by Paschal at S. Prassede as 2,300: "fiunt etiam in simul omnes s(an)c(t)I duomilla CCC," see, Goodson, p. 167 & p. 228.

resemble the prophet witnesses of the Transfiguration. A broad majority of commentators identify these two men as Moses and Elijah,[640] (see *Figures 4b, 4c, & 4d*) though a small minority has questioned this.[641] This identification rests principally on the presence of a tablet or scroll in the hands of the young man to the left, bearing the word "Lege." This could either point to the Law through the instruction, "read," or alternatively, the young man's hand could be seen as covering the last letter of the word "Leges," rendering it a tablet of the "laws" given to Moses on Mount Sinai. In addition, many point out the close correlation between these two figures and depictions of Moses and Elijah elsewhere in the guise of a younger and an older man, especially in the Church of Ss. Nereo and Achilleo (See *Figure 3b*), built only a few years before by Paschal's predecessor, Leo III.[642] This identification is also strengthened by the fact that two remarkably similar portrayals of the Transfiguration are to be found in Paschal's three churches: another one in the St Zeno Chapel of S. Prassede (see *Figure 4f*); and a further depiction of Moses and Elijah in the apse arch of S. Maria in Domnica (see *Figure 5a*), pointing to it as a biblical subject favoured by Paschal.

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[640] Wolfgang Braunfels and Engelbert Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, 8 vols. (Rom: Herder, 1968), Vol 3, p. 293; Dinkler, pp. 25-50; Mâle, p. 90; Matthiae, p. 238; Marguerite van Berchem and Étienne Clouzot, *Mosaïques chrétiennes du IVme au Xme siècle* (Genève: Les presses de l'Imprimerie du "Journal de Genève", 1924); Rotraut Wisskirchen, *Das Mosaikprogramm von S. Prassede in Rom: Ikonographie und Ikonologie*, (Münster: Aschendorff, 1990), p. 91.

[641] Oakeshott sees the figure on the right, because of his long hair, as John the Baptist, and the left hand one, because of his youth as John the Evangelist. Wisskirchen, points out that, although John the Baptist is frequently depicted with long hair, it is hardly ever white, as here in S. Prassede. It is also unclear what the connection would be between the concept of "Law" or "reading" displayed in the left hand figure's scroll and John the Evangelist. Van Berchem and Clouzot, also discuss the possibility of these two figures being Isaiah and Jeremiah, but judge it to be unlikely by virtue of the fact that the prophets of the exile both tended to be portrayed as older men. See Oakeshott, p. 207; van Berchem and Clouzot, p. 233; Wisskirchen, *Das Mosaikprogramm Von S. Prassede in Rom*, p. 88.

[642] Wisskirchen, *Das Mosaikprogramm von S. Prassede in Rom*, p. 89.

Two significant interpretations of this arch have been offered by Wisskirchen and Mauck. Wisskirchen[643] reads the Triumphal Arch as having a fundamentally eschatological orientation, pointing forward to the Parousia. She sees the presence of Transfiguration elements as an allusion to the light of the city mentioned at Rev 21.24 and as an evocation of Isaiah 60.19. She interprets the presence of Moses and Elijah simply as confirmation of her eschatological reading of the whole arch. Marchita Mauck[644] offers a very different reading. She points to the ways in which the arch shows the many ranks of people who enter the Heavenly Jerusalem described in the funeral antiphons *In Paradisum* and *In Regnum Dei.* She argues the Roman liturgy used for the reinterring of saints' relics was essentially a funeral rite, which would have used these texts. She concludes that what we see here in the arch is a depiction of the liturgical texts which were used on the day the church was dedicated by Paschal, situating Paschal's assiduous care for the remains of Rome's saints, and the papal liturgy which inaugurated this new church, within the timeless worship of heaven.

Whilst Mauck and Wisskirchen offer interpretations in parts insightful, neither really sees just how novel and innovative the presence of Moses and Elijah in this Rev 21 scene is. Mauck's theory concerning the influence of texts such as *In Paradisum* is by no means implausible. However, it offers no explanation as to why Moses and Elijah should be present within this image. She essentially ignores their "mysterious"[645] presence, dismissing them as, "idiosyncratic with the context of the program."[646] Very

[643] Ibid., pp. 63-99, pp. 119-123.
[644] Marchita Mauck, "The Mosaic of the Triumphal Arch of S. Prassede: A Liturgical Interpretation," *Speculum* 62/4, (1987), pp. 813-828.
[645] Ibid., p. 814.
[646] Ibid.

few people have attempted to explain the significance of Moses' and Elijah's depiction in this Heavenly Jerusalem scene, and no satisfactory account for their presence has emerged. I outline here six parallels between the Transfiguration narratives and Rev 21 which may explain their being read in the light of each other and the connections drawn by Paschal between these two texts.

Mountain top visions

The first parallel possibly being drawn is the way in which the Transfiguration and John's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem could both be seen as mountain top visions. Rev 21.10 explicitly uses the language of ecstatic vision in connection with a mountain top, speaking of John being taken "in the spirit" to a high mountain. Mention of a "high mountain" is also a feature found in both Mark's and Matthew's Transfiguration narrative. This mosaic could be pointing to a parallel in the experience of John on Patmos and John (and the other two disciples) on Mount Tabor, whose visionary experience takes place, "in the spirit" and is preceded by being led up a mountain.[647] The presence of an angel holding a measuring stick close to Elijah underlines this parallel further.[648] If this represents the angel of Rev 21.15, then Elijah's experience of the Transfiguration is also compared with John's ascent to view the holy city in Rev 21.9.

[647] The traditional ascription of Revelation to the Apostle John would, of course, also make him the subject of both visions, though the figure of John does not seem to be emphasised here in S. Prassede.

[648] Wisskirchen wonders if this might be the angel of Rev 10. In the end she concludes he points to Elijah as some sort of generic precursor or forerunner figure. See Wisskirchen, *Die Mosaikprogramm*, pp. 91-93.

Glory

A second parallel concerns vision of God's glory. Rev 21.11 describes the Holy City as possessing the "glory of God." At Rev 21.23, this is interpreted in terms of light: God's glory is the city's light; its presence is also the reason why the city does not need sun or moon; and the source of that glory, the city's lamp, is the Lamb. The Transfiguration narratives also describe an experience involving light, something particularly emphasised in Luke's version by the addition of the word *glory* to his narrative. The frequent connection of *glory* with the cultic presence of God in the Tabernacle and Temple allows the mosaicist to point to both Rev 21 and the Transfiguration as comparable mountain-top visions involving an experience of God's presence seen as glory within his heavenly temple dwelling.[649]

Cloud

A third parallel which could point to a connection between the Transfiguration and this depiction of Rev 21 is the presence of a cloud over the Holy City. There is no mention of any clouds in Rev 21. This detail could, therefore, be seen as a direct importing of the overshadowing cloud from the Transfiguration narratives. However, the City is described as descending from heaven (Rev 21.2 & 10), and so its emergence out of clouds could simply be a way of portraying the city's descent. It is more than possible these clouds are intended to evoke both those points; it would seem difficult to exclude entirely the idea that at least some reference to the cloud of the Transfiguration is being made. If this is so, the artist could be suggesting that the

[649] Schiller points to another instance of the Transfiguration being compared with other scriptural passages involving the word *doxa* in the Pala D'Oro, a Milanese golden altar frontal created not much more than twenty years after the S. Prassede images, in which the Transfiguration is placed between depictions of the Presentation in the Temple and the Wedding in Cana of Galilee. A similar process of connection through the notion of glory seems to be at work here, but in this case, linking the Transfiguration with very different passages (Luke 9.31/John 2.11/Luke 2.32). See, Schiller, p. 150.

space overshadowed by the Transfiguration cloud is comparable with the Heavenly Jerusalem depicted here.

Exodus

A fourth parallel which might be drawn between the Transfiguration narratives and Rev 21 is one which focuses on an element present solely in Luke's gospel, namely the mention of the topic of conversation on the mountain top being the "exodus" Jesus was to accomplish in Jerusalem.[650] It could be, as I have argued is the case in Classe, that this mosaic scene is intended as a depiction of the exodus discussed on the Mount of Transfiguration, an exodus in which Jesus leaves the earthly Jerusalem and enters the heavenly one. This parallel could explain the presence of two angels on either side of Jesus in the middle of the mosaic (see Figure 4e) as a reference to the two men in bright clothing present at Jesus' Ascension in Acts. It may be that this mosaic seeks to present the connection already made between the Transfiguration and the Ascension through Luke's phrase, "behold two men." If this is the case, the mosaic reads the Transfiguration as a similar entry by Jesus into the dwelling place of God in heaven. It could be that we see here the "exodus" in Jerusalem discussed by Jesus, Moses and Elijah, being realised before them: Jesus, after accomplishing his work in the earthly Jerusalem, is depicted reigning in the celestial Jerusalem, having entered the heavenly tabernacle accompanied by the two angelic men of Acts 1.10.

Revelation 11

A fifth parallel between the Transfiguration narratives and this heavenly Jerusalem scene revolves around Rev 11.1-13. In Rev 11, there is a description of two enigmatic

[650] Lk 9.31

prophet figures, several features of which seem to cohere with elements of the Transfiguration narratives. These two figures both have the characteristics of Moses and Elijah, being able to close the heavens[651] and to turn water into blood,[652] though they are never explicitly named as such. However, other elements of Rev 11 have no parallel with the Transfiguration narratives, such as the prophets killing their enemies with fire, their dying at the hands of the Beast, being raised in the earthly Jerusalem, and subsequently transported to heaven on a cloud. Further complexity is added by the fact that Rev 11 points to Moses more as an eschatological figure than the Law giver he is presented as here. In addition, the two figures of Rev 11 *both* share the characteristics of Moses and Elijah, rather than each being separate embodiments of the two prophets as presented in the synoptic narratives. It is also the case that the prophets' prophesying takes place *outside* the temple in Rev 11.2-3 rather than inside the walls as Moses and Elijah are depicted here. It is also important to note that the angel holding the measuring rod next to Elijah is far more likely to be a reference to Rev 21.15 than to Rev 11.1, as the measuring rod of 11.1 is given to John the seer, and is not held by an angel. Although Rev 11 may be a strong influence, it can't *on its own* account exhaustively for the depiction of Moses and Elijah in this scene. Rev 11 does, however, point to one other context in which two mosaic and elijan figures are closely linked with God's temple in Jerusalem (Rev 11.1 & 8), with standing in the presence of God (Rev 11.4), and in which they are perceived as figures who experience an ascent into heaven (Rev 11.12). As such, this could point to Rev 11 operating as an inter text, allowing the synoptic Transfiguration narratives to be read side by side with Rev 21.

[651] Cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 17.1 & 18.1.
[652] Cf. Moses in Exodus 7.14-19.

Temple connections

One of the characteristics of Rev 21's description of the New Jerusalem is that it is a temple space, in which God's presence is freely available to all who dwell there. Rev 21.22 does not state that there is no temple in the city, but that John did not *see* one, for "the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" constitute its temple. The vision recounted by Revelation 21, therefore, is one in which the whole space of the city is a temple. This is particularly pointed to in Rev 21.16 where the city is described as four square, with equal height, width and length, echoing the cubic proportions of the Holy of Holies[653] in the Jerusalem Temple.[654] A further allusion to the whole of the holy city being a temple space is the language used at Rev 21.3, describing God's dwelling in that city in terms of a "σκηνὴ," echoing the language of the wilderness tradition concerning Moses' earthly Tabernacle. If Paschal is drawing a comparison between the Transfiguration narratives and Rev 21's account of the New Jerusalem, then one of the parallels being presented here in S. Prassede could be the Transfiguration as a visionary experience of God's presence conceived of as a temple dwelling.

S. Prassede: Conclusion

The presence of imagery from the Transfiguration within this depiction of Revelation 21 points to a series of important points being made by Paschal about the Transfiguration. One of the most significant of these must be the shared status of Rev 21 and the Transfiguration as texts claiming to be the fruit of visionary experience. Paschal's mosaic shares the Western tendency which we detected in Chapter 7 of interpreting the Transfiguration in terms of a corporate vision of the life of heaven

[653] 1Kings 6.20.
[654] Wisskirchen, in fact, argues the city presented here in the Triumphal arch is indeed square, but that the perspective of the space it is placed is makes it seem wider. See Wisskirchen, *Das Mosaikprogramm von S. Prassede in Rom*, pp. 87-93.

and of understanding it as an experience akin to seeing the heavenly temple dwelling of God which is revealed in Rev 21. In addition to this, it is possible that several key elements only found in Luke's narrative are important in many of the connections Paschal makes, such as those revolving around the *exodus* Jesus was to accomplish in Jerusalem, and the notion of *glory*. It is clear the significance of this mosaic as, in part, an interpretation of the Transfiguration has been largely neglected in the reception history of the Transfiguration, and that few have noticed the striking points that could be being made by Paschal through his comparison of the Transfiguration with John of Patmos's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem.

I want to suggest that the presence of the saints' relics within S. Prassede makes the reading I have outlined more convincing. Paschal's transferring of relics to S. Prassede enables him to articulate a broader notion of sacred space. Goodson[655] has written extensively on the way in which Paschal's building programme was designed to emphasise and aggrandise the political power of the papal court. Indeed she argues Paschal's reinterring programme was designed to emphasise the whole of the city of Rome, the Pope's seat, as, in some sense, "sacred space". She points to the heavenly city depicted in the triumphal arch in S. Prassede as, in part, a depiction of Rome, a dwelling place of the saints, whose gates are guarded by the city's apostolic patrons Peter and Paul. It is almost impossible not to see a connection between the scenes depicted in the S. Prassede mosaics and their being situated in a liturgical space in which are enshrined the physical remains of many of those same saints. Finding motifs from the Transfiguration amongst such a theological scheme points to the very great likelihood of the Transfiguration being interpreted in this context as a similar

[655] Goodson, esp. pp. 197-256.

entry into the heavenly Jerusalem which the saints share with God, and of worship in that church being seen as experience of a similar reality.

8.5.2 St Zeno Chapel in S. Prassede, Rome

As a way of contextualising the mosaics we have examined in S. Prassede, I next examine other depictions of the Transfiguration in structures erected by Paschal I, in which I argue one can detect a series of theological motifs which support the reading I have brought to bear on the Transfiguration elements in the sanctuary mosaics of S. Prassede.

Two other Transfiguration images exist in the St Zeno Chapel of S. Prassede, and also in the apse of the church of S. Maria in Domnica, both created at Paschal's behest. The image in the St Zeno Chapel is undoubtedly of the Transfiguration, but largely destroyed; the image in S. Maria in Domnica is in excellent condition, but its designation as a Transfiguration scene is debated. The first point to be made about both of these images must be the simple fact that their presence in two of the three churches Paschal rebuilt points to the Transfiguration as having been a clear focus of some theological interest to him. However, the fact that all three depictions are significantly different from each other shows this fascination not to be with the Transfiguration as a static image or fixed narrative, but rather as a flexible theological lens through which other narratives and theological motifs can be explored and depicted.

The St Zeno chapel was substantially rebuilt and adorned by Paschal as a mausoleum for his mother and, though very small indeed (3.5m square), is completely filled with

an extraordinary array of mosaics.[656] As one enters the chapel, on the wall directly facing the visitor are the remains of a Transfiguration image, about two thirds of which have been destroyed to make way for a thirteenth century icon of the Blessed Virgin, housed in a seventeenth century altar piece (see *Figures 4f & 4g*). All that one can see are the heads of five figures: Christ in the middle; Moses and Elijah on each side; and just visible, two of the three apostles, probably Peter on the left and John on the right; and on the far right is a disembodied hand and a hint at what could be the outline of the head of a third apostle. This appears to be a very different evocation of the Transfiguration from that seen over the high altar, and to be more in keeping with the sort of naturalistic depiction seen in S. Nereo ed Achilleo, which will have been created only 10-15 years earlier. Three small, but significant points need to be made about this mosaic, which is rarely commented on by historians.

First, it is notable just how closely the figures of Moses and Elijah here mirror the two figures I have pointed to in the triumphal heavenly Jerusalem scene over the altar of S. Prassede. Although Moses and Elijah are on opposite sides of Christ here from the arch scene, and although Moses does not hold a tablet of the Law, they replicate the depiction there of Elijah as an older, grey headed man, and Moses as a younger man with short, dark hair. This image offers considerable resolution to the question of the identity of the figures in the triumphal arch against those who claim there is no evocation at all of Moses and Elijah in the Revelation 21 scene.

[656] For illustrations and brief descriptions of the chapel's history, see, Paola Gallio, *The Basilica of Saint Praxedes* (Rome: Monaci Benedictini Vallombrosani, 2009), pp. 25-37; Krautheimer, Corbett, and Frankl, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, pp. 252-255; Matthiae, p. 233; Rotraut Wisskirchen, *Die Mosaiken der Kirche Santa Prassede in Rom* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1992), pp. 54-65.

Secondly, there is ambiguity concerning the mandorla of glory, which appears to encompass Peter but not John. The inclusion of Moses and Elijah within the mandorla of glory sets this image apart from that seen at Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo, where only Christ is in the central nimbus. There is disagreement amongst commentators as to what the dark line which seems to delineate the mandorla represents and whether it includes the disciples or not. Wisskirchen has argued it outlines not the mandorla of glory, but the mountain.[657] However, this would seem not to include the figure on the right, and leave the mountain an odd, lob-sided shape. Most hold it to show the extent of the glory in which Moses, Elijah and Moses appear.[658] However, on the left of the image, this green line appears to have been extended out to include Peter in the glory. A number of different explanations have been offered, not least that this shows recognition of the ambiguity concerning whether the disciples enter the cloud with Jesus. Some have wondered whether this line was added later as some sort of theological correction[659] or as an attempt to include the disciples as recognition of the more explicit description in Luke's gospel of his entry.[660] If that is the case, perhaps agreement was unable to be found amongst the mosaic's creators concerning whether Peter was to be included within the glory or not. It is equally possible the confused image might simply be a sign of artistic incompetence or mistake. I argue it is certainly possible we see evidence of reflection on the Lucan narrative and of uncertainty as to how that narrative should be depicted.

[657] Wisskirchen, *Die Mosaiken der Kirche Santa Prassede in Rom*, p. 57.
[658] Goodson, p. 169; Josef Wilpert and Walter Nikolaus Schumacher, *Die römischen Mosaiken der kirchlichen Bauten vom iv.-xiii. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau; Basel; Wien: Herder, 1976), p. 335.
[659] Dinkler, p. 31.
[660] Nordström sees evidence of strong influence on this image by the Lucan narrative. See, Nordström, p. 123.

Third, it is important to note a number of local traditions concerning the chapel, which point to it being seen as a paradise and as a Holy of Holies, and to associations of the chapel with visionary activity. The St Zeno Chapel itself is square in shape, with every inch covered in gold mosaics. Some suspect Paschal rebuilt the chapel using at least one partially pre-existing wall, and that it may have inherited its shape from the previous building.[661] Even though the chapel is actually taller than it is wide, upon entering the chapel, one is immediately struck by the cubic feel of the space. It may be that some sort of cubic Holy of Holies is being evoked. Indeed both Gallio and Mâle point to a Roman tradition of uncertain age, but possibly ancient, in which this chapel is referred to by locals as the "Hortus Paradisi."[662] Many of the arches in the chapel are decorated with lush flowers and plants. This local name could simply be a reference to that. However, may we perhaps wonder whether this local tradition stems from a deeper theological statement being made about the Transfiguration, the first image one sees upon entry into the chapel, as the revelation of a paradisal place of God's dwelling, such as we saw in Classe? Could this chapel also evoke, through its square proportions, the Holy of Holies, so often portrayed in Old Testament tradition as a new Eden, and described as having been decorated with flowers and palm trees?[663] Gallio also points to another name which the Chapel has traditionally had, being also dedicated to Our Lady under the title, *Sancta Maria, Libera nos a Poenis Inferni.* She states this stems from a vision Paschal himself is supposed to have had, whilst saying Mass in the chapel, of the soul of his nephew being released from Purgatory and taken to heaven.[664] Could it be more than simple

[661] Baldracco, "La cripta della chiesa di Santa Prassede," *Revista di Archeologia Cristiana* 18, (1941), pp. 192ff.
[662] Gallio, p.25; Mâle, p. 91.
[663] See 1 Kings 6.
[664] Gallio, p. 25.

coincidence that a place known as a paradisal garden, and which echoes the proportions of the Holy of Holies became known in local tradition as the place in which Paschal, the church's saintly rebuilder, was supposed to have had a vision of heaven? Many of these questions cannot be answered definitively, but do point to intriguing possibilities concerning the way in which Paschal's image of the Transfiguration may have prompted local tradition to see the Chapel as a Holy of Holies and as a place where vision of heaven took place.

8.5.3 S. Maria in Domnica

See Figure 5a

The church of S. Maria in Domnica was also rebuilt and substantially adorned by Paschal. The mosaic figures of greatest interest for our discussion here are those on either side of the apse over the altar, pointing up to a frieze containing Christ flanked by the two angels and the Twelve Apostles in a paradisal garden.

The identification of these two figures is contested. Some see them as Moses and Elijah,[665] whilst others have suggested they could be John the Baptist and John the Evangelist,[666] or even Isaiah and Jeremiah.[667] The figure on the right (see *Figure 5c*) is presented in a way very similar to the Moses images in S. Prassede, as a younger, clean shaven man with short hair. The only difference with the other images is that here Moses is dressed in a red toga, and carries a scroll rather than a tablet depicting

[665] Guglielmo Matthiae, *S. Maria in Domnica* (Roma: Marietta, 1960), p. 42; Matthiae, *Le chiese di Roma dal IV al X secolo*, p. 274; Guglielmo Matthiae, *Mosaici medioevali delle chiese di Roma*, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1967), p. 237; Floriana Svizzereto, "Il mosaico absidale, manifesto iconoduluo: proposta di interpretazione," in *Caulius I: Santa Maria in Domnica, San Tommaso in Formis e il Clivus Scauri*, ed. Alia Englen (Rome: Palensesti Romani, 2003), p. 249.
[666] Goodson, p. 153; Oakeshott, p. 241.
[667] van Berchem and Clouzot, p. 241.

the Law. The other figure (see *Figure 5b*) is very unlike all the Elijan figures we have examined in this chapter. Here he is presented as a younger but mature man with long hair, and a full, dark beard. He wears a yellow tunic with a brown mantle, which has prompted some to see him as a John the Baptist figure. He resembles very strongly the individual widely identified as the Baptist in the Heavenly Jerusalem scene in S. Prassede,[668] particularly as a result of his brown and yellow clothing, a frequent artistic convention associated with the Forerunner. It strikes me, however, that much of this debate takes place in apparent ignorance of the notion that it may not be problematic that the Elijan figure in this arrangement looks like John the Baptist. John is frequently portrayed as an Elijah figure in the synoptic gospels.[669] In fact, this question is closely linked with the discussion which takes place directly after the Transfiguration in Matthew and Mark in which Jesus explicitly describes John as Elijah.[670] We might see here interpretation of the Transfiguration in which that conversation is evoked through presentation of Elijah as John the Baptist.

A further question is precisely what is being presented in this series of images over the sanctuary arch. In the light of our discussion of the images in S. Prassede, it could be the case that we see here a very similar combining of the Transfiguration with imagery of Christ seated in heavenly glory presented in paradisal terms. Here heaven is not presented as a heavenly Jerusalem, but rather as a paradise garden in a way reminiscent of the image we saw in Classe and in the Zeno Chapel. However, Christ is accompanied here on either side by two angels, just as he is in S. Prassede (c.f.

[668] Wisskirchen, *Das Mosaikprogramm von S. Prassede in Rom*, p. 94.
[669] John's wearing camel skin is often seen as evoking Elijah's appearance described in 2 Kings 1.8, whilst Luke 1.17 explicitly speaks of John inheriting the spirit of Elijah, and Jesus speaks of John as Elijah in Mt 11.13-14.
[670] Matthew 17.10-13; Mark 10-13.

Figures 4e & 5d), implying we see a depiction of him entering heaven in glory accompanied by the two angelic men of Acts 1.10. It could be that we see here a very similar conception to that expressed in S. Prassede, but with the significant difference that heaven is presented as a garden rather than the city of Rev 21. Moses and Elijah point to Christ showing his ascension and glorification in heaven to be the same thing they witnessed on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Conclusion: St Zeno Chapel and Santa Maria in Domnica

Examination of the two other Transfiguration images created by Pope Paschal I reveals first, that they make the identification of the two figures as Moses and Elijah in the St Prassede apse mosaic more likely to be correct. In addition to this, the St Zeno Chapel image could reveal the presence of uncertainty about whether the disciples enter the cloud, and of attempts to make this image conform more closely to the Lucan narrative. The St Zeno Chapel image also prompts tantalising questions concerning connections in local tradition between the location of this Transfiguration image as a place associated with vision of heaven, and understood to be like a Holy of Holies. In addition to this, the image in S. Maria in Domnica depicts the Transfiguration as like entering a paradisal garden. It also repeats the connection particularly emphasised by Luke between the Transfiguration and the Ascension, which we see in S. Prassede. A distinct character of the images in S. Maria in Domnica is meditation on the Elijan character of John the Baptist's identity.

8.6 The Utrecht Psalter and an ivory diptych

We have noted that a number of distinctive Transfiguration interpretations emerge in ninth century Roman depictions, and that they frequently pick up ideas which we

have explored in written comment in Chapter 7. This raises the question whether these perspectives are solely the fruit of one man's mind in one particular place, namely Paschal I, or whether these themes come to be repeated in other contexts. One problem in answering that question is the significant scarcity of Transfiguration images from the ninth century. However, in the next section of this chapter I examine two examples of Transfiguration depictions from different Western locations, and in different media, but from the same period, which appear to display a great degree of artistic and theological creativity in the ways in which they present the Transfiguration.

The Utrecht Psalter

See figures 6a and 6b.

The first is an image found within the Utrecht Psalter.[671] Probably produced somewhere around Rheims, this manuscript is dated by most scholars to some time in the ninth century, usually between 816 and 835,[672] at almost exactly the same time as Paschal's reign as pope (817-824). Each Psalm is illustrated by a series of line drawings. These images range across a wide selection of typologies, personifications, allusions, and literal illustrations of phrases and incidents mentioned in the Psalms.[673] There is much discussion concerning the genesis and original purpose of the book.[674] It is not large enough to have been a text read from in choir, and the Psalms are laid out in canonical rather than liturgical order. In addition, the fact that the illustrations are not coloured implies it was probably not a luxury item made for an aristocratic

[671] A full facsimile of the manuscript can be found in Ernest T. DeWald, *The Illustrations of the Utrecht Psalter* (Princeton: University Press, 1932).
[672] See, K. van der Horst and others, *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David* (Utrecht: HES in conjunction with Harvey Miller, 1996), pp. 27-29.
[673] For further examples, see, ibid., pp. 56-70.
[674] For an exhaustive survey of this scholarly debate, see, ibid., pp. 73-81.

patron. Both these considerations have led van Horst and Walther to suggest it may have been intended as a tool for young monks learning the Psalms by heart, and that the extensive illustrations at the head of each text operate as aide-mémoire.[675]

There is within this Psalter what seems to be a depiction of the Transfiguration placed between Psalm 150 and the canticle of Isaiah 12. Between these two texts, we see a transfigured Jesus on a mountain, surrounded by Moses, Elijah, and the three disciples. Two of the disciples are lying on the ground, and one is standing up. However, this mountain itself is placed within what appears to be a city wall, and is surrounded by two large crowds of people. Within the walled area is a fountain from which two individuals are drinking. Water from the fountain flows from the well out of the walled space and reaches those outside the walls, who also drink from it.

The image would seem to be an illustration of the canticle from Isaiah 12 set below it, as the sketch appertaining to Psalm 150 is to be found on the opposite page. We see a depiction of the drawing of water from the wells of salvation mentioned in Isaiah 12.3, with the Transfiguration probably illustrating the final verse of the canticle, "Exsulta et lauda, habitatio Sion, quia magnus in medio tui Sanctus Israel." The walled city is the dwelling of Sion, rejoicing in the presence of the Holy One of Israel. The few scholars who comment on this Transfiguration image simply recognise it as such and have not offered any explanation as to why the Transfiguration should be connected with Isaiah 12, [676] and, indeed, often seem slightly puzzled by it.

[675] Ibid., pp. 81-83; Ingo Walther, *Codices Illustres: The World's Most Famous Illuminated Manuscripts 400-1600* (Köln ; London: Taschen, 2001), pp. 90-91.
[676] DeWald, pp. 65-66; e.g., Suzy Dufrenne, *Les illustrations du psautier d'Utrecht: sources et apport carolingien* (Paris: Ophrys, 1978), p. 142, footnote 466.

In the light of our exploration of the mosaics of S. Prassede, and of the importance of Revelation 21 and 22 in its interpretation of the Transfiguration, however, this image becomes much easier to explain. Rev 21 and 22 play a key role in linking this Transfiguration scene with Isaiah 12. I want to argue the artist who created this image interpreted Isaiah 12 as pointing forward to Revelation 21 and 22. Both passages describe Jerusalem: Revelation 21 and 22 take place in the Heavenly Jerusalem; and Isaiah 12 urges the people of the dwelling of Sion to rejoice. Both passages describe life giving water: Rev 22 speaks of the river of the water of life flowing through the Heavenly Jerusalem, with the Tree of Life on either side of it; whilst Isaiah 12 speaks of drawing water from the wells of salvation. Both passages speak of God being in the midst of his people: Rev 22.3 asserts God tabernacles with his people; and Isaiah 12 urges exultation in the Holy One of Israel being in the midst of the dwelling of Sion. The artist assumes there was so close and obvious a connection between the Transfiguration and Revelation 21 and 22, that he uses it as a way of connecting Isaiah 12 and Rev 21. Seeing an image of the Transfiguration enables the reader to remember Rev 21 and 22, which, in turn, enables that reader to remember Isaiah 12. It seems the artist, like those who created the image in S. Prassede, saw both the Transfiguration and Rev 21 as parallel mountain top visions in which Christ appears in glory in his heavenly temple dwelling. An intriguing character of the image we see in the Utrecht Psalter is that it comes from a very different cultural milieu, in Northern France, from the images we see in S. Prassede, but that both were created at most ten years apart from each other. I have no way of proving any connection between the two images, but they both display a very similar interest in linking the Transfiguration with Revelation 21 and 22.

However, even though the two images express a similar interpretation, they were clearly used very differently. The notion that the Utrecht image of the Transfiguration could be a mnemonic device for memorising Isaiah 12, connects us once again with the ideas Mary Carruthers has proposed and which we have examined in Chapter 6 in connection with Chrysostom's preaching on the Transfiguration.[677] If the theory is correct that the Psalter's images are mnemonic devices, it shows the strength of the connection between the Transfiguration and Revelation 21 and 22 was so pronounced that it could be used to prompt memory of a completely different Old Testament text being compared with John's vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem. In Carruthers' terms, an image of the Transfiguration becomes the *eidolon,* the viualised memory stored in the mind, which is enough to evoke recall of Isaiah 12 through its similarity to Revelation 21 and 22. An image of the Transfiguration becomes the aide-mémoire which enables a young monk to remember the words of Isaiah 12.

Victoria and Albert Museum Inventory No. 254-1867

See figure 7.

Evocation of Revelation 21 and 22 can also be seen in a pair of ninth century ivories found at the Victoria and Albert Museum, numbered 254-1867. These two ivory plaques depict the Transfiguration and the Ascension. The ivory is probably of late antique origin, and has been re-used twice by different artists. On the back of the Transfiguration scene is an older depiction of the Last Judgement, and the reverse side of the Ascension is decorated with scenes of plants and animals. Williamson dates the Ascension and Transfiguration scenes, the last to be inscribed on the ivory,

[677] Indeed, Horst, p.81, points to Carruthers' work in the light of the possibility that the Utrecht Psalter images could be a series of mnemonic devices.

to the late ninth century (850-870) and sees them as of French origin.[678] Their last use was as the two outer bindings of a book, but before that, it seems the original purpose of the Transfiguration and Ascension scenes was to serve as the doors to a tabernacle, shown by the markings left on them by an old lock and hinges.[679]

One of the most significant points which these images make, and which expresses a similar interpretation as that which we saw in St Prassede and S. Maria in Domnica, is a comparison of the Transfiguration and Ascension as parallel entries into heaven. An intriguing element of this Transfiguration image is the appearance above the disciples of the three huts Peter suggests, along with a rather curious looking tree. A point of comparison for us here is an ivory depiction of the Transfiguration from a similar period (870-880) held by the Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. No. 255-1867), which also depicts the Transfiguration, but which omits the tabernacles and tree, and any reference to the Ascension.[680] So few images of the Transfiguration in this medium exist from this period that comparison with Inv. No. 254-1867 may have limited worth. However, this second Transfiguration image may show that the presence of the tabernacles and tree in Inv. No. 254-1867 could be distinct and somewhat unusual.

It is unclear whether the three huts simply represent Peter's words, or whether they show Peter James and John to have actually entered the place of heavenly tabernacles. In other words, this pair of ivories could be a depiction of the disciples having entered heaven and seeing at the moment of the Transfiguration the dwellings of the

[678] Paul Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings: Early Christian to Romanesque* (London: V&A Publishing, 2010), p. 191.
[679] Ibid.
[680] Ibid., pp. 194-195.

righteous, such as one sees in the *Ap. Pet.* 16ff., or in 1 Enoch 39.[681] If that is the case, then it could be that the small tree depicted by the huts is, in fact, the Tree of Life, which is found on either side of the river of the water of life in Rev 22.2. It strikes me as more than possible that we see again the influence of Revelation 22 in this image of the Transfiguration through the presence of what is possibly the Tree of Life, and that the image points to the disciples as having entered the place of heavenly dwellings in a way not dissimilar to the interpretation displayed in the Utrecht Psalter. Of further significance is the theory that these two images could have been chosen to adorn the front of a tabernacle in an Anglo-Saxon or Carolingian church. Such a tabernacle, used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament, would have echoed in a Christian church the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple, and communicated the notion of a particular place as the locus of God's presence. The opening of those doors would have represented an entry point to God's presence embodied in the consecrated host of the Mass. Choosing these two images for the two doors of a tabernacle makes a strong theological point, and in the light of the evidence marshalled in this chapter should not be seen as mere coincidence. Access to, and reception of the Blessed Sacrament for those worshipping before a tabernacle decorated with these doors was to be seen as a similar experience as the Transfiguration and Ascension, a moment of entry into a heavenly realm and into God's presence.

Connections have been drawn between this pair of ivory plaques and the Utrecht Psalter by art historians, but only on artistic and stylistic grounds. Beckwith[682] argued

[681] In other words, the sort of interpretation Heil and Lohmeyer have suggested, that the dwellings of the just, such as are seen in 1 Enoch 39, are suggested through the New Testament narratives' use of language appertaining to tabernacles and tents. See, Heil, pp. 115-127; Lohmeyer, pp. 185-215, p.194.

[682] John Beckwith, *Ivory Carvings in Early Medieval England* (London: Harvey, Miller and Medcalf, 1972), pp. 43-48.

for a later provenance, claiming them to be the product of later tenth century Anglo-Saxon artists influenced by the Utrecht Psalter.[683] This theory has generally not been supported by scholars of the period.[684] I am not in a position to make a verdict on questions of dating, and leave that to scholars more highly skilled in Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian art history. However, the *theological* reading of this pair of ivories I outline above shares with the Utrecht image a drawing on imagery from Revelation 22. My reading does not claim to offer decisive historical evidence for Beckwith's theory, but does produce a theological rationale which shows reading these ivories in the light of the Utrecht Psalter could make sense. I can't prove whether they pre- or post-date the Utrecht image, but I do argue they display a similar theological reading of the Transfiguration as an entry into heaven and as evoking Rev 22, a point which many art historians' discussion overlooks.

In both the Utrecht Psalter and this Victoria and Albert Museum pair of ivories, we see further examples of Revelation 21, 22, and the Ascension being evoked in connection with depiction of the Transfiguration, and in the former case, of this being used to link the Transfiguration with Isaiah 12.

8.8 "Visionary Visual Exegesis"

[683] See also, Margaret Helen Longhurst, *Catalogue of Carvings in Ivory*, (London: Pub. under the authority of the Board of Education, 1927), p. 64; Perette Michelli, "Beckwith Revisited," in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. Catherine Karkov and George Brown (New York: State Univesity of New York Press, 2003), pp. 103-6, 109-11; John Obadiah Westwood, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Fictile Ivories in the South Kensington Museum. With an Account of the Continental Collections of Classical and Medieval Ivories* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1876), p. 116.

[684] Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires du moyen age* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1978), p. 66; Fillitz Hermann, *Kunstchronik* 27, no. 12 (1974), pp. 433-434; P. Lasko, *Burlington Magazine* 116, (1974), p. 429; A.L. Vandersall, "Two Carolingian Ivories from the Morgan Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, no. VI (1972), p. 25, p. 29; Williamson, pp. 191-193.

In order to draw together the some of the threads explored in this chapter, I wish to reflect on a number of questions appertaining to the Transfiguration's status as a visionary episode. I intend to draw on evidence from this chapter to make three points concerning visual interpretation of the Transfiguration which we have encountered, by applying the work of Chidester,[685] Baun,[686] O'Hear,[687] Kovacs, and Rowland[688] to the results of our examination.

My first point concerns the ability of visual depictions of the Transfiguration to communicate several ideas, narratives, and motifs at once. Chidester has written on the ways in which sense perception was used in the Ancient World as a metaphor for the different ways in which humans reflect intellectually, understand divine revelation, and apprehend the transcendent. One of the most important ideas he formulates is that a dichotomy existed in the patristic mind between two modes of perception. The reading, hearing and understanding of words was orientated towards expressing or presenting ideas in terms of *order* and *sequence*. Vision, however, and the seeing of light was orientated towards expressing ideas in terms of a sense of *simultaneity*. Chidester convincingly draws out many examples from a range of ancient commentators in which verbal perception expresses discontinuity, distance, difference, temporal sequence, and prioritised order. By contrast, vision is shown by him to convey a sense of continuity, union, connection, and to be capable of

[685] David Chidester, *Word and Light: Seeing, Hearing, and Religious Discourse* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).
[686] Jane Ralls Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium : Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[687] Natasha O'Hear, *Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art : A Case Study in Visual Exegesis*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[688] Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Oxofrd: Blackwell, 2004).

expressing the spatial rather than the temporal.[689] Jane Baun has made similar points in her work on medieval Greek apocalypses. She points to the way in which description of visionary experience often frustrates modern scholars' attempts to order, define, and categorise those accounts in terms of linear time and space.[690]

A frequent characteristic of many of the images which we have examined in this chapter is their ability to express several theological motifs *simultaneously*. Indeed, I would argue it is precisely their ability to present a series of ideas at once that has frequently made them difficult for modern commentators to interpret. A writer can only comment on the Transfiguration as evoking ideas in a temporal order, which will inevitably be prioritised by the order in which they are discussed. Visual interpreters, by contrast, can create an image which evokes them simultaneously in a way which resists prioritising and categorising, and which is frequently more allusive and suggestive in the way in which it accomplishes that. The apse in S. Apollinare in Classe embodies this *par excellence*. Different commentators have seen a wide range of themes present such as Golgotha, the Transfiguration, the Ascension, the Exaltation of the Cross, and the Parousia of Christ in glory, and have tried to argue for one to the exclusion of all others. Chidester's work shows that attitude to be misconceived, and that the ancient mind considered the visionary experience of the Transfiguration as able to evoke simultaneously a range of motifs at the same time. Such a view would support my reading of the Classe mosaic as presenting the Transfiguration in the context of a series of visionary motifs linked with apocalyptic heavenly ascent, such as we also see in the *Ap. Pet*. The triumphal arch in S. Prassede

[689] He notes this distinction, in Chapter 2, particularly in Philo, and in debate around the Arian controversy. See, Chidester, pp. 25-50.
[690] Baun, esp. pp. 133-151.

also depends on a dynamic of simultaneity in the way in which it holds together images from very different portions of the New Testament, but which are presented as depicting a similar reality. The juxtaposing of the Transfiguration with images of Moses in St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, or in Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo with images evoking Isaiah 7, also presents the viewer with a single simultaneous apprehending of a series of incidents, which when viewed together are shown to share fundamental connections and similarities. Chidester reveals the act of viewing a series of images in the ancient world to have involved a presupposition of continuity, simultaneity, cohesion and compatibility to the way in which they relate to each other. It was less concerned with the forensic diagnosing of origins, the pin pointing of one single theme to the exclusion of others, or the spotting of inconsistencies and theological tensions, in the way that modern comment on those images sometimes is.

A second point I wish to make concerns the frequent connection we have seen emerge between Western depiction of the Transfiguration and the Book of Revelation. I want to suggest, in the light of insights provided by O'Hear's work that there might be something characterising this connection which stems from their both purporting to be the fruit of visionary experience. O'Hear convincingly shows that exegesis of the Book of Revelation has all too often taken place without recognition of the visual nature of the imagery the text uses to express itself, and the visionary character of the experience the narrator claims lies behind it. O'Hear wonders whether there is something about the idiom of visual artistic interpretation which is better suited to expressing the content of the Book of Revelation in a way that textual, verbal interpretation cannot. She goes further, though, and asks whether there is something about the *visionary* nature of the text (i.e. that it claims to be the product of a vision,

of something seen) that only visual interpretation is capable of communicating. She concludes that in some depictions of the Book of Revelation we can detect what she coins as, "visionary visual exegesis." This is interpretation which has the ability to, "connect the viewer with the visionary essence of the Book of Revelation."[691] I want to suggest that, within O'Hear's terms, Paschal I was engaged in "visionary visual exegesis" when he created the triumphal arch mosaic scenes in both S. Prassede and S. Maria in Domnica. By combining Rev 21 with elements from the Transfiguration narratives, he points to a quality or character within both texts which can be articulated *visually* and which is *visionary* in origin. In other words, both Rev 21 and the Transfiguration narratives should be seen as reporting in words a visionary experience of a visual nature. A very similar thing can also be said about the image in Sinai, and the comparison made between the Transfiguration and the images it is surrounded by of Moses's experience of the Burning Bush and receiving of the Law. The mosaicist interprets the gospel Transfiguration narratives as being characterised by the same fundamental mechanic as the Exodus narratives concerning Moses. There exists behind the text a visionary experience, recounted, possibly imperfectly by a narrative, which the artist chooses now to express using a visual medium. By doing this, the artist judges the character of the two narratives to be defined not just by imagery which may be expressed or depicted visually, but that this visual character stems from a similar or parallel visionary experience.

A third point I want to make in the light of O'Hear's and Chidester's ideas concerns what one might describe, using Kovacs' and Rowland's terminology,[692] as a process of "actualisation" which takes place in the liturgy. Kovacs and Rowlands distinguish

[691] O'Hear, p. 226.
[692] Kovacs and Rowlands, pp. 7-11.

between allegorical attempts to interpret the Book of Revelation intended to "decode" an unchanging, clear message, and interpreters who use the text more as a heuristic lens through which to understand afresh their present circumstances. It is during this process that they argue the text is "actualised" in the lives of those contemplating it. All of the mosaic cycles we have examined are found in liturgical spaces. I argue they undergo just such a process of "actualisation" during the celebration of the liturgy. The eschatological and physical divide between the life of heaven and earth is held to be broken down by those worshipping below. Although commenting on later apocalyptic writings in a Byzantine context, Baun has pointed to the way in which the imagery employed by ancient visionary texts sometimes makes more sense to the modern mind when "viewed" as if in a sacred building. She speaks of, "thinking 'architecturally'" as a, "way to approximate the experience of time and space within apocalypses."[693] She argues a liturgical context provides a series of episodic glimpses in which imagery, words, action, and ideas are momentarily brought together coherently.[694] The eucharistic context of all the mosaics we have examined in this chapter represents a crucial perspective in which those present in the church conceive of themselves as experiencing the reality depicted before them in mosaic form. Both Elsner and von Simson have pointed to the importance of this liturgical context in Classe and Sinai. However, it is also surely the case with the other images we have looked at in this chapter, too, such as S. Nereo ed Achilleo, S. Maria in Domnica, and the St Zeno Chapel in S. Prassede. For Elsner, the Transfiguration image at Sinai both depicts the ascent of the human soul to God, but also exemplifies and embodies it through the process of vision. The liturgy becomes for him a key moment within

[693] Baun, p. 152.
[694] Ibid., esp. pp. 151-162.

which the image presented before its viewers is understood to be experienced, or "actualised," in the present day lives of worshippers.

This apprehension is often perpetuated beyond the temporal span of the liturgy by the presence of the saints' remains, such as is seen in S. Prassede or S. Apollinare in Classe. As a result of these relics' presence, the church is characterised as sacred space in which God is found dwelling amongst his saints. This "actualisation" of Rev 21 and the Transfiguration narratives particularly in S. Prassede, finds its expression, therefore, in a broader political agenda in which, as Goodson argues,[695] the papal liturgy taking place in S. Prassede was intended to point to the whole of Rome as sacred space, as a heavenly city in which God dwells, and in whose name and presence its bishop rules. The twin visions of the Transfiguration narratives and Rev 21 held together become a lens through which those worshipping in ninth century Rome interpret their experience of the liturgy and conceive of the political and spiritual status of the city they dwell in.

8.9 Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter that the emergence of visual depiction brings many new and intriguing perspectives to bear on the Transfiguration narratives, and that many of these revolve around the episode's status as an account of purported visionary experience.

I hope one contribution to knowledge this chapter has made is to focus on a number of images within the Western tradition which have otherwise often been over looked

[695] Goodson, pp. 197-256.

by commentators. I hope to have shown a considerable degree of complexity and creativity to be present in these images. I have also challenged a series of scholarly conventions, such as the assumption that the image in Classe has no influence on later images, or the assumption that the Sinai image lays the foundations for the later template of the Eastern icon of the Transfiguration.

Second, I hope to have shown several of the theological strands present in Latin written comment outlined in Chapter 7, to be present in visual depiction. These include the propensity to interpret the Transfiguration in terms of a more corporate vision of heaven, and to compare the Transfiguration with passages from other portions of the scriptures such as the Book of Revelation, Luke's birth and infancy narratives, and Isaiah 7 and 12. I hope to have shown the recurrence of the priestly and temple motifs which I have noted to be present in patristic comment. We have found it to be the case that the Lucan narrative exerts influence over many depictions of the Transfiguration, especially in connection with ideas to do with ascent into heaven.

Thirdly, I also want to argue many ancient artists saw visual depiction of the Transfiguration as capable of offering meditation in a special way on the visionary character of the episode recounted in the synoptic gospels. I have argued visual depiction in the ancient world to be able to hold together in one simultaneous presentation many different and complex ideas, motifs and theological assertions, and to show them to be mutually enriching perspectives. I have also argued the images we have discussed could be seen as examples of "visionary visual exegesis," and as expressing in visual form the visionary character of the Transfiguration. In addition, I

have shown how crucial the liturgical context was to the ways in which the images laid before worshippers were "actualised" in their contemporary experience. The Transfiguration became a model for a number of ways in which ascent to the divine was understood to take place, and was also exploited politically to exert and express the power of several bishops.

This chapter marks, in many respects, the culmination of my survey of the reception history of the Transfiguration in the patristic era. We see many of the interpretations we have encountered in written comment emerge and be explored in visual depiction. However, visual depiction of the Transfiguration also enables a number of artists to explore many of the complexities I have shown exist in previous patristic comment, such as precisely how the Transfiguration was to be understood as a vision, and how that related to the vision of ordinary Christians. A crucial part of that exploration, however, continues to be dependent on elements within Luke's narrative, such as his linking of the Transfiguration with the Ascension, with the cultic associations of the word "glory," and a conceiving of the Transfiguration as an entry into the tabernacle dwelling of God. I have also shown the Western iconographic tradition to be capable of considerable creativity and to be orientated to hermeneutic concerns focused on interpretation of the Transfiguration in the light of other portions of scripture. The emergence of Transfiguration images in Rome and Ravenna from the sixth century onwards marks a fascinating new chapter in the history of its interpretation, which has often been overlooked, down-played, or fundamentally misconstrued by those who have commented on it.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

I show in this chapter how I have answered the research questions I laid out in my introduction as the focus of this doctoral thesis, and offer a number of reflections on the conclusions I have drawn throughout this thesis. I asked how ancient Christian commentators and artists interpreted the synoptic Transfiguration narratives, and what role Luke's version in particular had within that history of interpretation.

In Chapters 1-3 I showed why this question needed to be posed, by revealing a number of shortcomings within the treatment the Transfiguration has received at the hands of modern scholars. The most significant gap in knowledge which this thesis fills is the near universal ignoring of pre-critical comment by modern New Testament scholars. In addition to this, modern patrologists have failed to pay enough attention to the hermeneutic concerns I have made the subject of this thesis, and have often underrated the complexity of many Latin traditions of Transfiguration interpretation. It is also the case that few commentators have taken artistic depiction of the Transfiguration into account in their discussion either of the New Testament texts or patristic comment on the incident. The Transfiguration is often assumed by modern New Testament scholars either to be a solely literary construction, or based on some sort of historical kernel very different to the story recounted in the gospels. One of the consequences of this presupposition is that a number of questions concerning how the disciples' sight is expressed, what that seeing could signify, and how this relates to other visionary incidents, are seldom asked by modern scholars. I have argued this ignoring of questions about the visionary status of the Transfiguration means a number of ambiguities in the Greek text are frequently overlooked, and the distinct

character of the Lucan text as emphasising this is often minimised. A small number of modern scholars has attempted to situate the Transfiguration within a more apocalyptic or visionary milieu, but their voices have either not found widespread approbation within the academy, or their studies display significant shortcomings which have tended to compromise the credibility of their assertions. By contrast with modern comment, patristic writers bring very different presuppositions to their comment. We see in their attempts to explain the nature of this vision a wide range of theories, ideas, and readings of the text stemming from many different understandings of the visionary and its significance. They see in detail added by Luke, evidence of the visionary experience of the disciples, and they use the Transfiguration to interpret other scriptural texts which claim to be the fruit of visionary or prophetic experience.

9.1 Transfiguration and Vision

Throughout our survey of patristic comment on the Transfiguration narratives, we have noted a wide range of different understandings of the disciples' vision, which I have ordered here in 5 broad categories.

Category 1: Altered vision

Many of the writers we have surveyed understand the disciples as able to witness the Transfiguration as a result of having their own vision altered. We see evidence of this in the earliest reception, in 2 Peter, where the writer uses language of Peter's status as an "eyewitness," which could be capable of evoking comparison with the ecstatic, privileged vision of participants in the Greek mystery cults. The *Apocalypse of Peter* also describes Peter's eyes being "opened" so that he might be enabled to enter heaven and witness a vision of God's heavenly tabernacle. Tertullian interpreted

Peter's vision in terms of a dream-like form of ecstasy, akin to that of the prophets Zechariah and Isaiah, in which the soul visualised an image of the reality God wished to reveal. Anastasius of Sinai also sees Luke's description of Peter as revealing him to be in a state of ecstasy, which prompts a vision of the heavens. For Origen, the disciples were only able to witness the Transfiguration because of a coming together of an alteration in their vision which was in proportion to their spiritual maturity, and an accompanying withholding by God of his full glory. Origen's ideas exert considerable influence over later Greek comment, which emphasises the need for an alteration of the disciples' vision and describes an awakening of the eyes of the minds in which the soul "sees" a reality which the physical eyes cannot. I have shown in chapter four, however, that different emphases and understandings of this basic principle exist in Greek comment: Anastasius I of Antioch, Maximus, and Andrew of Crete hold that the disciples' vision was altered to *prevent* the overwhelming of their mortal vision; Cyril, by contrast argues their mortal vision *is* overwhelmed; whilst Basil and Eusebius argue the disciples' altered vision enabled them only to see a *partial* vision of divine glory. I argue more complexity exists in Greek understandings of the disciples' vision than many modern patristic scholars admit.

Category 2: Unaltered vision

Others we have encountered, especially Latin writers, insist that vision of the Transfiguration required no alteration of physical sight in order for it to be witnessed. Chrysostom is the only writer in the East I found to advocate a similar position. He sees this mortal vision as the spring board for an imaginative visualising of heaven. Many Latin writers, including Hilary, Jerome, Leo, Gregory, Bede, and Ambrose Autpert insist on the mortal nature of the disciples' vision, and on their witnessing of

the Transfiguration needing no alteration of their faculties of sight. Broadly speaking, Latin commentators tend to insist any human subject present on the mountain could see the Transfiguration, and emphasise the communal, corporate vision of the Age to Come by the faithful, which this signifies. As a result of this, notions to do with transformation of the mind are connected by Latins less with the disciples' vision, and more often with entry into the overshadowing cloud, which is frequently associated with the action of the Holy Spirit.

Category 3: Vision prompting greater vision

A further tradition of interpretation we have examined revolves around the Transfiguration as an experience which prompts the visualising of a greater vision of heaven. The first example of this we encounter is the *Apocalypse of Peter*, in which Peter's eyes are "opened," to reveal a vision of God's "tabernacle not made by human hands," where he dwells with his elect. Anastasius of Sinai and Chrysostom both understand the Transfiguration to prompt a further vision, but for them this is within those who heard the words of their sermons on the subject. Anastasius of Sinai urges his hearers to embrace a similar ecstasy, and witness a glorious vision of God's heavenly Kingdom. Chrysostom advocates a more imaginative and tropological process in which reading the Transfiguration prompts the mind to visualise God's heavenly dwelling as a Judge revealed in a court room, or a theatre full of gloriously apparelled people.

Category 4: Vision as metaphor for ascent to God

A further important impulse is interpretation which uses the Transfiguration as a metaphor for intellectual apprehension of the divine and of ascent to God. Origen is

the first proponent of this understanding. He sees in the disciples' vision of the Transfiguration a model for ascetic reading of the scriptures in which the mind of those who are spiritually mature metaphorically "sees" God. Seeing the Transfiguration as a model for ascent to God through the spiritual life more generally, through monastic observance, or through ascetic practices becomes a widespread interpretative approach, especially in Greek comment. However, I have shown there remain a number of tensions in the precise way in which various commentators reconcile what the disciples experience on the mountain, what the faithful Christian experiences through ascesis in this life, and how the saved will witness Christ's glory in the Parousia: Anastasius I of Antioch, Maximus and Andrew of Crete hold the vision of the Transfiguration and the Parousia to be essentially the same thing, and to necessitate a change in the disciples' vision; Cyril, by contrast, holds they are essentially the same thing, but that this is precisely why the disciples' vision *is* overwhelmed by divine glory; by contrast, Basil and Eusebius speak of the Transfiguration only being a *partial* experience of the glory of the Age to Come. Both Anastasius of Sinai and Chrysostom point to connections between the Transfiguration and human vision of God before the Parousia, but see a role for ecstatic and imaginative processes to bridge that eschatological gap. By contrast with the East, Latin commentators tend to see the disciples' vision as only a partial version of that witnessed at the Parousia, but emphasise the corporate and communal nature of the vision to which the Transfiguration points forward.

Category 5: Vision to be compared with other visions and prophecy

A strong impulse found in Latin comment is a tendency to interpret the Transfiguration in the light of other visionary episodes in the New Testament, and

Old Testament prophetic utterance. This impulse starts with Tertullian who suggests the vision the disciples had at the Transfiguration was similar to the prophetic vision experienced by Habbakkuk and Zechariah. I have also shown Ambrose and Jerome to argue the Transfiguration fulfils Isaiah 7. A tradition of interpretation is seen in Bede and Ambrose Autpert which reads the Transfiguration in the light of Revelation 21 and 22, and Hebrews 12. We have seen that many of these traditions come to be expressed visually in artistic depictions. I have offered an explanation of some elements of the mosaics found in Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo in Rome based on Ambrose's and Jerome's comment, and have shown a repeated theme of Paschal's Transfiguration mosaics in S. Prassede, and S. Maria in Domnica to be depiction of the Transfiguration which draws on Revelation 21. I argue this tendency to be present in an ivory depiction of the Transfiguration created at the same time as the mosaics in S. Prassede. In addition, I have shown that a perceived connection between the Transfiguration and Revelation 21 was used by the creator of the Utrecht Psalter to create an aide-mémoire for the memorising of Isaiah 12.

9.2 Reflections on Vision

In response to these different modes of understanding the many sorts of vision prompted by the Transfiguration, I have found Stephen Pattison's[696] work on vision to be particularly helpful in pinpointing some of the dynamics which characterise these differences.

He argues that sight can be understood in three different ways:

[696] Stephen Pattison, *Seeing Things: Deepening Relations with Visual Artefacts* (London: SCM Press, 2007).

1. The first is as a *perceptual experience*. This is the physiological process whereby the organ of the eyes apprehends the physically visible world and transmits that information to the brain. This also includes psychological questions concerning how the brain interprets that information, or is capable of misinterpreting it, or imagining other realities and attributing them to sight.
2. A second way of understanding vision is as a *social practice.* This refers to the historical, philosophical and cultural influences that affect how we understand sight: how we value vision; the things we choose to see and the things we forbid being seen; how we represent and describe the visual; the things we regard it credible for someone to claim to see and the things we don't think it possible to see; the different scientific and philosophical theories of light and sight that we produce. These change depending on time and place, and Pattison uses Jay's phrase, "scopic regime,"[697] to describe the "integrated complex of visual theories and practices"[698] which exist at any one time.
3. The third element of sight is its status as a *discursive construct*. By this Pattison means the wide range of visual metaphors used by the Western intellectual tradition to describe knowledge, reasoning, and experience of the divine. These revolve around understanding seen as sight and light, and ignorance as darkness, or blindness. In these, an analogy is drawn between our experience of reason, spiritual growth or mystical ecstasy, and human sight as defined by a particular "scopic regime."

[697] Ibid., p. 26.
[698] Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), p. 4.

I wish to suggest, in the light of the evidence I have amassed in this thesis, that modern New Testament scholars' interpretation of the Transfiguration is overwhelmingly governed by the understanding of vision we see in category 1, as a purely *perceptual experience*. Very few explore what we might describe within the terms of category 2 the "scopic regime" within which the gospel writers work, and within which their first audience read and understood them. A major problem is the fact that modern and New Testament writers inhabit two completely different "scopic regimes". Patristic writers share a "scopic regime" much closer to those who created the New Testament, and so understand the wider range of meaning, which claims to vision had in the ancient world. I argue this notion of "scopic regime" could be useful in explaining many of the interpretative differences we have explored through this thesis between ancient and modern interpretation.

Pattison argues the pre-cartesian understanding of vision was fundamentally "haptic," by which he means that it was seen to establish a participatory, reciprocal relationship between the viewer and that which is seen. This was partly due to a series of theories explaining the physiological processes of sight in terms of a physical relationship.[699] These scientific theories came to be extended conceptually to undergird all sight as having a relational, almost tactile quality. Pattison asserts, "sight was not abstract, passive and distant, it was physically relational, a kind of active touching, penetrating and being penetrated."[700]

Pattison contrasts the "scopic regime" of antiquity with that of modernity. He notes a significant change brought about by Locke and Descartes, in which vision is

[699] Pattison, p. 42.
[700] Ibid.

increasingly divorced from the activity of the mind. The mind becomes the true seat of sight, separate from the physical world, and the eye simply a perceptual organ feeding it with the information it needs to interpret its surroundings. The viewer increasingly stands at an objective distance from what is seen, as a dispassionate, forensic observer of what is physically present. With the reasoning mind as the organ of vision interpreting its surroundings, claims to subjective vision of something not seen by others becomes categorised as misinterpretation or psychological disturbance. The range of things which may legitimately be described as "seen" is, therefore, much narrower in modernity than in antiquity. In this way, the modern world's "ocularcentric" understanding of vision excludes ecstatic vision. Pattison judges the modern view of vision to be an impoverished one: "...this dismissal of "extraordinary" sight may simply be another kind of blindness which confines Westerners' vision to a thin, limited view of reality...The arbitrary censorship of apparently non-material "seeing" might be another instance of our unwillingness to deal with vision in its pluriformity."[701]

This difference in understanding of vision goes to the heart of some of the difficulties inherent in modern critical scholarship's treatment of the Transfiguration and its ignoring of pre-critical comment. For the writers of the New Testament, vision was not just an objective judging and measuring of reality external to the human subject. The writers of the New Testament would necessarily see in the Transfiguration's claims to be a "vision" an important *participatory* element largely over looked in modern criticism. In this, the role of the disciples as witnesses and participants in this vision takes on a much greater importance. I argue, therefore, Patristic interpretation

[701] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

is much more sensitised to interpretation of the ways in which the disciples *participate* in our narrative and give this element a much greater significance.

Patristic comment also lays stress on the Transfiguration as a metaphor for knowledge and vision of the divine in those who read the narrative. The cleavage we have noted between Modern and Ancient Transfiguration interpreters' theories of vision becomes even more pronounced when we examine the third category of vision described by Pattison, that of vision as a *discursive construct*. Modern historical critical New Testament scholarship is almost universally uninterested in seeing in the Transfiguration narratives any kind of metaphor or analogy which might appertain to epistemological questions touching on knowledge, understanding of God, or spiritual growth. Critical scholars are concerned solely with establishing the historical origins of the text, or with giving a cultural and historical account of theological motifs within our narratives. The Fathers, by contrast, see a rich range of analogies between the Transfiguration story and the processes whereby the faithful experience God, interpret the scriptures and "see" the divine. I argue this stems from their more expansive notion of "vision" both as implying a greater degree of participation, and also as standing as an important metaphorical analogy.

9.3 Importance of Luke's narrative

In response to the second part of the research question I laid out, I also argue details only present in Luke's narrative have repeatedly played a particularly important role in much of the discussion we have outlined above concerning the visionary character of the Transfiguration, and especially the disciples' *participation* in it.

Entry into the Cloud

The question of who enters into the cloud, and Luke's distinct assertion that the disciples do, prompts reflection on the way in which the Transfiguration is conceived of as an entry into a divine tabernacle. The different sense of space I have pointed to as present in Luke's version could also underpin some comparisons made between the Transfiguration and entry into an enclosed space. I have to admit this is not a dynamic frequently commented upon by patristic authors. However, two authors do use the language of enclosed spaces to describe looking at the Transfiguration. Anastasius of Antioch describes Peter looking into a vestibule or porch, whilst Chrysostom compares the vision he hopes the Transfiguration will prompt in his hearers to be like looking into a theatre or a court room. The notion that this vocabulary stems from Luke's narrative is difficult to prove conclusively, but is offered here as a plausible possibility. I have also suggested that Luke's entry into the cloud could be one of the principal dynamics being evoked by the creators of the Transfiguration mosaic at St Catherine's monastery on Sinai. Latin writers such as Ambrose and Hilary associate the cloud with the working of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Jerome, Augustine, Bede and Ambrose Autpert read the disciples' entry into the cloud as akin to entry into a heavenly tabernacle. The question of who enters the cloud is commented upon more widely by Latin writers. Most read the Lucan text as implying entry by all the disciples. The only exception to this, which I have been able to find, is Ambrose Autpert, who sees the cloud as hiding Moses and Elijah, and leaving the disciples outside it. We have noted that debate about who enters the cloud continues to be reflected in visual depiction. I have suggested some of the more perplexing elements within the Transfiguration image in the St Zeno Chapel in S. Prassede may stem from

lack of clarity as to whether the disciples' should be included within the glorious cloud.

"Glory" and "Exodus"

I have shown Luke's language of "glory" to be a crucial connection used repeatedly by patristic writers in East and West to link the Transfiguration with a series of Old Testament epiphanies, experiences of God's cultic presence, and the life of the Jerusalem Temple. However, I have argued in Chapter 8 this is a particularly important connection for artists who draw connections between the Transfiguration and Revelation 21 and 22 in S. Prassede, the Utrecht Psalter and the ivory diptych we examined. I have also argued the images in S. Prassede and S. Maria in Domnica present the Transfiguration as a foretaste of what Luke describes as the "exodus" Jesus was to accomplish in Jerusalem at his Ascension and glorification.

Connections with the Ascension

Luke's connecting of the Transfiguration to the Ascension described in Acts is accomplished through shared use of the phrase, "ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο."[702] Links with the Ascension are very pronounced in *Ap. Pet.* which locates its transfiguration scene on Mount Olivet, and actually turns the incident into an ascension in which Moses, Jesus and Elijah are taken into heaven. I have argued *Ap. Pet.* draws on many Lucan details, and echoes Luke's language concerning "two men." These Lucan connections with the Ascension become particularly pronounced in the depictions we have examined in ninth century Rome, in S. Prassede and in S. Maria Domnica, in which we see a concatenation of imagery from the Transfiguration with imagery drawn from

[702] Luke 9.30 c.f. Acts 1.10.

Acts 1 showing Jesus entering heaven accompanied by two angelic figures. In addition to his, the ivory diptych we studied presents the Transfiguration side by side with the Ascension and strongly evokes one in the depiction of the other.

Sleep

Both Anastasius of Sinai and Chrysostom see significance in the sleepiness of the disciples described by Luke. For Anastasius, it is a consequence of their ecstatic vision, and evidence of exhausted rapture. By contrast, Chrysostom interprets this entirely to the contrary. He sees the sleepy exhaustion as a sign of the weakness of the mortal faculties of sight, and as proof that no form of ecstasy is entered into. This is an impulse shared by many later Latin writers, such as Ambrose of Milan and Ambrose Autpert, who connect the disciples' sleepiness with a state of joyful forgetfulness.

Peter's not knowing what he said

Peter's not knowing what he said is most notably pointed to as revealing an ecstatic state by Origen and Tertullian. For Tertullian, this is a positive example of the sort of Montanist prophetic activity he seeks to defend, and argues the disciples' experience to be similar to that of the prophets of the Old Testament. Origen also sees Peter's not understanding what he said to be a sign of ecstatic vision, but one which is prompted by demonic possession. For Origen, Peter's state of mind is a hindrance to understanding the Transfiguration, whereas for Tertullian it is a crucial prerequisite. Anastasius I of Antioch echoes elements of Tertullian's judgement. For Anastasius, Peter's not knowing what he said is evidence of ecstasy, and a positive example of the sort of vision available for his hearers. By contrast with this, there emerges a

consistent impulse within later Latin interpretation seen in Ambrose, Leo, Bede, Augustine and Ambrose Autpert, to show that whilst Peter was somehow beside himself, it was purely in a sense of joyous excitement, or elated forgetfulness, and lead to no state of epistemically altered consciousness or ecstasy.

Priestly, tabernacle, and temple themes

It is also the case that a number of readings which present the Transfiguration as an entry into a temple space, compare it with God's heavenly tabernacle, or see Jesus as a high priestly figure, frequently draw on Lucan elements. The *Apocalypse of Peter* is one of the most important examples of this sort of interpretation. It locates the Transfiguration on Sion, mentions the Lucan theme of ascending the mountain in order to pray, and echoes Luke's language of "glory," and the phrase, "behold two men," in its description of a heavenly scene full of priestly figures. I have argued this text influences later depiction of the Transfiguration in Classe, which is replete with priestly themes. Origen describes the transfigured Jesus as a High Priest, and roots this in Luke's mention of Jesus' ascent of the mountain being in order to pray. He also describes the cloud as a tabernacle, and points to the processes of ascending to the divine, which he sees the Transfiguration to stand for, as akin to entry into a Holy of Holies. I have shown that this temple understanding of the Transfiguration allows Origen to connect the Transfiguration to a number of temple incidents in Luke's Gospel, through use of Philippians 2. Anastasius of Sinai has been shown both to draw on Luke's version of the narrative and to produce a number of readings in which the Transfiguration is compared with the feast of tabernacles, and the transfigured Christ is described as the new Christian temple established in the New Jerusalem. I have also argued that in the depictions found in S. Prassede, in the Utrecht Psalter,

and in the ivory diptych we examined, details from the Lucan narrative are crucial to the connections which are drawn between the Transfiguration and the temple city of Rev 21. These include the notion of "glory," connections with the Ascension, and meditation on the "exodus" Jesus was to accomplish in Jerusalem.

9.4 Reappraisal of Latin traditions of Transfiguration interpretation

I hope that answering the research question I set myself has resulted in two further original contributions to knowledge. The first of these is a re-appraisal of the vitality and creativity of Western traditions of Transfiguration interpretation. We have noted that it is a wide spread common place amongst those who write on the Transfiguration that the Orthodox East places great theological import on the Transfiguration and has a rich tradition of interpretation and depiction. Although this may be the case, this view has lead to a neglecting of western artistic and hermeneutic traditions. I hope to have shown that early artists in Rome, Ravenna, and France displayed great creativity in the way in which they juxtaposed imagery from the Transfiguration with other visionary incidents from the scriptures. These emphasised entry into God's heavenly tabernacle, such as Revelation 21 and 22, and Hebrews 12, or are prophetic texts from the Old Testament such as Isaiah 7, Habakkuk and Zechariah. In addition to this, the connections between the Transfiguration and the Heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation 21 were felt to be so widely held by the author of the Utrecht Psalter that that it was used as an aide-mémoire for the memorising of Isaiah 12. We have also pointed to examples of these connections having an impact on the liturgical and political experience of those who worshipped beneath these images. Paschal's placing of many saints' remains under his mosaic in S. Prassede reveals his attempts to "actualise" the image he presented not just during the liturgy, but also as a way of

extending notions of sacred space to the whole city he presided over as bishop. In addition to this, the presence of the Transfiguration in the St Zeno Chapel of S. Prassede may have contributed to local traditions which held the space to be like a paradisal garden, or Holy of Holies, and to be a place Pope Paschal was himself held by local tradition to have experienced a vision of heaven. In many of these depictions, we see a frequent insistence within Latin discourse on the corporate and communal character of the vision which the Transfiguration points forward to. It is possible this stems from the insistence of most Latin writers that the disciples' vision was not altered, and that anyone present could have seen the Transfiguration. This contrasts with a greater emphasis in the East on the restricted nature of the vision which the Transfiguration stands for, reserved for the ascetically trained, those who lead the monastic life, or those have received the wisdom needed to read and contemplate the scriptures correctly.

9.5 The importance of visual interpretation and depiction

A second original contribution to knowledge which emerges out of this thesis is a renewed emphasis on the importance of visual interpretation within accounts of the reception history of scriptural texts. The study I have offered of mainly Western Transfiguration images has shown that many of the interpretative strands we have seen in written comment come to be expressed in different ways in visual depiction. I have argued we see the sort of interpretation O'Hear has described as "visionary visual exegesis." The frequent comparison of the Transfiguration with portions of the Book of Revelation, along with the influence of the *Apocalypse of Peter,* brings to the fore not just their shared status as the purported fruit of visionary experience, but also the visual character of the subject those texts depict. Comparison of the

Transfiguration with prophetic texts from the Old Testament, such as we see with Isaiah 7 in Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo, or in Tertullian's comment on the Transfiguration, also asserts an understanding of prophetic utterance which is rooted in the visualising of imagery. It is also the case that a number of interpretations which are less pronounced in written comment are sometimes more emphasised in visual depiction. The presence of priestly or temple-centred themes, for example, becomes more pronounced in many of the depictions we have examined than it is in written comment, and expresses the spatial dynamic inherent in ideas to do with entry into the divine presence, and the place of God's dwelling. It is also the case that many of the depictions of the Transfiguration which we have examined succeed in holding several images, ideas, and scriptural references together in one simultaneous presentation. I have used Chidester's work to show how visual depiction enables this in a way which resists the prioritising of one reference over others, and which can be more allusive or suggestive in the way in which it communicates a sense of relationship between images. Visual depiction also opens up opportunities for biblical texts to be "actualised" in the lives of those who behold them, and who may indeed be illiterate, through the liturgical context in which they are set. Many of the themes explored in images of the Transfiguration such as vision of God, a sense of the presence of heavenly individuals, experience of Jesus' glorious presence, or a looking forward to the Parousia are key dynamics within the celebration of the Mass, which will have taken place under them. Indeed the communion of saints is often emphasised physically by the presence of the bones of the saints. What is depicted in Transfiguration depictions as a one off event in the life of Jesus, becomes a narrative entered into time and time again by those who feel they experience the reality it expresses every time they celebrate the Liturgy.

9.6 Conclusion

This re-appraisal of the New Testament Transfiguration narratives and their interpretation in the Patristic period has shown that a normative way of reading that narrative for something approaching almost half of Christian history is one which took very seriously the visionary character of the incident. The point of this thesis has not been to show that modern historical critical comment on the Transfiguration has no use. This thesis has simply tried to show where gaps and uncertainties within modern scholarship exist and has tried to fill and clarify them by ranging across comment produced by people who inhabit a "scopic regime" very different from that of modernity. As such, this thesis is useful to historical-critical scholars who want to explore how the sort of vision described in the Transfiguration narratives was understood by the gospels' writers and their first readers in antiquity. However at the same time, it is also of use to those interested in the significance of our texts' history of interpretation, and the ways in which they have been interpreted in a number of contexts throughout a significant period of Christian history. Patristic commentators frequently saw the Transfiguration as a paradigm for a range of metaphorical sight, prophetic utterance, inspired dream, and ecstatic vision, which characterise human existence, ascetic growth, liturgical worship, and intellectual reflection. Especially in the West, it was compared in both written and artistic reflection with a broad range of apocalyptic and prophetic texts, and was often seen to embody an entry into the divine presence understood to be akin to the heavenly tabernacle of God, or the Holy of Holies. Luke's gospel played an especially pivotal role in discourse concerning the visionary status of the incident. This contrasts with the focus of much modern critical scholarship, which revolves around a smaller number of questions to do with the

literary origin of the Transfiguration narratives, is ambivalent or uncertain about how to interpret the visionary claims of the texts, and has frequently overlooked both the significance of visual reception, and the distinct character of Luke's narrative. By examining a number of artists and commentators who inhabit a "scopic regime" much closer to that of the writers of the New Testament, I have shown the potential which many elements in our narrative have to provoke discourse concerning its visionary status. I have shown Luke's version to be particularly replete with such detail, and I have argued for a re-evaluation of the creativity of Western theological and artistic traditions' handling of the Transfiguration.

Far from being theologically naïve, or critically worthless, the patristic hermeneutic reflection we have examined is highly attentive to complexities present within the biblical text, and sensitive to the different ways in which those complexities might be read or understood. My study is not intended to reveal the insights of modern critical scholarship on the Transfiguration to be worthless, but rather that they stand on the shoulders of a much older body of reflection which is capable of significant hermeneutic sensitivity, creativity, and originality.

Thesis word count: 98, 842 words.

Illustrations Appendix



Figure 1: *St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai*
Source: Wikipedia, copyright owner presently unknown.



Figure 2: *S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna*
© Peter Anthony



Figure 3a: *Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo, Rome.*
© Br Lawrence Lew, O.P.



Figure 3b: Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo, close-up of Transfiguration image.
© Br Lawrence Lew, O.P.



Figure 3c: Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo, close up of Annunciation scene
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Figure 3d: Ss. Nereo ed Achilleo, close-up of Virgin and Child image.
© Br Lawrence Lew, O.P.



Figure 4a: *S. Prassede*, Rome.
© Peter Anthony



Figure 4b: Close up of Heavenly Jerusalem, S. Prassede, Rome
© Peter Anthony



Figure 4c: Moses figure in the Heavenly Jerusalem scene, S. Prassede, Rome.
© Peter Anthony



Figure 4d: Close-up of Elijah figure in Heavenly Jerusalem, S. Prassede, Rome.
© Peter Anthony



Figure 4e: S. Prassede, Rome, close up of Christ in the Heavenly Jerusalem
© Peter Anthony



Figure 4f: Transfiguration image, Zeno Chapel, S. Prassede, Rome.
© Peter Anthony



Figure 4g: Zeno Chapel Transfiguration close-up
© Peter Anthony



Figure 5a: Santa Maria in Domnica, Rome.
© Peter Anthony



Figure 5b: John the Baptist/Elijah figure close up, S. Maria in Domnica, Rome.
© Peter Anthony

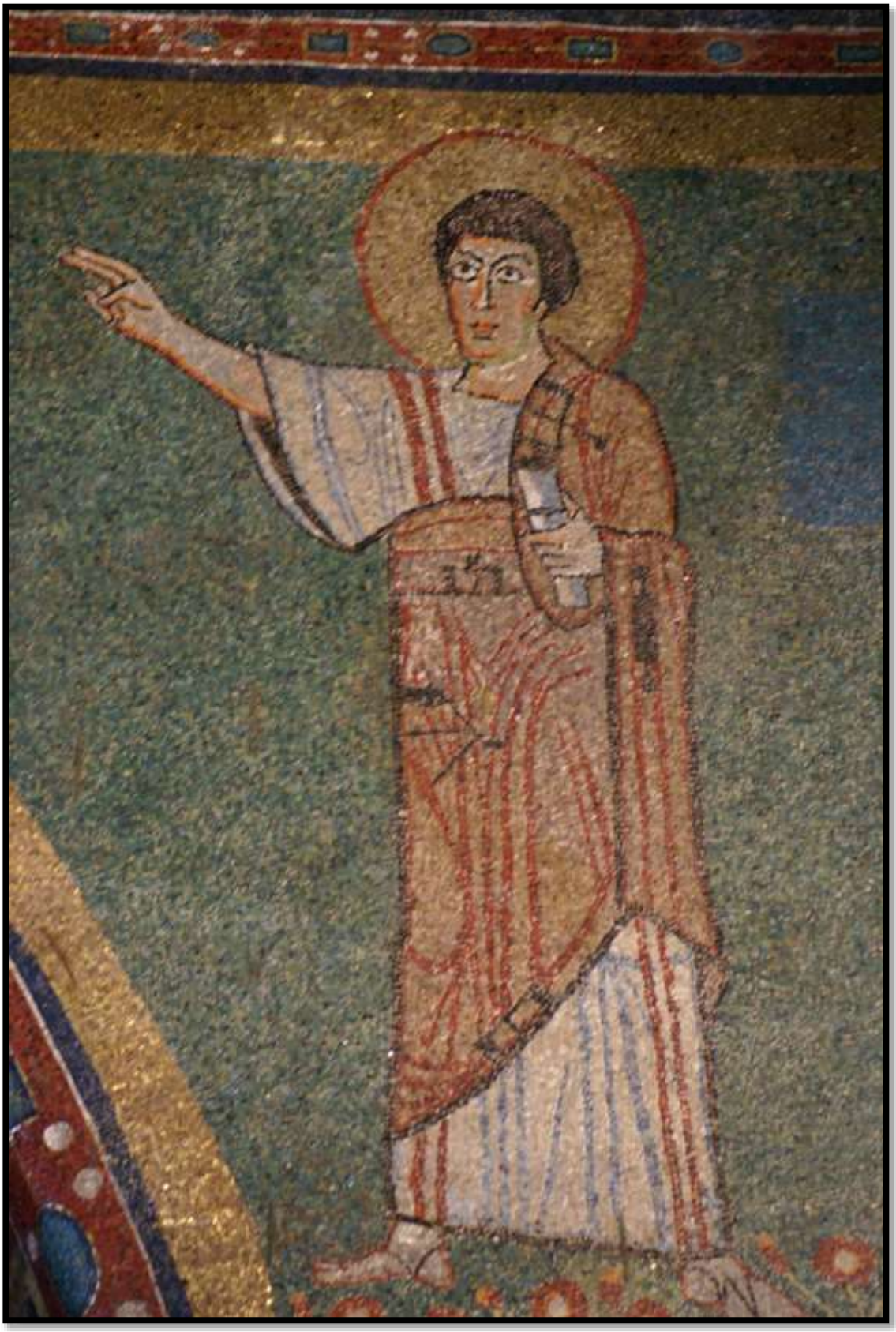


Figure 5c: Moses figure close up, S. Maria in Domnica, Rome.
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Figure 5d: S. Maria in Domica, Rome.
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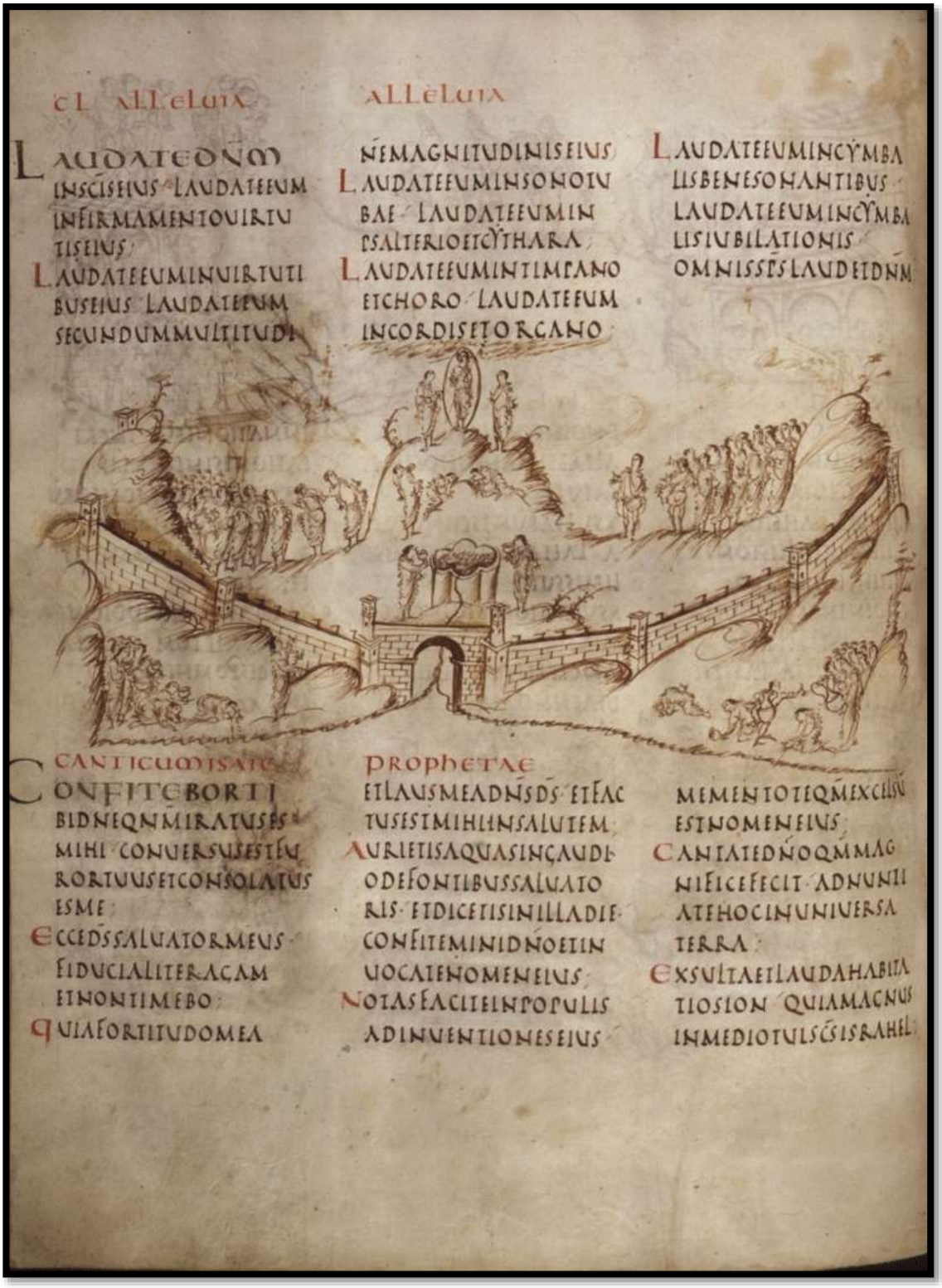


Figure 6a: *Utrecht Psalter*
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Figure 6b: Utrecht Psalter close-up
© The University of Utrecht



Figure 7: Ivory, Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogue number 254-1867
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Abbreviations for primary sources

Ap. Pet.	*The Apocalypse of Peter,* Ethiopic text: D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes will be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter*, (Atlanta Georgia, Scholars Press, 1988), pp.162-243. Greek, Akhmim text: GCS, Neue Folge, 11, pp. 104-117. Elliot and James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
Act. Pet.	*The Acts of Peter* Latin text: *Acta Apostolorum Aprocrypha*, Vol I, ed. Richard Lipsius, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1959), pp. 45-103.
Act. Joh.	*The Acts of John,* *Acta Apostolorum Aprocrypha*, Vol II/1, ed. Richard Lipsius, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1959), pp. 151-216.
Ad Theo. Laps.	John Chrysostom, *Paraenesis sive Adhortatio Ad Theodorum Lapsum,* Patrologia Graeca 47, 278-316.
Adv. Marc.	Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 1 (Turnhout, Brepols, 1956), 441-725.
Adv. Prax.	Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 2 (Turnhout, Brepols, 1956), 1159-1205.
Amb. Lib.	Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguorum Liber,* Patrologia Graeca 91.1125-8.
Bab.	John Chrysostom, *Discours sur Babylas,* Sources Chrétiennes 362*, ed. M. Schatkin* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1990).
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Patristic Series Latina*
Com. in Mat.	Hilary, *Commentarius in Matthaeum,* Patrologia Latina, 9, 917-1078.
Com. in Ev. Mat.	Jerome, *Commentarorium in Evangelium Matthaei* 3.17.1-9; Patrologia Latina, 26, 17-218
Com. In Ioh.	Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarii in Iohannem,* Pusey, P.E., *Sancti patris nostril Cyrilli arch. Alexandrini in d. Joannis Evengelium*, Oxford, 1872.
Com. In Luc.	Eusebius of Caesarea, *Comentarii in Lucae Evangelium quantum superset in Codicibus Vaticanis*, Patrologia Graeca, 24, 529-605.

Com. Mat.	Origen, *Commentarorium In Evangelium Secundum Matthaeum*, Patrologia Graeca 13, 835-1600.
Comm. Matt.	Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentarius in Matthaeum* Patrologia Latina 9, 917-1078.
Contra Cels.	Origen, *Contra Celsum*, Patrologia Graeca 11, 651-1632.
Contra Haer.	Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses,* Patrologia Graeca 7, 437-1224.
De Anima	Tertullian, *De Anima* Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 2, 781-869.
De Div. Nom.	Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite,. *De Divinis Nominibus* 1.4, Patrologia Graeca 3, 585-996.
De Prin.	Origen, *Peri Archon,* (De Principiis), Patrologia Graeca, 11, 115-414.
Explan. In Luc.	Cyril of Alexandria, *Explanatio in Lucae Evangelium,* Patrologia Graeca 72, 475-950.
Expos. in Luc.	Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*; Patrologia Latina 15.1527-1850.
Frag. Luc.	Origen, *Fragmenta in Lucam*, ed. Max Rauer, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, Origenes Werke 9, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1959) 227-336.
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahunderte (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.)
Hom. 21	John Chrysostom, Homilia XXI, *Ecloga de Imperio, Poteste et Gloria*, Patrologia Graeca 63, 696-716.
Hom. 24	The Venerable Bede, *Homilia 24 in Quadragesima: Quia Dominus Ac Redemptor* ed., David Hurst and J. Faipont, 1955, Corpus Christianorum 122, p. 170ff.
Hom. 56	John Chrysostom, *Hom XLV, Commentarius In S. Matthaeum Euangeliam,* Patrologia Graeca 58, 549-558.
Hom. in Trans.	Ambrose Autpert, *Homilia in Transfiguratione Domini,* Patrologia Latina 89, 1305-1320.
Hom. Div. 9	Cyril of Alexandria, *Cyrilii Homilae Diversae, Homilia IX,* Patrologia Graeca 77, 1109-1016.

Hom. Gen.	Origen, *Homélies sur la Genèse*, Sources Chrétiennes, 7, ed. Henri de Lubac & Louis Doutreleau (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1976).
Hom. in Io.	John Chrysostom, *In Ioannem Homiliae*, Patrologia Graeca 59, 23- 483.
Hom. in Ps. 44	Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia in Psalmum XLIV*, Patrologia Graeca 29, 387-414.
Hom. Lev.	Origen, *In Leviticum Homilia*, Patrologia Graeca 12, 404-574.
Hom. Luc.	*Homélies sur S. Luc*, SC 87, ed. Henri Crouzel (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1962), pp. 94-459.
Hom. Nom.	Origen, *In Numeros Homilia*, Patrologia Graeca, 12, 585-806.
Hom. Ps.	Basil, *Homilae in Psalmos* Patrologia Graeca, 29, 209-493.
In Ps. 45	Ambrose, *In Psalmum XLV Enarratio*, Patrologia Latina 14, 1133-1146.
Joh. Com.	Origen, *Origenes Johannescommentar*, (Commentary on St John's Gospel), ed. Erwin Preuschen, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, 10 (Origenes 4) (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchandlung, 1903), 3-480.
Orat. 7	Andrew of Crete, *Sancti Andreae Archiepiscopi Cretensis Cognomento Hierosolymitani Orationes Oratio VII: In Domini nostri Transfiguratione*, Patrologia Graeca 97, 932-57.
Paed.	Clement of Alexandria, *Paedogogos*, ed. O. Stählin, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, 15, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1972), 87-292.
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*, J. P. Migne (Paris, 1857-1866).
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, J.P. Migne (Paris, 1841-1855).
Prim. Reg. Expos.	Gregory the Great, *In Primum Regium Expositiones* Patrologia Latina 79, 21-468.
Sch. in Luc.	Athanasius, *Scholia in Lucam* Patrologia Graeca, 27, 1397D-1400A.
Ep ad Episc	*Epistola ad Episcopos Aegypti et Libyae* 13 Patrologia Graeca 25, 568C-569A.
SC	Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Editions du Cerf).

Serm. 1	Anastasius I of Antioch, *Sancti Anastasii Sermones Quator*, Sermo I, Patrologia Graeca 89, 1365-76.
Serm. 51	Leo, *Sermo LI*; Patrologia Latina, 54, 308-313
Serm. 78	Augustine, *Sermo LXXVIII, Patrologia Latina 38, 490-493.*
Tract. Adv. 5 Haer.	*Tractatus Adversus Quinque Haereses,* Patrologia Latina 42, 1101 ff.

Other Abbreviations

DACL	*Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, edited by Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq, 15 Vols, (Paris : Letouzey et Ané, 1953).
Danker	*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, edited by Frederick Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000).
EDNT	*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 Vols, edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993).
Good News	*Good News Bible*, 2nd ed. (London: Bible Society/Harper Collins, 1994).
Jerusalem Bible	*The Jerusalem Bible*, ed. Alexander Jones (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966).
Lewis and Short	*A Latin dictionary: founded on Andrews' edition of Freund's Latin dictionary*, edited by E.A. Andrews, William Freund, Charlton Lewis, Charles Short, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975).
Liddell and Scott	*A lexicon abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)
Oxford Latin Dictionary	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, edited by P.G.W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).
NEB	*The New English Bible* (Oxford; Cambridge: Oxford University Press; Cambridge University Press, 1970).
NIV	*The Holy Bible: The New International Version* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974).

NRSV	*The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version, containing the Old and New Testaments with the Aprocrypha, or Deuterocanonical Books,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
Patristic Greek Lexicon,	*A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* edited by G.W.H. Lampe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.
RSV	*The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, containing the Old and New Testaments with the Aprocrypha, or Deuterocanonical Books* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1952).
REB	*The Revised English Bible: New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
Translator's NT	*The Translator's New Testament,* edited by W. D.McHardy (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1973).
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* 10 vols, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964-1974).

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