

Völuspá and the Feast of Easter (Summary and Examples)

A. It seems clear that the poet of *Völuspá* has absorbed some Christian influences, but the nature of them cannot be decided without taking some view on:

- a) the probable date of the poem, and
- b) whether it is the work of a Christian or a pre-Christian poet.

a) The date of the poem has often been linked, rather subjectively, to Christian millenarian fears that the world would end either about the year 1000 or ca. 1030. I shall suggest two more concrete links to datable skaldic poetry. At least three stanzas of *Völuspá* are echoed at the end of *Þorfinnsdrápa* (A1), and this suggests a *terminus ante quem* ca. 1065. But st. 30, at least, is probably later than ca. 962: its list of valkyrie-names includes both *Skögul* and *Geirskögul*, and this seems to reflect a misunderstanding of *Hákonarmál* 11, in which *Skögul* is once referred to as *geir-Skögul* (A2).

b) During the first part of this period most Icelandic and Norwegian poets were heathen. From ca. 995 onwards, they were often in the service of Christian kings who discouraged the use of heathen mythology in poetry, on the traditional grounds that heathen gods were either devils or wicked historical figures (A3). There is a small group of rather minor early eleventh-century skaldic poets who do use mythological kennings, the most notable of whom is Hofgarða-Refr, and these men may have been covert heathens, but most skaldic poets of this period studiously avoid imagery derived from heathen belief. The earliest poet who uses heathen mythological imagery (rather sparingly) while being certainly a devout Christian is Arnórr jarlaskáld, in poems dating from ca. 1044 onwards. The balance of probability is therefore that the *Völuspá* poet was not Christian, and this impression is reinforced by the fact that he misunderstands or reinterprets some Christian ideas. If this is accepted, it follows that he was almost certainly illiterate in the Roman alphabet and had no knowledge of Latin. Consequently, any specific Christian influences on the poem must be confined to those which could be *heard* in a vernacular language that the poet could understand, and in a social context from which non-Christians were not excluded.

1. Björt verður sól at svartri,
sækkr fold í mar dækkvan,
brestr erfiði Austra,
allr glymr sær á fjöllum,
áðr at eyjum friðri
(innróttar) Þórfinni
(þeim hjalpi goð geymi)
goðingr myni fœðask.

The bright sun will become black,
the earth will sink in the dark sea,
the labour of Austri [the sky] will split,
the whole sea will rage over the mountains,
before in the islands a finer prince
than Þorfinnr will be born
(may God help that protector of his household).

(Arnórr jarlaskáld, *Þorfinnsdrápa* 22; funeral-lay, composed c. 1065)

...Austri ok Vestri

... Eastern and Western

svart var þá sólskin of sumur eptir

(among the dwarves, *Völuspá* 11,3)

the sunshine was then black during the summer after

(*Völuspá* 41,5-6)

troða halir helveg, enn himinn klofnar.

men will tread the road to Hel and heaven will split.

(*Völuspá* 52,7-8)

Sól tér sortna, sígr fold í mar,

the sun will become black, the earth will sink into

Hverfa af himni heiðar stjórnor;

the sea, the bright stars will disappear from heaven.

(*Völuspá* 57,1-4)

2. Göndul ok *Skögul* sendi Gauta-týr
at kjósa of konunga,
hverr Yngva ættar skyldi með Óðinn fara
ok í Valhöll vera.

The god of Goths (Óðinn) sent Göndul
and Skögul to choose among kings,
who of the kin of Yngvi should go with
Óðinn and stay in Valhöll.

Hví svá gunni skiptír, *geir-Skögul*?
órum þó verðir gagns frá goðum.

Why do you decide the battle so, spear-
carrying Skögul? Nonetheless, I had
deserved victory from the gods.

(Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *Hákonarmál* 1 and 11,1-3; c. 962-5)

Sá hon valkyrior, vítt um komnar,
gorvar at ríða til Goðþjóðar;
Sculd helt scildi, enn *Scögul* önnor,
Gunnr, Hildr, Göndul oc *Geirscögul*;
Nú ero talðar nönnur Herians,
gorvar at ríða grund, valkyrior.
(*Völuspá* 30)

She saw valkyries, come from afar,
ready to ride to the race of men;
Skuld held a shield, and Skögul was the second,
Gunnr, Hildr, Göndul and Geirscögul;
now the Warrior's [Óðinn's] women have been listed,
valkyries ready to ride the earth.

3. end ec forsacho allum díoboles uuercum
and uuordum, Thunaer ende Uuóden ende
Saxnóte ende allum them unholdum the hira
genótas sint.

and I forsake all the devil's works and
words, Thunaer and Uuóden and Saxnót,
and all the fiends who are their
companions.

(Saxon Baptismal Oath, from Mainz, 9th century; Vatican MS Cod. Pal. 577; Simek 276)

B. The most notable feature of *Völuspá* 3-6, often ignored simply because of the familiarity of its material, is its extensive use of *Genesis* 1, 1-14 (B1-4). One of these echoes also appears in similar words in the verse of the *Wessobrunner Prayer* 2-6 (B1), and the prose ending of that prayer (B5) is in its turn echoed in the early eleventh-century *Missal of Robert of Jumièges* (B6). This prayer appears in the Easter Vigil service, during which heathens who had received some instruction in the Christian faith were introduced to the church as catechumens. The first lesson at that service was always *Genesis* 1, 1-14, and there is evidence that some care was taken to ensure that catechumens received enough explanation in a vernacular language for them to understand at least the general outline of the Latin service. Just before the point at which catechumens must leave, the Easter Vigil service in the *Missal of Robert of Jumièges* also includes a sentence in which the ritual of the lighting of the new fire is used to foreshadow the destruction of Satan and his angels by fire on Doomsday. Something like this might have contributed to the fire imagery of the Ragnarök description in *Völuspá* (B7), even though Surtr's fire is also referred to in *Vafþrúðnismál* 50, where Christian influence seems less likely.

1. Ár var alda þat er ecci var, (H, SnE)
vara sandr né ser né svalar unnir;
íðrð fannz æva né upphiminn,
gap var ginnunga, enn gras hvergi.
(*Vsp.* 3)

Dat ero ni uuas noh ífhimil,
noh þaum, noh pereg ni uuas,
ni sterro nohheinig, noh sunna ni scein,
noh mano ni liuhta, noh der maræo seo.
Do dar niuuiht ni uuas enteo ni uuenteo,

'It was in ancient times, when nothing was,
there was neither sand nor sea nor cold waves;
no earth existed, nor heaven above,
magic space was void, and no vegetation.'

'There was no earth, nor heaven above,
nor tree, nor rock existed,
not a star shone, nor did the sun,
no moon give light, nor (was there) the famous sea.
Nothing existed, neither end nor beginning ...'

In principio... (Gen. 1,1)

'In the beginning...'

Terra autem erat inanis et vacua...

'And the earth: was without form and void' (Gen. 1,2)

2. Áðr Burs synir biððum um yppu,
þeir er miðgarð mæran scópo;

'Until Burr's sons raised up the lands,
they who created splendid middle earth.'
(Vsp. 4,1-4)

Dixit vero Deus: 'Congregentur aquæ, quæ sub
cælo sunt, in locum unum, et appareat arida.
Et factum est ita.

'And God said: 'Let the waters under the heaven be
gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land
appear'. And it was so.' (Gen. 1,9)

(In principio creavit Deus cælum et terram)

('In the beginning God created the heaven
and the earth') (Gen. 1,1)

þá var grund gróin grœnum lauki
leek.' (Vsp. 4,7-8)

Et ait Deus: 'Germinet terra herbam virentem...

'And God said: 'Let the earth bring forth green
herbs...' (Gen. 1,11)

3. Sól varp sunnan, sinni mána,
hendi inni hægri um himiniðður; caeii,

'The sun moved from the south, the moon's
of companion, her right hand on heaven's rim,'
(Vsp. 5,1-4)

Dixit autem Deus: 'Fiant luminaria in firmamento
ut dividant diem ac noctem et sint in signa et
tempora et dies et annos...

'But God said: "Let there be lights in the firmament
heaven, so that they divide the day and night, and let
them be for signs and times, both days and years..."'
(Gen. 1,14)

4. nótt ok niðiom nöfn um gáfo,
morgin héto oc miðian dag,
undom oc aptan árom at teiia.
'to Night and her children they gave names,

called them morning and midday,
afternoon and evening, to count in years.'
(Vsp. 6,5-10)

Appelavitque Deus lux Diem et tenebras Noctem.
Factumque est Vespere et mane, dies unus.

'And God called the light Day and the darkness
Night.
And there was the evening and the morning, the
first day.' (Gen. 1,5)

5. Cot almahtico, du himil enti erda gauuorahtos enti du mannan so manac coot forgapi: forgip mir in
dina ganade rehta galaupa enti cotan uuilleon, uuištóm enti spahida enti craft, tiufun za
uuiðarstantanne enti arc za piuuissanne enti dinan uuilleon za gauurchanne.

'Almighty God, you made heaven and earth and you gave so many good things to men. By your grace,
give me right belief and good will, wisdom and foresight and strength, to resist the devil and to shun
evil and to do your will.'
(Wessobrunner Prayer, closing section)

6. Deus qui mirabiliter creasti hominem. et mirabilius redemisti. da nobis quesumus contra
oblectamenta peccati mentis ratione resistere. ut mereamur ad gaudia aeterna peruenire.

'God, who marvellously created mankind and even more marvellously redeemed them, grant, we pray,
that we may resist by mental reason the distracting pleasures of sin, so that we may deserve to reach
the eternal joys.' (Missal of Robert of Jumièges, Easter Vigil, prayer after the first reading, 'In
principio').

7. Surtr ferr sunnan með sviga lævi,
skinn af sverði sól valfíva;
'Surtr travels from the south with the destroyer
of brushwood (=fire), the sun shines from the
sword of the gods doomed to slaughter.'

(*Vsp.* 52,1-4)

geisar eimi við aldmara
threatens
leicr hárf hiti við himin síalfan

'flame rages opposite life-nourishing (fire),
the lofty heat plays against heaven itself.'

(*Vsp.* 57,5-8)

Nec te latet satanas imminere poenas imminere
tibi tormenta. imminere tibi diem iudicii. diem
supplicii. diem qui uenturus est uelut clibanus ardens.
In quo tibi atque uniuersis angelis tuis
aeternus ueniet interitus.

'Be not deceived, Satan: punishment threatens thee,
torment threatens thee, the day of judgement

thee, the day of punishment, the day which shall
come

as a burning furnace, when everlasting destruction
shall come upon thee and all thine angels.'

(*Missal of Robert of Jumièges* 96-7)

C. When we look more closely at the description of Ragnarök in *Völuspá*, at the events that precede it and the rebirth of the world that follows it, it is possible to identify a large number of echoes of the *Book of Revelations* (chapters 6, 8, 17 and 19-22) and of the so-called 'Little Apocalypse' in Christ's predictions of Doomsday in *Mark* 13,7-26 (C1-14). I include st. 65, which is only in *Hauksbók*, although it is rejected by Dronke and von See as too overtly Christian to be original. As its material is derived from the same source as stt. 45, 57, and it was clearly known to the poet of *Hyrnduljóð* 44, it must, if interpolated, have been inserted early and skilfully; but it is a simpler hypothesis to suggest that it is an original part of the poem.

The simplest way in which this apocalyptic material could have reached the poet is probably via a single Easter Day sermon. Since it was believed that Doomsday would be on the same day as Christ's resurrection, it is not surprising that some Easter sermons, such as *Blickling Homily VII*, concentrate on the coming end of this world. But unlike *Blickling Homily VII*, whose description of the last things comes from the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Thomas*, this sermon must have been based on these passages of canonical scripture. Something rather like parts of it can be seen in *Vercelli Homily II*, one version of which is entitled *De Die Iudicii* (see C1, 5, 10, 14, 15, the last containing a long list of short phrases, nearly all of which could be paralleled from various stanzas of *Völuspá*).

None of the surviving versions of *Vercelli Homily II* can plausibly be suggested as the actual Easter sermon that might have been heard by the poet of *Völuspá*, because the poem also contains apocalyptic biblical echoes that are not found in any version of the homily, and the actual source probably included all of them. They include the strife between brothers in *Vsp.* 45 (cf. *Mark* 13,7); Loki bursting free in *Vsp.* 47 (cf. *Rev.* 21,7); the gathering of the forces of the Beast for battle in *Vsp.* 51 (cf. *Rev.* 19,19); and the second rising of the earth from the sea (cf. *Rev.* 21,1). Other possible echoes are the image of the old woman giving birth to Fenrir's children and the gorging on the blood of the dead in *Vsp.* 40-41 (cf. the whore of Babylon in the wilderness, drunk on the blood of the saints, in *Rev.* 17,3-6); and the image of the dwarves trembling outside their stone doors in *Vsp.* 48 (cf. *Rev.* 6,15-16). Nor is there any evidence that the source sermon was in Old English - it might equally well have been in Old Norse or Old Saxon. The apparent reinterpretation of OS *Mu(ð)spilli* 'Doomsday' as *Muspeliz ... lýðir* 'the forces of (a giant called?) Muspell' (*Vsp.* 51,2-3) may suggest that the last is the most likely, but too few early homiletic texts survive for us to know how widely current this word was, especially whether it was used in early Norse homilies.

1. Sá hon þar vaða þunga strauma
Menr meinsvara oc morðvarga,
Oc þannz annars glepr eyrarímo;

Timidis autem et incredulis et exsecratis et homicidis
et fornicatoribus et ueneficis et idololatrís et omnibus
mendacibus, pars illorum erit in stagno ardenti igne
et sulphure, quod est mors secunda.

'She saw there, wading the grievous currents,
lying men and murderers,
and the man who seduces another man's mate;
(Vsp. 39,1-6)

'But as for cowards and unbelievers and the accursed
and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and
idolators and all liars, their part will be in the bog
blazing with fire and sulphur, which is the second
death.'
(Rev. 21,8)

...in morþre 7 on mane, in susle 7 on sare, on wean 7 on wærmum, betweox deaðum 7 dioflum, 7 on bryne 7
on biternesse 7 on fulnesse 7 on eallum þam wítum þe dioflu gearwædon fram þære frymþe...

(On the sinful soul in hell, *Vercelli Homily II*, Version A 63-7)

'... in murder and in crime, in torment and in sorrow, in woe and among worms, among the dead and devils,
and in burning and in bitterness and in foulness and in all the punishments which devils have prepared
since the creation...'

2. Austr sat in aldna í lárniði
ok fæddi þar Fenris kindir;
'In the east sat the old woman in Iron Wood
and gave birth there to Fenrir's children,'
(Vsp. 40,1-4)

Et in fronte eius nomen scriptum: Mysterium; Babylon
magna, mater fornicationum, et abominationum terræ.
'And upon her forehead a name written: "Mystery,
Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and
abominations of the earth"'
(Rev. 17,5)

3. Fylliz fiörvi feigra manna,
ryðr ragna siöt rauðum dreyra;
'(He) fills himself with the life-blood of
doomed people, reddens the gods' homes
with red blood.'
(Vsp. 41,1-4)

Et vidi mulierem ebriam de sanguine sanctorum,
et de sanguine martyrum Jesu;
'And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the
saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus;'
(Rev. 17,6)

4. Bræðr muno beriaz oc at bönom verðaz,
muno systrungar sifíom spilla;
hart er í heimi, hórdómr mikill,
sceggöld, scálmöld, scildir ro klofnir,
vindöld, vargöld, áðr veröld steypiz;
'Brothers will fight and slay each other,
kinsfolk will break the bonds of kinship;
it's harsh in the world, much wickedness,
an axe-age, a sword-age, shields are split,
a wind-age, a wolf-age, before the world falls;'
(Vsp. 45,1-10)

Et tradet frater fratrem in mortem et pater filium;
et consurgent filii in parentes et morte efficient eos.
'And brother will deliver brother to death, and the
father his son; and children will rise against their
parents and procure their deaths.'
(Mark 13,12)

Cum audieritis autem bella et opiniones bellorum,
ne timueritis; oportet fieri sed nondum finis.
'But when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do
not be afraid; so it must be, but the end is not yet.'
(Mark 13,7)

5. Leica Míms synir enn miðuðr kyndiz
at ino gamla Gíallarhorni;
hátt blæss Heimdallr, horn er á lopti,
'Mím's sons are active and the tree of fate
catches fire at the sound of the ancient horn
Gjöll; Heimdallr blows loudly, the horn
is aloft,'
(Vsp. 46,1-6)

Et primus tuba cecinit. Et facta est grando et ignis
mixta in sanguine, et missa est in terram; et tertia pars
terrae combusta est, et tertia pars arborum combusta
est.
'And the first trumpet sounded, and a hail came, fire
mixed with blood, and was sent on the earth; and a
third part of the earth was burned up, and a third
part of the trees were burned up.'
(Rev. 8,7)

In þam dæge beoð blawende þa byman of. iiii. sceattum þyses middangeardes, 7 þonne ealle arisað ...

(*Vercelli Homily II*, Version A 12-13)

'In that day the trumpets will sound from the four corners of this earth, and then all will arise...'

6. ymr íþ aldna tré, enn iðunn losnar;
hræðaz allir á helvegum,
áðr Surtar þann sefi of gleyþir.
'The ancient tree groans and the giant (Loki)

Et cum consummati fuerint mille anni, solvetur
Satanas de carcere suo et exhibit seducere gentes,
quae sunt in quattuor angulis terrae.
'And when a thousand years have passed, Satan

breaks free; all are afraid on the roads to Hel
before Surtr's kinsman (fire) swallows it
(the tree.)' (Vsp. 47,3-8)

7. gnýr allr iðtunheimr, æsir ro á þingi;
stynia dvergar fyr steindurom.
'The whole giant-world resounds, the gods are
in council; the dwarves tremble in front of
their stone doors.' (Vsp. 48,3-6)

8. fara ffils megir með freca allir,
þeim er bróðir Býleiptz í for.
'all the forces of the monster travel with the
wolf; Býleiptz's brother (Loki) is in company
with them.' (Vsp. 51,5-8)

9. gríótiþiórg gnata, enn gífr rata,
troða halir helveg, enn himinn klofnar.
'stony rocks clash, and hags are about,
men tread the road to Hel and heaven splits.'
(Vsp. 52,5-8)

10. Sói tér sortna, sígr fold í mar,
hverfa af himni heiðar stjörnor;
'The sun grows dark, earth sinks in the sea,
the bright stars depart from heaven.'
(Vsp. 57,1-4)

7 on þam dæge gewit sunnan leoht 7 monan leoht 7 þa leoht ealra tungla

(Vercelli Homily II, Version A, 6-7)

'and on that day the light of the sun and the light of the moon and the light of all stars will depart'.

11. Sér hon upp koma öðro sinni
iöðr ör ægi, iðiagræna;
'She sees rise up for a second time
earth from the sea, eternally green.'
(Vsp. 59,1-4)

12. Munu ósánir acrar vaxa,
bðils mun allz batna, Baldr mun koma;
búa þeir Höðr oc Baldr Hroptz sigtóptir,
vel, valtívar – vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?
'Fields will grow unsown,
every ill will be put right, Baldr will come;
Höðr and Baldr, those gods of the slain,
will happily inhabit Hroptz's (Óðinn's)

will be set free from his prison and will go out
to mislead the peoples who are in the four corners
of the earth.' (Rev. 21,7)

Et vidi mortuos, magnos et pusillos, stantes in
conspectu throni; et libri aperti sunt.
'And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before
the throne; and the books were opened.' (Rev. 20,12)
Et dicunt montibus, et petris: Cadite super nos, et
abscondite nos a facie sedentis super thronum,
'and (they will) say to the mountains and rocks: Fall
on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth
upon the throne,' (Rev. 6,16)

Et vidi bestiam et reges terrae et exercitus eorum
congregatos ad faciendum proelium cum eo, qui
sedebat super equum, et cum exercitu eius.
'And I saw the Beast and the kings of the earth and
their army gathered to do battle with him who sat
on the horse, and with his army.' (Rev. 19,19)
et caelum recessit sicut liber involutus, et omnis
mons et insula de locis suis motae sunt.
'and the heaven departed like a rolled-up scroll, and
every mountain and island was moved from its place.'
(Rev. 6,14)

Sed in illis diebus post tribulationem illam sol
contenebrabitur, et luna non dabit splendorem
suum, et erunt stellae de caelo decedentes...
'But in those days, after that trouble, the sun will be
darkened, and the moon will not give forth its
splendour, and the stars will be departing from
heaven...' (Mark 13,24-5)

Et vidi caelum novum et terram novam; primum
enim caelum et prima terra abierunt, et mare iam
non est.
'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first
heaven and the first earth had passed away; and there
was no more sea.' (Rev. 21,1)

... et ipse Deus cum eis erit eorum Deus, et
absterget omnem lacrimam ab oculis eorum, et
mors ultra non erit, neque luctus neque clamor
neque dolor erit ultra, quia prima abierunt.
'... and that same God who is with them shall
be their God, and he will wipe away every tear
from their eyes, and death will be no more, nor will
mourning or crying or sorrow be any more, because

victorious dwellings – do you know enough
yet, or what?' (Vsp. 62)

the former things will have gone away.'
(Rev. 21,3-4)

13. Sal sér hon standa sóio fegra,
gulli þacþan, á Gimlé;
þar scolo dyggvar dróttir byggia
oc um aldrdaga ynðis nióta.
'She sees a hall stand, fairer than the sun,
thatched with gold, at Gimlé;
there bands of trustworthy people will dwell
and enjoy bliss for ever.' (Vsp. 64)

Et nox ultra non erit, et non egent lumine
lucernae neque lumine solis, quoniam
Dominus Deus illuminabit super illos,
et regnabunt in saecula saeculorum.
'And there will be no more night, and they will not
need the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun,
for the Lord God will be a light over them, and they
will reign for ever and ever.' (Rev. 22,5)

14. Þá kœmr inn ríki at regindómi,
ðflugr, ofan, sá er ðllo ræðr.

Et tunc videbunt Filium hominis venientem
in nubibus cum virtute multa et gloria.

Then comes the mighty one to divine power,
strong, from above, he who rules all.
(Vsp. 65; Hauksbók only)

And then they will see the Son of man coming
in the clouds with great strength and glory.
(Mark 13,26)

On þam dæge siteð ure dryhten in his þam myclan mægenþrymme

(Vercelli Homily II, Version A 14-15)

'On that day our Lord will be seated in that great majesty of His.'

15. On þam dæge us bið æteowed se opena heofon 7 engla þrym 7 eallwihtra hryre 7 eorþan forwyrht,
treowleasra gewinn 7 tungla gefeall, þunorrada cyrm 7 se þystra storm, 7 þæra liga blæstm 7 graniendra
gesceaft 7 þæra gasta gefecht 7 sio grimme gesykhð 7 þa godcundan miht 7 se hata scur 7 hellwarena dream
7 þara bymena sang 7 se brada byrne 7 se bitera dæg 7 þara sawla gedal 7 se deaðberenda draca 7 diofla
forwyrð 7 se nearwa seap 7 se swearta deap 7 se byrmda grund 7 se blodiga stream 7 mycel fionda fyrhto
7 se fyrena ren 7 hæðena granung 7 hira heriga fyll, heofonwarena mengo 7 hiora hlafordes miht, 7 þæt
mycle gemot 7 sio reðe rod 7 se rihta dom 7 þara feonda gestal 7 þa blacan ondwlitan 7 bifendan word 7
þara folca wop ond se scamienda here 7 sio forglendrede hell 7 ðara wyrma gryre. (Vercelli Homily II,
Version A 39-51, ed. Scragg 56, 58).

'On that day we shall be shown the open heaven and glory of angels and fall of all creatures and destruction
of the earth, the struggle of the faithless and fall of stars, noise of thunder and the storm of darkness, and the
blaze of the fires and groans of created things, and the fighting of the souls and the grim sight, and the
divine power and the hot shower, and the joy of the hosts of hell and the sound of trumpets, and the broad
fire and the bitter day and the separation of souls and the death-bearing dragon and the destruction of devils
and the narrow pit and the black death and the burning earth and the bloody stream and great fear of devils
and the fiery rain and groaning of the heathen and fall of their armies, the multitude of hosts of heaven and
their Lord's might, and the great conflict and the cruel cross and the righteous judgement and accusations of
the devils and the pale faces and trembling words and weeping of the peoples and the army of those who
are ashamed and the glowing hell and horror of the serpents.'

Conclusion

The acquaintance of the *Vöðuspá* poet with Christianity clearly extended to the indirect knowledge
of specific verses of scripture. Without the hypothesis that he had been a catechumen (perhaps in
order to trade with Christians or to serve a Christian king?), it is hard to explain this specific
influence on the poem. Furthermore, the proposition of any other detailed Christian influence on
the poem (such as Dronke's suggestion that he had heard the *Cantus Sibyllae* as part of the
Christmas Office) would also require us to assume that the poet had been a catechumen, and
therefore that he would already have experienced the Easter liturgy that I have studied in this
paper.