



## Research Article

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# Intimations of Revelation 19–21 in the Early North African Christian Communities

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to provide a survey of the interpretation of Revelation 19–21 in the early North African Christian communities (II–III century). These chapters refer to one of the most controversial passages of John’s Apocalypse (the eschatological war, the millennial kingdom, and the descent of the New Jerusalem). After a brief methodological reflection, the article will investigate how these chapters were interpreted not only in the early Latin authors but also how this material was employed in martyrdom accounts as well. The study, in fact, will begin with the first Latin document of Christian literature, the *Acta Martyrum Scilitanorum*, followed by the corpus of Tertullian, the *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, and the writings of Cyprian.

**Keywords:** revelation, Latin patristics, new testament, reception history

The purpose of this article is to offer an overview of the interpretation of chapters 19–21 of the *Book of Revelation* in the early North African Christian communities (II–III century).<sup>1</sup> In wider scholarship, attention to the interpretation of Revelation has mainly focused on individual works, above all the commentaries (the ones of Victorinus of Poetovio, Tyconius, Andrew of Caesarea, etc.), while fewer studies achieve a chronological or detailed examination of the reception of this book in the early Christian communities.<sup>2</sup> Along these lines, it is my intention to take steps in this direction, by analysing one of the most disputed passages in the whole book of Revelation<sup>3</sup> within the early Christian communities of Roman Africa. Thereby I aim to provide insights on the interpretation and exegesis of these chapters which could open further development in the study and comprehension of Revelation.

The motive in choosing Revelation 19–21 consists in its presentation of one of the highest eschatological climaxes; it describes the return of Christ and the eschatological war, the millennial kingdom, and the descent of the New Jerusalem. In contrast to the reluctant acceptance of Revelation in the eastern part of the Roman empire (which entails above all the question about chiliasm, referring to chapter 20), in the West

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<sup>1</sup> This article is part of a broader project (my PhD thesis at the University of St Andrews) which explores the exegesis of Rev 19–21 in the North African Christian Communities from the II to the V century (*“Quale regnum exinde iustorum! Qualis civitas nova Hierusalem!” Revelation 19–21 in the Exegesis of the Christian Communities of Roman Africa from the II to the IV century*).

<sup>2</sup> Two articles about the reception of Revelation are Meier, “Before Canonisation;” and Kruger, “The Reception of the Book of Revelation.” Recently, Hill provided a brief investigation on this topic (“The Interpretation of the Book of Revelation”); however, he only mentioned Tertullian and Tyconius from North African Christian communities. An exception is constituted by the commentary of Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*. In Meier, *Die Johannesoffenbarung*, there is only Tyconius and Augustine for the Western Christian Communities. The themes more studied in the context of the early reception of Revelation are the canonical issue and the chiliasm movement, related to Rev 20.

<sup>3</sup> See Koester, *Revelation*, 741.

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Revelation played a significant role in the exegesis of many Latin authors.<sup>4</sup> In this perspective, this article aims to investigate how the first Christian communities of Roman Africa understood chapters 19–21 of John’s Apocalypse and their proposed exegesis.<sup>5</sup>

Before entering the core analytical section, a methodological excursus is necessary; in this study, not only exact quotations of Rev 19–21 will be considered, but also allusions that could be useful for understanding the impact of these chapters in the North African tradition.<sup>6</sup> This is particularly important if one considers the “nature” of the book of Revelation itself. As Bauckham stresses, “it should be clear that the images of Revelation are symbols with evocative power inviting imaginative participation in the book’s symbolic world [...] the astonishingly meticulous composition of the book creates a complex network of literary cross-references, parallels, contrasts, which inform the meaning of the parts and the whole.”<sup>7</sup>

The first document to take into account is a martyrdom record which is extremely significant, given that it is the first evidence of the Latin Christian tradition. The *Acta martyrum Scilitanorum*<sup>8</sup> reports the trial that involved the Roman proconsul Vigellius Saturninus and a group of Christians,<sup>9</sup> which took place in Carthage on 17 July 180. In a brief dialogue, Saturninus tries to persuade the Christians to return to the Roman *bona mens*,<sup>10</sup> however, they bluntly refuse, professing the *nomen Christianorum*. In the final lines, the sentence of death is announced.

From the outset, the reader notes the contrast between Saturninus and Speratus (the spokesman of the martyrs), which draws attention to the act through which the Christians should provide evidence that they have returned to the *mos maiorum*: the oath to the Roman emperor.<sup>11</sup> The proconsul expresses the request with the following words: “If you begin to malign our sacred rites, I will not listen to you. But swear rather by the genius of our lord the emperor.”<sup>12</sup> Speratus’s reply, nevertheless, does not imply any repentance; on the contrary, it belies a strong contrast: “I do not recognize the imperial authority of this world. [...] for I recognize my lord, the king of kings and the emperor of all nations.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup> “The book would ultimately find a permanent place at the end of the New Testament canon, despite being temporarily eclipsed in some parts of the east because of doubts about authorship and eschatology that would first be raised in the third century” (Hill, “The Interpretation of the Book of Revelation,” 748). See also Kruger, “The Reception of the Book of Revelation,” 167–71. From the III century, in the Western communities a commentary tradition starts developing; on the contrary, for the Eastern communities, we must wait the VI century, with the commentary of Oecumenius.

<sup>5</sup> The Latin text found in the documents analysed will be compared to the Greek one to outline differences and similarities. At this stage, there is no unified Latin translation of the Bible. Tertullian seems to translate from the Greek, whereas Cyprian is the first Latin author who provided evidence of a Latin translation. It should also be noted that the “All surviving Latin New Testament books appear to derive from a single original translation, probably made in Africa at the beginning of the third century” (Houghton, *The Latin New Testament*, 4). For an introduction see *ibid.*, 4–18.

<sup>6</sup> Critics discussed how to classify patristic citations (see for example Osburn, “Methodology”). Here, I will adopt the following criteria: the term “citations” will apply to those cases in which the authors are quoting the text of Revelation (there could be an exact quotation or part of it), while “allusions” will apply in all the other cases, without further classifications.

<sup>7</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> A brief introduction of this document is found in Musurillo, *Acts*, 22–3. For a more detailed study see Ruggiero, “Atti dei martiri Scilitani,” 43–54. A recent introduction in Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives* 351–3, who also raised doubts about the early dating in *The Early Martyr Narratives*, 23–4.

<sup>9</sup> The problem of the number of the martyrs in this document has not yet been resolved. See Karpp, “Die Zahl der Schilitanischen Märtyrer,” 165–72; and Moss, *The Other Christs*, 129.

<sup>10</sup> “Potestis indulgentiam domini nostri imperatoris promereri, si ad bonam mentem redeatis” (1). I follow the text provided by Bastiaensen, *Atti e passioni*.

<sup>11</sup> See Rossi, “Mysterium simplicitatis,” 237; and Ruggiero, “Atti dei martiri Scilitani,” 96.

<sup>12</sup> “Initianti tibi mala de sacris nostris aures non praebebo; sed potius iura per genium domini nostri imperatoris” (Bastiaensen, *Atti e passioni*, 5). Translation by Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives*.

<sup>13</sup> “Ego imperium huius seculi non cognosco; [...] quia cognosco dominum meum, regem regum et imperatorem omnium gentium” (Bastiaensen, *Atti e passioni*, 6). As already suggested, I follow here the text of Bastiaensen who adopted the one of J. Armitage Robinson, *The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, Cambridge 1891, the most important edition of this text. However, Ruggiero reports a different text: “quia cognosco domnum meum et imperatorem regum omnium gentium.” The reason of the difference is that Ruggiero strictly follows manuscript A which he considers the best manuscript (Ruggiero, “Atti dei martiri scilitani,” 69).

Although the same title “emperor” (*imperator*) occurs, there is no doubt that the two men are referring to two distinct authorities; in the case of Vigellius, the reference is to the Roman emperor, whereas Speratus refers to God.<sup>14</sup> Besides, in Speratus’ answer, a reference to Rev 19:16 could be revealed. The last phrase, “the king of kings and the emperor of all nations” (*regem regum et imperatorem omnium gentium*), in fact, is a probable allusion to the description of Jesus found in Revelation 19:16: “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”<sup>15</sup> The first part is identical, while the second presents the same structure, that is, a title followed by a genitive. If an allusion to Revelation could be identified here,<sup>16</sup> one can hypothesise that the redactor of the text of the *Acta* knew the text of Revelation and chose the term *imperatorem* to stress the contrast between the Roman Emperor and the “real” one. Moreover, assuming an allusion to Rev 19:16, *imperatorem* would not refer generally to the Christian authority, but it would imply a specific role.

In this regard, Gregory Beale’s “The Origin of the Title ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’ in Revelation 17.14” points out that the closest expression of “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (*Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων*) found in the Old Testament is Dan 4:37 LXX (“He is the God of Gods and the Lord of Lords and the King of the Kings”<sup>17</sup>), claiming that:

The Christological title of Rev 17:14 has its origin in the divine title of Dan 4.37 (LXX). By the application of this title to Christ, the author may view God’s sovereign humbling of the King of Babylon in Dan 4 as a typological prophecy of Christ’s sovereign defeat of the end-time foe who is closely associated with eschatological Babylon. No doubt, the use of this divine title from Daniel is merely another way in which the author of Revelation expresses the absolute deity and kingship of the messianic Lamb.<sup>18</sup>

If one looks at the occurrences in Revelation of this phrase, it can be noted that this title is present in two significant contexts; the first one (17:14) is the anticipation of the victory of the Lamb over the kings of the earth, while the second one (19:16) is found in the description of the eschatological Christ prepared for the final battle. If we do recognise an allusion to Revelation here, Speratus’s statement not only points to what was considered by Christians to be the ultimate authority, but it also marked the fact that this authority remained under the assumption that Jesus was approaching the final battle, which manifested the final cosmic overturning at the end of the days.

The *Acta* briefly analysed shows an allusion to Rev 19:16, highlighting the author’s prospective aim to contrapose the Roman empire and the realm of God, which is accessible through the sacrifice of martyrdom, as in the last words of this text which said: “Today we are martyrs in heaven.”<sup>19</sup> These words recall one of the first treatises of Tertullian, *Ad Martyras*, in which the author talks about the heavenly rewards accomplished through the act of martyrdom: “You are about to pass through a noble struggle, in which the living God acts the part of superintendent, in which the Holy spirit is your trainer, in which the prize is an eternal crown of angelic essence, citizenship in the heavens, glory everlasting.”<sup>20</sup> Tertullian is conveniently, the

<sup>14</sup> As Rossi stresses: “I due attribuiscono un significato apertamente ed irriducibilmente antinomico all’*imperatorem nostrum*, ma sono entrambi perfettamente coscienti di cosa esso significhi per l’altro.” (“Mysterium simplicitatis,” 241). See also Frend: “Ego imperium. gentium. There was no compromise here. Moreover, the reward for rejecting the ‘mos Romanorum’ was immediate entry into Paradise. ‘Hodie martyres in caelis sumus’. This was to be the rallying-cry of African Christians against the Imperial authorities for the next two centuries.” (*Martyrdom and Persecution*, 314).

<sup>15</sup> “Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων” (NA<sup>28</sup>). The same expression recurs in Rev 17:14 with a different order: “κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων.” This formula is also present in 1 Tim 6:15.

<sup>16</sup> See Bastiaensen: “Se il testo di Robinson è corretto, si tratta di una nuova citazione da san Paolo, che precede immediatamente quella sul Dio invisibile. elementi della citazione sono ricavati anche dal testo dell’*Apocalisse*: si tratta di formule di frequente impiego nel conflitto con lo stato romano.” (*Atti e passioni*, 408). Ruggiero notes an echo from Revelation in this passage too (“Atti dei martiri scilitani,” 104).

<sup>17</sup> “ὅτι αὐτός ἐστι θεὸς τῶν θεῶν καὶ κύριος τῶν κυρίων καὶ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλέων” (Rahlfs, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Beale, “The Origin of the Title,” 619.

<sup>19</sup> *Act. Scill.* 15. Translation by Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives*.

<sup>20</sup> Translation by ANF. Other occurrences of the same idea are found in *De anima* 55, *Apologeticum* 50,13, *De carnis resurrectione* 40, *Ad Scapulam* 1. A brief reflection on this theme is offered by Daniélou, *Les origines*, 314–5. On the theology of martyrdom in Tertullian see the study of Bähnk, *Von der Notwendigkeit*.

next author under investigation. Two aspects of his theology need to be mentioned before looking at the occurrences of Revelation 19–21 within his corpus.<sup>21</sup> The first one, which Pelikan has already stressed, is the huge impact of eschatological thought in Tertullian's *corpus*;<sup>22</sup> this author shares the eschatological hope of the second coming of Christ and expresses the conviction that the end of time was imminent.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the eschatological dimension of Tertullian's thought is also related to two influences: millenarianism<sup>24</sup> and the so-called "New Prophecy."<sup>25</sup>

The weight of these traditions is still discussed in the scholarly debate, and regarding the influence of Montanism it became customary to classify the works of this author as "pre-" and "post-Montanist" according to the date of his conversion (207/208),<sup>26</sup> which seems though too rigid for an analysis about the reception of Scripture (Revelation in this case); the eschatological motif, in fact, is present since the beginning of Tertullian's literary production. Furthermore, the influence of millenarianism can be attributed to Revelation; the description of the millennium and the reign of the saints stem from there as the analysis of the passages will show.<sup>27</sup>

The belief in God's kingdom, which will be fully manifested at the end of days, is mentioned in two passages. In the last chapter of *De spectaculis*, written between 197 and 202,<sup>28</sup> Tertullian narrates the overturning of human fate. While Romans enjoy the shows which are forbidden for Christians while on the earth, Christians themselves will enjoy the *real* spectacle when the kingdom of God will come. The description combines elements taken from Revelation 19–21:<sup>29</sup> the resurrection of saints (20:4.6), and the New Jerusalem coming from heaven (21:2.10).

But what a spectacle is already at hand – the return of the Lord, now no object of doubt, now exalted, now triumphant! What exultation will that be of the angels, what glory that of the saints as they rise again! What the reign of the righteous thereafter! What a city, the New Jerusalem!<sup>30</sup>

Some years later, in the third book of the treatise *Adversus Marcionem*,<sup>31</sup> Tertullian talks again about the kingdom promised by God:

<sup>21</sup> In regard to Tertullian's references to the whole book of Revelation Meiser writes: "In the works of Tertullian, the book of Revelation is a reliable source for ethics and anti-heretic polemics and the major source for eschatology; in a creative manner, he alludes to Revelation in order to describe the state of Christianity in his days." ("Before Canonisation," 141).

<sup>22</sup> "Eschatology occupies a prominent place in many of Tertullian's writings." (Pelikan, "The Eschatology," 109). Reflections on the eschatology of Tertullian are found in Osborn, *Tertullian*, 214–24; Fernández, "La Escatología" 307–98. A recent update on scholarly opinions is offered by Wilhite, "Tertullian on the Afterlife," 492–5.

<sup>23</sup> See Daley, *The Hope*, 34. It must also be noted that scholars have emphasised the presence of some tensions: "For his eschatology would then appear as an attempt to hold in proper tension the immanence of that kingdom which was here already and that kingdom which was to come." This is the conclusion of Pelikan, "The Eschatology," 119. Some passages in which Tertullian expresses the conviction of the imminent end are: *Apologeticum* 32, *De cultu feminarum* 2,6, *De exortatione castitatis* 6,1–2, *De monogamia* 7,4 and 16,4–5, *De oratione* 5,4, *Adversus Hermogenem* 11, *Adversus Marcionem* III, 24,3, *De spectaculis* 30.

<sup>24</sup> On Tertullian and the millenarian movement see: Dattrino, "Tertulliano e il millenarismo;" Tibiletti, "Inizi del millenarismo;" Delrio, "Il millenarimo;" Leal, *La Antropología de Tertuliano*.

<sup>25</sup> See discussion in Trevett, *Montanism*, especially 66–76; Osborn, *Tertullian*, 209–13; Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 41–51; Berruto "Millenarismo;" Micaelli, *Tertulliano*.

<sup>26</sup> Recent examples are the study of Tabbernee, "The World to Come;" and Laato "The New Jerusalem."

<sup>27</sup> Tabbernee observes: "In either case, the main source of Tertullian's chiliasm must be Rev 20:1–15, Whether or not Montanus et al. were also chiliasts and whether their *logia* influenced Tertullian on the issue of a millennial reign on earth before the end of the world remains an open question" ("The World to Come," 267).

<sup>28</sup> Turcan, *Les spectacles*, 41–2.

<sup>29</sup> See the observations of Delrio who stressed the importance of Tertullian's use of Revelation as a source for the millenarian ideas ("Il millenarismo," 372).

<sup>30</sup> "Quale autem spectaculum in proximo est aduentus domini iam indubitati, iam superbi, iam triumphantis! quae illa exultatio angelorum, quae gloria resurgentium sanctorum! quale *regnum exinde iustorum!* qualis ciuitas noua hierusalem!" (CCSL, 1 [Dekkers, 1954]). Translation by Glover and Rendal, *Tertullian*.

<sup>31</sup> Written between 207 and 210 (Moreschini, *Opere dottrinali*, 20).

But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem, let down from heaven, which the apostle also calls our mother from above; and, while declaring that our politeuma, or citizenship, is in heaven, he predicates of it that it is really a city in heaven. This both Ezekiel had knowledge of and the Apostle John beheld. And the word of the new prophecy which is a part of our belief, attests how it foretold that there would be for a sign a picture of this very city exhibited.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, it is worth outlining that in the passage of *Adv. Marc.* Tertullian quotes his sources, mentioning Revelation. In my opinion, both passages recall the series of events of Revelation and express the eschatological end awaited by Christians.<sup>33</sup>

Another significant interesting passage is found in the treatise *De carnis resurrectione*, dated to the years 211–213.<sup>34</sup> In chapter 25, the author refers explicitly to Revelation with the expression “In the Revelation of John”:

In the Revelation of John, again, the order of these times is spread out to view, which the souls of the martyrs are taught to wait for beneath the altar, whilst they earnestly pray to be avenged and judged: (taught, I say, to wait), in order that the world may first drink to the dregs the plagues that await it out of the vials of the angels, and that the city of fornication may receive from the ten kings its deserved doom, and that the beast Antichrist with his false prophet may wage war on the Church of God; and that, after the casting of the devil into the bottomless pit for a while,<sup>35</sup> the blessed prerogative of the first resurrection may be ordained from the thrones; and then again, after the consignment of him to the fire, that the judgment of the final and universal resurrection may be determined out of the books.<sup>36</sup>

Numerous are the passages from Revelation alluded to in this brief section: the souls of the martyrs under the altar asking for God’s revenge (6:9–11), the reference to the plagues (15:7; 16:1; 17:1), Babylon destined to perish (17:12), the beast with the antichrist which moves war against the church (19:19–20), the devil put into the pit before the first resurrection (20:2–5),<sup>37</sup> and, lastly, the final judgment (20:9.14). Tertullian amalgamates various passages from Revelation; the future resurrection of the body claimed in this treatise finds the scriptural reference precisely in John’s Apocalypse, which provides the author the series of events that, from the martyrs’ request for revenge, culminates to the first resurrection and the final judgment.<sup>38</sup>

The last passage worth mentioning is taken from *Scorpiace*,<sup>39</sup> a reflection on martyrdom, where Tertullian again mixes elements derived from Revelation:

<sup>32</sup> “Nam et confitemur in terra nobis regnum promissum, sed ante caelum, sed alio statu, utpote post resurrectionem in mille annos in ciuitate diuini operis hierusalem caelo delatum, quam et apostolus matrem nostram sursum designat. Et politeuma nostrum, id est municipatum, in caelis esse pronuntians, alicui utique caelesti ciuitati eum deputat. Hanc et Ezechiel novit, et apostolus Ioannes vidit, et qui apud fidem nostram est novae prophetiae sermo testatur, ut etiam effigiem civitatis ante repraesentationem eius conspectui futuram in signo praedicarit” (CCSL, 1 [Kroymann, 1954]). Translation by ANF. I have proposed a more detailed analysis of these passages in “*Tracking the New Jerusalem in North African Christianity From the Origin to the End of the IV Century*” (article under submission).

<sup>33</sup> On the reception of the New Jerusalem in Tertullian: Mazzucco, “La Gerusalemme celeste;” and Laato, “The New Jerusalem.”

<sup>34</sup> On the date see Podolak who suggests the years 211–213 (*Introduzione*, 60).

<sup>35</sup> This concept is also present in *Adversus Hermogenem* 11,3, where there is also the reference to Rev 20:11, but it is a moot point whether these occurrences came from Tertullian himself, or he found them in the treatise of Theophilus of Antioch. See Delrio, “Il millenarismo,” 378, footnote 45.

<sup>36</sup> “Ordo temporum sternitur, quem martyrum quoque animae sub altari ultionem et iudicium flagitantes sustinere didicerunt, ut prius et orbis de pateris angelorum plagas suas ebibat, et prostituta illa ciuitas a decem regibus dignos exitus referat, et bestia antichristus cum suo pseudopropheta certamen ecclesiae inferat, atque ita diabolo in abyssum interim relegato primae resurrectionis praerogatiua de soliis ordinetur, dehinc et igni dato uniuersalis resurrectionis censura de libris iudicetur” (CCSL, 2 [Borleffs, 1954]).

<sup>37</sup> The first resurrection is also mentioned in *De monogamia* 10,4.

<sup>38</sup> See the observations of Delrio, “Il millenarismo,” 389.

<sup>39</sup> Barnes dates it to the years 203–204 (“Tertullian’s *Scorpiace*”).



Then to every conqueror the Spirit promises now the three of life, and exemption from the second death;<sup>40</sup> now the hidden manna with the stone of glistering whiteness, and the name unknown (to every man save him that receiveth it); now power to rule with a rod of iron, and the brightness of the morning star; now the being clothed in white raiment, and not having the name blotted out of the book of life, and being made in the temple of God a pillar with the inscription on it of the name of God and of the Lord, and of the heavenly Jerusalem; now a sitting with the Lord on his throne, which once was persistently refused to the sons of Zebedee.<sup>41</sup>

The description of the future glory of martyrs contains several allusions to Revelation: the winner will gain the tree of life and the absolution from the second death (2:7), the name unknown (2:17), the book of life (3:5), the New Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2), which will occur as a reward.<sup>42</sup> In the subsequent passage, Tertullian goes on with another reference to John's Apocalypse quoting verses 6:9–11, where the martyrs under the altar ask for revenge. The references to Revelation here were useful to provide support to Christians during the persecution and show them the heavenly rewards. As it has been stressed: "In the expectation and hope of the martyrs the eschatological fulfilment is anticipated."<sup>43</sup> Tertullian, in fact, after these scriptural references underlines that: "Who, pray, are these so blessed conquerors, but martyrs in the strict sense of the word? For indeed theirs are the victories whose also are the fights; theirs, however, are the fights whose also is the blood."<sup>44</sup>

Chapters 19–21 seem to find an authoritative role in Tertullian's writings; starting from *De spectaculis*, Revelation is employed to shape the eschatological picture of the last events both for martyrs and all Christians. Tertullian quotes and alludes to the Apocalypse of John to announce what will happen at the end of the days. Moreover, Revelation is a source to support martyrs during the persecution (*Scorpiace*). A literal interpretation of the Apocalypse could also be retrieved in the production of Tertullian; as seen in *Adversus Marcionem*, the author expresses the belief in a terrestrial kingdom of a thousand years, using the same passages to portray the final events in contraposition to the Roman shows (*De spectaculis*). Finally, a literal interpretation is also present in the hope of the resurrection of the body (*De carnis resurrectione*).

References to Revelation 19–21 are found in another martyrdom account: The *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*. This document reports the events of a group of martyrs who, after being imprisoned, were condemned *ad bestias* in the amphitheatre in Carthage during the shows celebrating the birthday of Geta, the son of the regent Emperor, on 7 March 203.<sup>45</sup> This *Passio* gathered three different voices; two martyrs narrate first-person accounts of their experience (Vibia Perpetua, ch. 3–10, a woman from noble

<sup>40</sup> The second death with the punishment of the impious people is also found in *De Pudicitia* 19,7–9 where Tertullian quotes the list of people found in Rev 21:7–8.

<sup>41</sup> "Exinde uictoribus quibusque promittit nunc arborem uitae et mortis ueniam secundae, nunc latens manna cum calculo candido et nomine ignoto, nunc ferreae uirgae potestatem et stellae matutinae claritatem, nunc albam uestiri nec deleri de libro uitae et columnam fieri in dei templo in nomine dei et domini et hierusalem caelestis inscriptam, nunc residere cum domino in throno eius, quod aliquando zebedaei filiis negabatur" (12,8. CCLSL, 2 [Reifferscheid and Wissowa, 1954]). Translation by ANF. "Il martirio, già considerate sotto l'aspetto del combattimento atletico, è qui visto, alla luce della lettura dell'Apocalisse, come un combattimento vissuto fino allo spargimento del sangue" (Bernardelli, et al., *Opere montaniste*, 242).

<sup>42</sup> Laato, "Most of the contents of this passage come from Rev 3:12, but the exact term, *Hierusalem* (or *Jerusalem*) *caelestis*, does not occur in the Book of Revelation. Tertullian may have taken it from Hebr 12:22–3" ("The New Jerusalem," 127).

<sup>43</sup> Bernardelli, et al., *Opere montaniste*, 146. My translation.

<sup>44</sup> ANF, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Introduction and discussion of the main questions are found in: Gold, *Perpetua*, 10–21; Amat, *Passion de Perpétue*, 19–83; Heffernan, *The Passion*, 3–99; Musurillo, *The Acts*, 25–7. See also the overview of previous scholarship on this document in González, *The Fate of the Dead*, 5–25. Heffernan claims that the most probable *terminus ante quem* for the composition of this document is the fall of 209 (79. See the discussion about the date pp. 61–79.). Nevertheless, Rebillard claims the year 260 as a *terminus ante quem* (*Greek and Latin Narratives*, 295–9). Numerous are the issues discussed by scholars concerning the texts; the manuscript tradition, in fact, retained both Latin and Greek versions, we also possess the *Acta*, which consists of a shorter Latin version of the *Passio*. On the discussion of the language of the early text and the *Acta* see Kitzler, *From "Passio Perpetuae,"* 98–116. An unresolved topic is the authenticity of the personal accounts of Perpetua and Saturus (see the discussion in Butler, *The New Prophecy*, 44–9; Amat, *Passion de Perpétué*, 67–78; Hunink, "Did Perpetua write.") I think Corsini is right in claiming that, although there are different voices, we should consider the document as a unified narration to comprehend its theology ("Proposte," 483). Finally, some scholars have tried to recognise in this document the possible influence of the New Prophecy

origin and Satorus, ch. 11–3, the catechumen), and the external editor who composes the introduction (1–2) and provides the narration of the martyrdom (14–21).

This *Passio* retains a rich imaginary derived from the book of Revelation, and a few citations can be recognized.<sup>46</sup> The world of John's Apocalypse is reflected, especially, in the visions of the martyrs. The first vision narrated is the one of Perpetua, who dreams about a ladder going up to heaven, whose sides present iron weapons. On its base, Perpetua sees a dragon which possibly recalled that of John's Apocalypse:

And beneath this ladder there lay a serpent of wondrous size, who set traps for the climbers and frightened them into not climbing.<sup>47</sup>

The dragon here evoked that of chapters 12 and 20 of the book of Revelation, which represent the eschatological enemy.<sup>48</sup> In addition, it is worth noticing that Perpetua, in order to climb the ladder, treads upon its head (*calcavi illi caput*<sup>49</sup>), which is a reminiscence of Genesis 3:15. This vision shares meaningful similarities to the following incident in chapter 10, where Perpetua dreams about a fight with an Egyptian. Perpetua is victorious over him by repeating the same action she did with the dragon: *calcavi illi caput*.<sup>50</sup> This repetition is not accidental since the Egyptian represents the dragon who is the enemy.<sup>51</sup> In this vision, one can clearly see Perpetua imagining her martyrdom, which could be considered the transposition of the final battle narrated in Revelation 19–21.<sup>52</sup> This association is also made explicit at the end of the account, when the woman states: "And I understood that I would not go to the beasts but would fight against the devil. But I knew that victory would be mine."<sup>53</sup> Likewise, the connection between the serpent of Genesis and the dragon of the Apocalypse stresses the martyrdom as the conclusion of the world (beginning with Genesis and ending in Revelation).

The other allusions of John's Apocalypse are found in chapters 11 and 12, which present the vision of Satorus,<sup>54</sup> who dreams about the martyrs after they experience death in the arena. Four angels take the

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(A brief reflection on scholarly opinions is offered by González, "The Passion," 37. On this question see also Marksches, "The *Passio Sanctarum*," 277–90).

<sup>46</sup> González provides a table with some correspondences between the text of the *Passio* and that of the *Vetus Latina*. (*The Fate of the Dead*, 82–3).

<sup>47</sup> "Et erat sub ipsa scala draco cubans mirae magnitudinis, qui ascendentibus insidias praestabat et exterrebat ne ascenderent." 4.4 (SC, 417 [Amat, 1996]). Translation by Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives*.

<sup>48</sup> "The image of the serpent conflates the representations of the serpent of Genesis, the dragon of John's Revelation, and the beast from the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Gn 3.15, Rv 13.1, and Herm. Vis.4.1.6). The serpent is an archetypal motif representative of evil." (Heffernan, *The Passion*, 176). See also Amat, *La Passion de Perpétue*, 203; and González, *The Fate of the Dead*, 87–8.

<sup>49</sup> 4.47 (SC, 417 [Amat, 1996]).

<sup>50</sup> 10,11. Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Amat claims that this expression "Reprise de 4,7, qui confirme que l'image du *draco* et celle de l'Egyptien son bein interchangeable." (*La Passion de Perpétue*, 229). Also Bastiaensen observes: "Questo egiziano è il diavolo, identico al serpent della prima visione (4,4 sgg.). Da notare anche che il *calcavi illi caput* del par. 11 riprende alla lettera l'espressione di 4,7, improntata a Gen. 3,15 a designare la vittoria su Satana." (*Atti e passioni*, 432). Of the same opinion, Corsini: "Egli si rotola nella polvere (10,7): il particolare è probabilmente tecnico (la polvere come neutralizzante dell'olio), ma raggiunge, sul piano simbolico, l'effetto immediate di collegare l'egiziano con il "serpente" (*draco*) della prima vision mediante questa caratteristica di strisciare per terra. L'atto di rotolarsi nella polvere assimila, dunque, l'egiziano al serpente" ("Proposte," 534).

<sup>52</sup> In this regard, Cacitti claims: "L'agone, per quanto combattuto in forma vicaria tra la *fortissima martyr* in veci di Cristo e il *foedissimus Aegyptius* in veci dell'Anticristo, tiene dunque dell'ineluttabilità apocalittica della battaglia di Harmagedon in Ap 19,11ss., gettando così nell'arena i reali protagonisti del conflitto: il cosmo marchiato da Satana e il Regno sigillato da Cristo si affrontano in una lotta che, a tenore di Ap 16,12–6, vede da un lato schierati tutti i re di tutta la terra e dall'altra i martiri che implorano il giudizio di vendetta (cfr. Ap 6,9–11 con parallelo in 20,4)." ("*Vae tibi saeculum*," 177–8). On the theme of martyrdom as cosmic conflict see Middleton, *Radycal Martyrdom*.

<sup>53</sup> 10,14. See the observations of Habermehl: "Sie hat ihr Martyrium nicht allein auf sich genommen; sie sieht es als Sieg in einem eschatologischen Kampf und als ihren Weg durch das *Tor des Lebens*." (*Perpetua und der Ägypter*, 188). See also Moss, *The Other Christs*, 99.

<sup>54</sup> "L'imagination de Satorus apparaît essentiellement pénétrée de l'*Apocalypse* de Jean." (Amat, *Passion de Perpétue*, 45). Petraglio in his study has hypothesised that he wrote in Greek for the assonances with the quotations of Revelation. ("Des influences").

souls and bring them into paradise (11). Then, Perpetua and Saturus stand in front of a marvellous palace made in light:

And we came near a place, whose walls seemed to have been built out of light. And before the door of that place stood four angels, who clothed those who entered in white robes.<sup>55</sup>

The light of the palace seems to recall the light of the New Jerusalem as it is described in chapter 21 of the *Book of Revelation*.<sup>56</sup> Further, this vision presents many traits taken from Revelation as Mazzucco has highlighted:<sup>57</sup> for example, Perpetua and Saturus worn “white robes” (*stolas candidas*), as in the first vision of Perpetua (4,8), which obviously recalls the robe of the martyrs. Heffernan also clarifies that in the expression “with his hands he stroked our faces” (*de manu sua traiecit nobis in faciem*) remembers the act of God who will wipe away tears (Rev 7:17 which has a parallel in verse 21:4).<sup>58</sup>

In this document, the use of the book of Revelation is manifested in the visions of the martyrs; thus, chapters 19–21 offered the martyrs the chance to foresee what will happen once they sacrifice themselves in the arena.<sup>59</sup> In this regard, it is worth observing another detail of the *Passio*. In chapter 17, the day before the show in the arena, the martyrs would gather for the last meal (*cenam ultimam*) and Saturus says to the people who were observing them: “Is tomorrow not enough for you? Why do you gladly see what you hate? Today friends, tomorrow enemies. Nevertheless, take a close look at our faces, that you might recognize us when the day comes.”<sup>60</sup> Saturus reminds the crowd that the judgment that Christians will endure in the arena will be overturned when the Christians themselves will be precisely the ones who will judge at the end of the days.<sup>61</sup> The roles that were overturned recall what we have already seen in the *Acta Martyrum Scilitanorum* and Tertullian (*De spectaculis* 30);<sup>62</sup> what is happening now on earth will ultimately be overthrown on the last day.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>55</sup> “Et uenimus prope locum, cuius loci parietes tales erant quasi de luce aedificati; et ante ostium loci illius angeli quattuor stabant, qui introeuntes uestierunt stolas candidas” (SC, 417 [Amat, 1996], 12,1). Translation by Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives*.

<sup>56</sup> “La visione di Saturo si differenzia dalla prima visione di Perpetua, perché all’interno del paradiso colloca una Dimora speciale, una Dimora di luce, la vera casa di Dio. Per questa distinzione tra paradiso e cielo si confrontano certe apocalisse ebraiche che menzionano più cieli; si potrebbe pensare anche all’Apocalisse del NT (che ha fortemente influenzato la visione di Saturo)” (Bastiaansen, *Atti e passioni*, 436). See also Amat, “Le theme du palais merveilleux, fait de lumière, appartient à l’imagerie antique. Mais ici, à partir de la description du palais divin, les images sont imprégnées du souvenir de l’*Apocalypse* de Jean” (*Passion de Perpétue*, 236). See the article of Mazzucco for an overview of the New Jerusalem in this document, 67–70.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–70.

<sup>58</sup> “*Traiecit nobis in faciem*: the open palm is a universal symbol for peace, welcome, and benediction. There are Biblical precedents for God’s stroking the face, and specific statements that God will wipe away one’s tears (see Is 25.8; Rv 7.17, 21.4)” (*The Passion*, 289).

<sup>59</sup> For the role of the visions in this document, and in general, in martyrdom literature, consider the relevant observations of Pizzolato, “Note;” and Ferrarini, “Visioni,” 1060.

<sup>60</sup> 17,1. Translation by Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives*. Consider the rich analysis of this passage in D’Inca, “*Hodie Amici*,” 50.

<sup>61</sup> “In quell giorno, che può riferirsi al giorno dello spettacolo ma, nell’intenzione di Saturo, è un richiamo al giorno del giudizio.” (Corsini, “Proposte,” 526). Of the same opinion also Bastiansen: “Le minacce dei condannati non sono l’espressione di un desiderio puramente umano di vendetta, ma vanno messe in relazione con i passi biblici – soprattutto con quelli dell’*Apocalisse* – dove si parla del giudizio di Dio, che infligge una giusta condanna a coloro che hanno perseguitato i santi (ved Apoc 6,10; 14,7; 18,20; cfr. Tert de ora 5,3; Scorpice 12,9, ecc.). In die illo: espressione biblica per il Giorno del Giudizio, il giorno della ricompensa.” 443. On the contrary, Heffernan, “The phrase was a favorite of Christian writers and could signify the *parousia*, that day when the righteous and the persecuted would be saved and the evil punished (Mt 7.22), as well as the day Jesus died (*Gospel Pet.* 12.50). However, in this context it appears, despite its inherent ambiguity, to refer to the following day, when they shall be led in formal procession (*pompa*) into the arena for the start of the games” (*The Passion*, 323).

<sup>62</sup> “At the final judgment, the martyrs themselves will, along with Christ, judge those who, on earth, have judged them (*Ad mart.* 2.4; cf. *De spect.* 30.3).” (Tabbernee, “The World to Come,” 263).

<sup>63</sup> It should be noted that the *Passio Perpetuae* has been influential on other north African martyrdom accounts of the III century (on this matter consider Lomanto, “Rapporti”). Although there is no space here to give a comprehensive analysis, it is worth outlining that these texts retain images taken from Revelation 19–21. For example, in the *Passio sanctorum Mariani et*



The last author considered is one of the most important Latin writers of North African Christianity: Cyprian, elected bishop of Carthage in 249.<sup>64</sup> Cyprian lived under very harsh times for his community; he had to deal with the Decian persecution (250), which carried the problem of the *lapsi*, the schism in 251, and the plague of 252–4. He died as a martyr in 258, and the account of his interrogation and his death was then recalled by the deacon Pontius and transmitted to us as the *Acta Cypriani*. The difficulties experienced surely had an influence on Cyprian's *Weltanschauung*. He shares, in fact, the Stoic view of the *senectus mundi*<sup>65</sup> and the fact the end was fast approaching (*De mortalitate* 25).<sup>66</sup>

In his study, Gallicet claims that, although the quotations of the book of Revelation employed by Cyprian are numerous, their use does not concern eschatological issues but rather general teachings for Christians.<sup>67</sup> This is the case for example with some passages of Rev 19–21 used in the treatise *Ad Quirinum* which is a *florilegium* of scriptural quotations.<sup>68</sup> Meiser, however, has highlighted those allusions/quotations from John's Apocalypse conserve some eschatological traits, for example, in connection with the fate of martyrs.<sup>69</sup> In this regard, it is worth analysing a passage of *Ad Fortunatum (de exhortatione martyrii)*. This work, written in the year 257,<sup>70</sup> aims to offer a scriptural guide that could help Christians during the difficult period of persecution. In chapter 12, at the end of the treatise, Cyprian describes the rewards gained through martyrdom:

In the Apocalypse also he says the same thing: "And I saw," said he, "the souls of them that were slain for the name of Jesus and the word of God." And when he had placed those who were slain in the first place, he added, saying: "And whosoever had not worshipped the image of the beast, neither had received his mark upon their forehead or in their hand"; all these he joins together, as seen by him at one time in the same place, and says "And they lived and reigned with Christ." He says that all live and reign with Christ, not only who have been slain; but even whosoever, standing in firmness of the faith and in the fear of God, have not worshipped the image of the beast, and have not consented to his deadly and sacrilegious edicts.<sup>71</sup>

In this passage, Cyprian cites Rev 20:4, but a few things need to be highlighted here. First of all, Cyprian uses the Latin verb *occisorum* to render the Greek term *πεπελεκισμένων*. It is noteworthy that Cyprian uses this verb not only for verse 20:4 but also for 6:9 (*Ad Quirinum* III,16, *De lapsis* 18, *De bono patientiae* 21). The Greek text used two different verbs related to the martyrs. In the case of verse 6:9, in fact, there is the verb *εσφαγμένων* derived from *σφάζω*, which means "slay, slaughter,"<sup>72</sup> whereas in the case of 20:4 there is

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*Iacobi* 12,5 there is an allusion to Rev 19,11–21 and the high tribunal of 6,6 could recall that of Rev 20:11 (This last reference has been outlined by Mazzucco, "La Gerusalemme," 70).

<sup>64</sup> For an introduction on this author and its time see: Veronese, *Introduzione*; Toso, *Opere*, 9–58; Burns, *Cyprian*, 1–11.

<sup>65</sup> On this matter: Zocca, "La 'Senectus mundi';" Daniélou, *Les origines*, 207–12.

<sup>66</sup> An insight on the signs which indicate the end, and the imminent Parousia could be found in Fernández, *La escatologia*, 114–20.

<sup>67</sup> Gallicet, "Cipriano," 71–3.

<sup>68</sup> II,1 (Rev 21:6, also quoted in II,6 with verse 21:7), II,3 (Rev 19:11.13), II,19 (Rev 19:6.7; 21:9), II,30 (Rev 19:11–6), III,100 (Rev 21:6.7). These quotations of Revelation are used in Christological contexts; see the analysis of Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible*, 551–3.

<sup>69</sup> Meiser, "Before Canonisation," 149–51. See also Fahey, "The Apocalypse is used almost exclusively by Cyprian as a source book for Christological statements and statements about the blessings of martyrdom. Only a very few Apocalypse texts are used in a parenetic context." (*Cyprian and the Bible*, 535). Daley argues: "Cyprian stresses more than any previous Latin writer the greatness of the reward promised those who remain faithful in adversity." (*The Hope*, 41).

<sup>70</sup> Toso, *Opere*, 377.

<sup>71</sup> "Item in apocalypsi hoc idem loquitur, et uidi, inquit, animas occisorum propter nomen iesu et sermonem dei. Et cum primo in loco posuisset occisos, addidit dicens: et quicumque imaginem bestiae non adorauerunt nec acceperunt inscriptionem in fronte aut in manu sua. Quos uniuersos a se in eodem loco simul uisos coniungit ac dicit: et uixerunt et regnauerunt cum christo. Viuere omnes dicit et regnare cum christo, non tantum qui occisi fuerint, sed quique in fidei suae firmitate et dei timore perstantes imaginem bestiae non adorauerint neque ad funesta eius et sacrilega edicta consenserint" (CCSL, 3 [Weber, 1972]). Translation by ANF. A comment on chapter 12 is provided by Walz, *Vorbereitung*, 299–309.

<sup>72</sup> Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1737–8.

*πεπελεκισμένων*, derived from *πελεκίζω* which means “cut off with an axe, behead.”<sup>73</sup> On the one hand, it is possible that Cyprian decided to simplify the text (or maybe his version of the Bible retains this variant reading<sup>74</sup>); on the other hand, he may simply have wanted to establish a robust correspondence between the two verses and thus between the people described there; the martyrs who will participate in the Kingdom of God are, in fact, precisely those of verse 6:9.

In chapter 21 of the treatise *De bono patientiae*, Cyprian writes that Christians should await the day of vengeance, using the words of Revelation 6:9–11:

And when he had opened, says he, the fifth seal, I saw under the altar of God the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for their testimony; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?<sup>75</sup>

Martyrs had to wait “until the number of their fellow-servants and brethren is fulfilled, who afterwards shall be slain after their example” which could mean their fate in the millenarian kingdom of 20:4–6. As stressed by Eugenio Corsini, in fact, the millennial kingdom is a follow-up of what has been said in the fifth seal.<sup>76</sup> The idea of the promised kingdom is also reflected in another treatise, *De dominica oratione*, a comment on the Lord’s Prayer, dated to the years 251–252:<sup>77</sup>

Through the mercy of God we have been spiritually remade and so, when we are reborn, let us imitate what we are destined to become. For since, in the Kingdom, we shall have the day alone, without the interruption of the night, let us keep nocturnal vigil as though in the light. And since we shall pray constantly and give thanks to God, let us not cease here likewise to pray and to give thanks.<sup>78</sup>

In this context, it seems that Cyprian retains the imagery of the Apocalypse to refer to the kingdom awaited by the Christians, in which there will not be the night. The expression, in fact, recalls Rev 21:23–5.<sup>79</sup>

Although Gallicet stressed that Cyprian does not use Revelation as a prophecy of the last events,<sup>80</sup> I think it is worth outlining that, as far as chapters 19–21 are concerned, the Christological employment finds a place in the treatise *Ad Quirinum*, whereas in the other treatises, Cyprian employs these chapters in an eschatological sense. In the context of martyrs’ rewards (*Ad Fortunatum*), and to picture the last events in the other two cases, in *De bono patientiae*, the quotation of Revelation is inserted in a chapter where the

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 1357. As regards the occurrences of these two verbs, some considerations could arise; “σφάζω” recurs more than one time in Revelation above all referring to the Lamb; thus, the use of this term reveals a strong connection between the martyrs and the Lamb = Jesus’s sacrifice. However, “πελεκίζω” is a *hapax legomenon* in the whole NT.

<sup>74</sup> According to the text types classified by Gryson, not only the African tradition but also the European text retains the same reading: only the Vulgate present the reading “decollatorum,” as the Greek text. (*Apocalypsis Johannis*, 679).

<sup>75</sup> “Et cum aperuisset, inquit, quintum signum, uidi sub ara dei animas occisorum propter uerbum dei et martyrium suum, et clamauerunt magna uoce dicentes: quousque, domine sanctus et uerus, non iudicas et uindicas sanguinem nostrum de his qui in terris inhabitant?” (CCSL, 3A [Moreschini, 1976]). Translation by ANF.

<sup>76</sup> Corsini, *Apocalisse*, 221. Aune notes the correspondences between verses 6:9 and 20:4. (*Revelation*, 1087–8).

<sup>77</sup> Toso says 252 (“Opere,” 205), Gallicet proposes the year 250 (“Cipriano e Apocalisse,” 74).

<sup>78</sup> “Per dei indulgentiam recreati spiritaliter et renati imitemur quod futuri sumus: habituri in regno sine interuentu noctis solum diem, sic nocte quasi in luce uigilemus; oraturi semper et acturi gratias deo hic quoque orare et gratias agere non desinamus” (CCSL, 3A [Moreschini, 1976], 36). Translation by Alistair, *On the Lord’s Prayer*.

<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, there is no space here to deal with the so-called “Pseudo-Cyprian” writings which contained references to the book of Revelation. In the treatise *Ad Novatianum* 17, for example, Rev 6:12–7 and 20:11–2 are mixed with eschatological purposes. In *De laude martyrii* 28 and 30 references to Rev 20:4–6 are used to claim the kingship and victory of the martyrs. Finally, one of the most significant references is found in *De montibus Sina et Sion* 10 where the New Jerusalem is associated with the last breath of Jesus on the cross. As Laato has highlighted: “Two special features of Pseudo-Cyprian’s view of the Church are conspicuous here: first, its immediate contact with and dependence on the crucified Christ and second, its eschatological character.” (“Jews and Christians,” 158). This passage is examined in the article in “*Tracking the New Jerusalem in North African Christianity From the Origin to the End of the IV Century*” (under submission).

<sup>80</sup> See footnote 67.

author stresses the importance to wait for the judgment and the day of vengeance.<sup>81</sup> And finally, in *De dominica oratione*, at the very end of the treatise, Cyprian's exhortation to pray opens the perspective of the future; the chance to foresee the Kingdom. As Hamman argues: "From here we repeat our eternity role. Vigilance gives prayer its eschatological dimension."<sup>82</sup>

In conclusion, my analysis of the reception of chapters 19–21 of the book of Revelation has emphasised how these chapters recurred in the early Christian Latin authors describing the last events. Moreover, I think it is possible to say that John's Apocalypse was authoritative in these communities and there is also a continuity for the fact that all documents analysed present quotations and/or allusions in two contexts: overall, Tertullian, the martyrs in the *Passio Perpetuae* and Cyprian articulate a similar description of the end of times using images and symbols taken from John's Apocalypse, and, specifically, Revelation recur to sustain martyrs during persecution.

Hence, the importance of that theme in martyrdom literature should be noted, although in this kind of document, more allusions rather than quotations are found.<sup>83</sup> In particular, Revelation gives the martyrs the occasion to interpret their painful reality in view of the eschatological reward. Habermehl rightly observes and concludes concerning the vision of Saturus: "Saturus' face demonstrated how God's promise to the martyrs is fulfilled; as already assured in Revelation (6:9; 20:4), right after death, martyrs enter heaven."<sup>84</sup>

This brief analysis on the early interpretation of Rev 19–21 in North African Christian communities opens additional reflections as stressed in the introduction. Particularly, the authoritative place seen in the North African Christian communities could be a starting point for the comparison to other communities' reception of these chapters and their interpretation. Moreover, the path traced here should be expanded with the examination of later authors to fully understand how the exegesis of these chapters found a place in North African Christianity.

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<sup>81</sup> "Il faut savoir attendre le Jugement (21–3); ce sera pour Cyprien l'occasion de présenter un tableau de la fin du monde, d'après l'Apocalypse et le prophète Malachie." (Molager, *A Donat*, 138).

<sup>82</sup> Hamman, "Le rythme," 172. English my translation.

<sup>83</sup> See the observations of Mazzucco, "L'Apocalisse," 17.

<sup>84</sup> English my translation. (*Perpetua und der Ägypter*, 196).

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