

THE ARMENIAN VERSION OF PS.-HIPPOLYTUS
DE CONSUMMATIONE MUNDI AND ITS IMPACT ON
THE ARMENIAN APOCALYPTIC TRADITION

A First Appraisal*

1. *Introduction*

Working with apocalyptic texts often feels like playing with matryoshka dolls. Unlike the real toy, however, one discovers to be caught in a game with an ever fading prospect of getting to the final, tiny nucleus. Even worse, the different layers appear to be so intricately intertwined as to lose any sense of sequence, the ever-elusive core becoming a futile goal. Then, as one's research advances the number of unpublished but miraculously extant texts that are closely related to one's original subject of research seem to multiply just as miraculously. It was thus that it came to my attention that there is an Armenian version of a Greek apocalyptic text of disputed date known as Ps.-Hippolytus *De Consummatione mundi* / *Περὶ τῆς συντελείας τοῦ κόσμου* (henceforth *GCM*, *BHG* 812z, *CPG* 1910)¹. *GCM* was recently edited with a scrupulous *apparatus fontium* by P. Athanasopoulos, who mentioned its sixteenth-century Latin and French translations, but the medieval Armenian version has remained virtually unknown². The main purpose of the present article is to draw attention to the existence of the Armenian Ps.-Hippolytus and provide a tentative appraisal of its relationship to other apocalyptic texts preserved in Armenian, as well as contribute to our understanding of the time-frame and geographical-cultural *milieu* of its composition.

I will offer a preliminary review of the Armenian manuscript tradition before a more thorough study may be undertaken in the future. Then, I will point out the circulation of concepts known from *GCM* via other texts preserved in Armenian, particularly some motifs about the most notorious antagonist of the end-time drama – the Antichrist – known as *Neʾn* (Նէն)

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¹ For a critical edition of the Greek text with a textual, historical and source-critical analysis see ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*.

² ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*, p. 65-67.

in Armenian sources. I do not claim to be exhaustive, but will present illustrative examples that demonstrate the affinities of the Armenian translation of Ps.-Hippolytus *De Consummatione mundi* (henceforth *ACM*) to some later texts, as well as explore the degree and nature of such affinities. From a broader perspective, these textual matters allow us to trace cultural-literary connections of Late Antique Jewish and Christian communities of the eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia that produced these apocalyptic texts, to a broader geographical area encompassing the western Mediterranean on the one hand, and reaching the Armenian highlands, on the other. It is only recently that these exchanges have been discussed in light of long-ignored and hardly ‘canonical’ apocalyptic/eschatological texts, a discussion to which this article wishes to contribute³.

The text whose study led me to Ps.-Hippolytus is a rather well-known, albeit poorly and incompletely published composition written in the second half of the twelfth century that in the scholarly literature has assumed the title of the *Prophecies of Agat'on* (henceforth *PA*). Nevertheless, this author and title are not exactly and consistently what the manuscripts transmit. Sometimes the author appears as Agadron and the title varies in the three attested recensions⁴. *PA* was brought to the spotlight by Ašot Hovhannisyan and Hakob Anasyan in the 50s and 60s of the last century, both of whom emphasised its importance as one of the earliest expressions of Armenian aspirations for “national liberation” with the help of a European messianically-coloured military support. This idea had a long vitality reaching at least the time of the Russian Tsar Peter the Great – a possible candidate for a messianic Emperor. Such apocalyptic echoes are evident in a letter that Israyēl Ōri wrote in 1701 in Latin addressed to the Tsar⁵. *PA* lays great hope on the arrival of an army led by a Roman Emperor named Constantine who would deliver the Armenians, and Christians in general, from their subjection to Muslim rule. This Constantine, however, was of Armenian stock according to this text. He was the offspring of three hundred warriors – the *armenk'* – that the first Christian Armenian

³ A recent volume on the Armenian apocalyptic traditions testifies to this interest: BARDAKJIAN – LA PORTA, *Armenian Apocalyptic*. See also REEVES, *Trajectories*, and GREISIGER, *Messias. Endkaiser. Antichrist*.

⁴ A partial text can be found in AWGER, *Agat'on*. For details about this publication, as well as the manuscripts of the *Prophecies* with further bibliography see POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*, p. 152, 159-161; and POGOSSIAN, *The Last Emperor*, p. 479-496.

⁵ HOVHANNISYAN, *National Liberation*, explores this subject in two magisterial volumes; the letter of Israyēl Ōri is cited in Armenian translation in vol. 1, p. 13; ANASYAN, *Liberation movements*, p. 52-55, 153-154.

King Trdat had left in Rome as body-guards of the Emperor Constantine the Great upon his visit to the imperial capital⁶. These motifs assured the continuous popularity of this apocalyptic text for centuries to come, eclipsing what may have been its nucleus – Agat'angel *On the end of the world* (*AEW*). At the same time, this constant interest also guaranteed the preservation and transmission of certain very old apocalyptic motifs through the centuries.

PA incorporated and armenianised *AEW*, which is likewise unpublished and virtually unknown. I have identified thirteen manuscripts that transmit it in three recensions, under slightly divergent authors' names. Recension A assigns the composition to Agat'ang, B to Agadron, and C to Agat'angel⁷. The latter name obviously alludes to the celebrated and enigmatic Agat'angelos – the presumed author of the narrative on the conversion of the Armenians. The first scholar who discussed the manuscript tradition of this text, Hakob Anasyan, maintained the name Agat'angel as its author and I will follow his nomenclature⁸. The complete title of the text is *History on the advent of the Antichrist and on the end of the world* / Պատմութիւն վասն Նեան գալստեան եւ վասն կատարածի աշխարհիս. I have analysed the relationship between the *PA* and *AEW* elsewhere⁹. It appears that once the *PA* employed various textual units from *AEW* and reworked them fitting them into an Armenian context, *AEW* became less popular and was copied much less frequently than the *PA*. The relationship between *GCM*, *AEW* and *PA*, as well as the spread of certain apocalyptic motifs in other Armenian texts seemed to suggest a chain of transmission that lead from the *PA* to *AEW* to *GCM*. Yet, a circumstantial textual analysis reveals a more complex situation, as we shall see below. Nevertheless, the important affinities between ideas and textual units in *GCM* on the one hand, and *AEW* and through it *PA*, on the other, alerted me to the possibility that Ps.-Hippolytus' text may exist in Armenian too.

⁶ For the motif of the three hundred *armenk'* and its diffusion in Armenia and Latin sources, see POGOSSIAN, *The Letter of Love*, p. 90-92; and POGOSSIAN, *The Last Emperor*, p. 487-491.

⁷ For further details see POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*. Manuscripts will be cited according to the conventions of the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes, i.e. M = Matenadaran, Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Erevan, Armenia), followed by the relevant call number. *AEW* manuscripts consulted are: M2004 fol. 112v (recension A); M641 fol. 235r (recension B); M8387 fol. 220v (recension C).

⁸ ANASYAN, *Armenian Bibliography*, cols. 149-151.

⁹ POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*; POGOSSIAN – LA PORTA, *Apocalyptic Texts*.

2. *The Armenian Ps.-Hippolytus*

Indeed, in 1884 Cardinal J.B. Pitra published several Hippolytan texts in Armenian, one of which was a fragment of the Armenian version of *De consummatione mundi* (ACM)¹⁰. He based the publication on two unspecified manuscripts from the Mechitarist Library of Venice. Those contained a deficient text which led Pitra to the conclusion that the Armenian tradition did not preserve the whole of CM¹¹. Pitra's edition includes fragments corresponding from § 1 to the middle of § 3, and roughly half of § 10 of the Greek original. About a decade later, B. Sargisean pointed out the impact of this treatise "ascribed to Hippolytus of Bosra", which is how the author known as Hippolytus of Rome in the Greek and Latin traditions is known in Armenian, on various apocalyptic texts preserved in Armenian¹². Sargisean published excerpts from the text based on an unidentified Venice manuscript (or manuscripts) for the purpose of making textual comparisons between it and other apocalyptic texts. Unfortunately, not all of the parallels provided by Sargisean are convincing because frequently it is not possible to postulate a direct relationship between the texts he juxtaposed. Often they all simply used similar eschatological concepts, phrasing them rather differently from case to case, which could and did circulate also orally. Furthermore, all the Armenian manuscripts that I was able to view attribute the text to a Hippolytus, yes, but not to Hippolytus of *Bosra*. This could lead to the hypothesis that the Armenian tradition preserves the memory of two distinct authors: Hippolytus of Bosra (= Rome) vs (Ps.?) Hippolytus who redacted *GCM*. Although Sargisean did not identify the text from which he published the excerpts as a translation of *GCM*, and his historical analysis or textual parallels are not always tenable, he was the first scholar to draw attention to the place of this treatise in what he called "Armenian apocrypha".

I have not yet prepared an exhaustive list of all the Armenian manuscripts of *ACM*. Rather, I have examined several specimens in the Institute of the Ancient Manuscripts – the Matenadaran (Erevan), collating five among those¹³. There are witnesses elsewhere, too, first of all in Venice, as well as in Jerusalem, Paris, and Vienna, which I have not seen. Nevertheless, a preliminary analysis allows to distinguish at least two recensions

¹⁰ PITRA, *Sanctus Hippolytus*, p. 270-273.

¹¹ PITRA, *Sanctus Hippolytus*, p. 219-220.

¹² SARGISEAN, *Apocryphal literature*, p. 156, 179, 194-212.

¹³ I would like to express my gratitude to the Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts – Matenadaran (Erevan), not only for granting me access to these manuscripts *in situ* but also for providing me with their digital photographs on a short notice.

of *ACM*. One family, which I will call the A family or A recension, follows the Greek original more or less faithfully. From this family I have collated M944 and M2330. Manuscript M2715 also belongs to it. In another group of manuscripts that appear to be more numerous, the text agrees with the Greek original only up to the end of § 35 roughly. After that, there is an interpolation which is a narrative of the deeds of the Antichrist that weaves together motifs known from *AEW* and *PA*, without depending on any of them directly. I have examined the following manuscripts from the Matenadaran belonging to the B family whose *incipit* corresponds to the Greek original: M516, M2576, and M2890. A sub-group of this family omits the first eighteen paragraphs that function as an introduction to the main themes of the treatise and that justify the purpose of the work. A sizeable number of codices copied in and around the city of Van and the Monastery of Varag belong to this sub-group. Their content and the arrangement of texts are identical or almost identical. The oldest extant witness among them is M4717. Others that most likely belong to the same sub-group based on their provenance and content include M4724, M4726, M4749, M4756, M9568, and M10236. As already indicated, there are doubtless more witnesses both in the Matenadaran and other libraries with important holdings of Armenian manuscripts.

The Armenian translation, particularly of the A recension, is faithful to the Greek original, as some of the examples provided below testify. Recension B exhibits signs of heavier editing. The translation is free of the excesses of the Hellenising school. Thus, *ACM* renders the Greek text into a fluent Armenian. A more detailed comparison between the Greek original and the Armenian recensions will surely provide further insights on the textual transmission of the Greek original, and, possibly, the date of the Armenian translation, especially if it turns out to depend on a specific Greek recension. Such a study remains to be carried out in the future.

3. *A cluster of texts related to De Consummatione Mundi*

Two earlier apocalyptic texts are presumed to be among the main sources of *GCM*. On the one hand it depends heavily on a treatise supposedly penned by the second-third century bishop of Rome Hippolytus, *De Christo et Antichristo* (*BHG* 812zb, *CPG* 1872). About one third of *GCM* consists of direct borrowings from the latter¹⁴. On the other hand, as early as 1895

¹⁴ ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*, p. 28-29; WHEALEY, *De Consummatione*, p. 461-463. There are doubts whether *De Christo et Antichristo* was authored by the same Hippolytus of Rome who was the author of theological, exegetical, heresiological, homiletic, and

Wilhelm Bousset pointed out numerous parallels between *GCM* and a sermon on the end of the world ascribed to Ephraem Syrus that has come down in Greek. He considered this Greek Ephraem (henceforth *GE*) to have been the source of *GCM*, although other scholars have postulated the opposite, i.e. that *GCM* was the source of *GE*¹⁵. The most substantial comparison between *GE* and *GCM*, as well as other compositions with eschatological content ascribed to Ephraem and preserved in Greek, has been carried out recently by I. Bugár, who has made important suggestions about their dating to which I will return below¹⁶. Bousset also noted the affinities between *GCM* and two other sermons attributed to Ephraem extant in Latin and Syriac, although the connection between these last two and *GCM* is more tenuous¹⁷. The Greek Ephraem (*GE*) is known as *Sermo in adventum domini, et de consummatione saeculi, et in adventum antichristi* / Λόγος εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ περὶ συντελείας τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου (CPG 3946)¹⁸. According to Verhelst, the most recent editor of the Latin sermon ascribed to Ephraem (henceforth *LE*), it was written in Latin based on Latin translations of Syriac eschatological works, such as the *Revelations of Ps.-Methodius* or Ephraem's authentic sermons themselves¹⁹. On the other hand, Kortekaas has argued for a translation from a Greek original²⁰. It is published as *Scarpsum de dictis sancti Efre[m] prope fine mundi et consummatione saeculi et conturbatione gentium* (CPL 1144)²¹. Finally, a Syriac eschatological sermon (*mēmra*) attributed to Ephraem (*SE*), but surely post-dating the Islamic conquests in its current form, is extant. It is known as a *Mēmra of the holy saint Ephrem, the Syrian teacher, concerning the end, (final) consummation, judgment, and punishment; on the people of Gog and*

calendrical works, or if he was a different Hippolytus active in the eastern Mediterranean, for example in Bosra as he is attested in the Armenian tradition. These issues are not relevant to the present paper. Interested readers may consult the respective introductions by M. Simonetti in IPPOLITO, *Contra Noetum* and by E. Norelli in IPPOLITO, *L'Anticristo*.

¹⁵ MCGINN, *Antichrist*, p. 300, note 66, though McGinn does not develop a sustained argument. BADILITA, *Métamorphoses*, p. 372 follows McGinn.

¹⁶ BUGÁR, *Hippolytus Recast*.

¹⁷ BOUSSET, *Der Antichrist*. References to these texts in the context of other medieval eschatological compositions are spread in the entire book, but specific textual parallels between these compositions ascribed to Ephraem and *GCM* may be found on p. 20-26, 34-40, 86-165. A convenient and brief summary of Bousset's comparisons is provided in GRYPEOU, *Ephraem Graecus*, which, however, does not offer new analysis, and, unfortunately, relies on the older publication of *GE* by Assemani, rather than Frantzolas' more recent and preferable edition (see the next note).

¹⁸ Edited in FRANTZOLAS, *Ephraem Syrus*, vol. 4, p. 111-128.

¹⁹ VERHELST, *Sancti Ephrem Prope fine mundi*, p. 519.

²⁰ KORTEKAAS, *Biblical Quotations*.

²¹ VERHELST, *Sancti Ephrem Prope fine mundi*.

*Magog; and about the Antichrist*²². The accuracy of all three attributions to Ephraem is not tenable, although that question is not directly relevant to this paper. Nor is it of concern here how much each of these texts actually depends on authentic Ephraem, either in the Syriac original or in Greek or Latin translations. In his *apparatus fontium* Athanasopoulos has scrupulously revealed numerous other locations where *GCM* depends on specimens from a corpus of Greek texts ascribed to Ephraem Syrus, some authentic, others not. Likewise, Bugár has explored the overlapping content of Greek homilies ascribed to Ephraem with interest in eschatology²³. What is important for this paper is to highlight that the presence of not very popular eschatological *topoi* in Armenian texts, such as in *AEW* or *PA*, that appear to be indebted to Ps.-Hippolytus, may have actually spread through other related texts that formed a cluster, including these Pseudo-Ephraemian sermons in Syriac or Greek. It would be more difficult to postulate transmission of ideas to Armenian via Latin texts before the period of the Crusades. Below I provide examples of ‘eschatologically sensitive formulae’ or *memes* in order to evaluate the relationship of *GCM/ACM* with other Armenian apocalyptic texts²⁴.

4. *Ps.-Hippolytan themes in Armenian apocalypses*

4.1. *The nature of evil: Antichrist and Satan*

The author of *GCM* built his narrative of the end-time villain – the Antichrist – on the basis of Hippolytus’ treatise *De Christo et Antichristo*, expanding, adapting and adding new layers to concepts developed therein. It has numerous shared ideas and even close verbal parallels also with *GE*. However, their relative dating is still unclear and it is, therefore, hard to decide at this stage of research whether *GCM* depends on *GE* or vice versa. Hippolytus’ *De Christo et Antichristo* was the first work to have systematised the notion of the Antichrist as a single, evil human being, diametrically and symmetrically opposed to Christ in every way. This meant, among others, that also the false messiah will have an origin from a Jewish tribe – that of Dan – and he too will be elevated to the royal status – as king of the Jews²⁵. *GCM* took these Hippolytan antinomies a

²² BECK, *Ephraem Sermones*, p. 79-94; REININK, *Pseudo-Ephraem*.

²³ BUGÁR, *Hippolytus Recast*, p. 213-215.

²⁴ For these terms in the context of the composition of apocalyptic texts see, POGOSSIAN – LA PORTA, *Apocalyptic Texts*, p. 825 and DITOMMASO, *Armenian Daniel*, p. 138-140.

²⁵ For more details and further bibliography see POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*, p. 169-170. These two motifs circulated in apocalyptic/eschatological texts since the second century through the works of Irenaeus of Lyon and Hippolytus, and were widely

step further by identifying the Antichrist with the Devil/Satan himself²⁶. Indeed, *GCM* was likely produced in a *milieu* thoroughly familiar with speculations on the extent of the Antichrist's diabolic or Satanic associations. These notions circulated especially in the Palestinian-Mesopotamian geographical area in Late Antiquity, and ranged from imagining the Antichrist as the instrument of Devil or of Satan to his descent from Devil/Satan. Already Cyril of Jerusalem in his *Fifteenth baptismal oration* interpreted 2 Thess 2:9 as a reference to Satan who would use the Antichrist as his instrument²⁷. Similarly, Theodoret of Cyrus speaks of the Devil that will completely merge with the Antichrist²⁸. More significantly, the *GE* calls the end-time villain "the Dragon" who has demons under his command²⁹. Yet, in *GCM* the Antichrist is more than the Devil's (or Satan's) instrument. He is the Devil incarnate: "... καὶ οὕτως ὁφθῆναι τὸν υἱὸν τῆς ἀπωλείας, ἡγουν τὸν διάβολον"³⁰. The Armenian translation faithfully reproduces: "Էւ ապա Էրեւեսցի որդին կորստեան, որ է ինքն սատանա"³¹. While the identification of the Antichrist with the Devil/Satan is scattered throughout this treatise, one may single out § 22 for its more explicit description. On the one hand, *GCM/ACM* identifies the "Devil" with the "Son of Perdition", the Antichrist. On the other hand, *GCM* brings Hippolytus' antagonistic parallelism between Christ and the Antichrist to the extreme by positing the Devil as his *father*. The Antichrist's conception through the Devil and his birth from a false virgin negatively mirrored Christ's miraculous conception and birth from the *Theotokos*³². Therefore, the tension between the notion of an Antichrist as an evil human being who was the instrument or the child of the Devil/

diffused thereafter. On the significance of the origin from Dan and the concept of the Antichrist as a Jewish pseudo-messiah see BOUSSET, *Der Antichrist*, p. 108-115; HILL, *Antichrist from the Tribe of Dan*; BADILITA, *Métamorphoses*, p. 173-176.

²⁶ MCGINN, *Antichrist*, p. 71, 74; BADILITA, *Métamorphoses*, p. 373-374; BUGÁR, *Hippolytus Recast*, p. 222.

²⁷ The relevant passage with a facing Italian translation in POTESTÀ – RIZZI, *L'Anticristo II*, p. 107 (§ 14)

²⁸ The relevant passage from Theodoret's *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* with an Italian translation in POTESTÀ – RIZZI, *L'Anticristo II*, p. 151.

²⁹ FRANTZOLAS, *Ephraem Syrus*, p. 111, 114, 115, 116, 119, etc. BOUSSET, *Der Antichrist*, p. 89-95.

³⁰ ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*, § 9: "... and thus shall be seen the son of perdition, that is the devil".

³¹ M2330, fols 197v-198r: "... and then shall be seen the son of perdition who is Satan himself".

³² ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*, § 22, who also rightly remarks that the use of the term "Theotokos" excludes the possibility that the text could be dated to the time of Hippolytus of Rome, i.e. the third century.

Satan vs. the Devil/Satan incarnate himself, remains unresolved in Ps.-Hippolytus³³.

These conceptions gave rise to further speculations in apocalyptic texts written in various languages, including in Armenian³⁴. *AEW* seems to be the earliest among extant Armenian texts that builds a more complex genealogy of the Antichrist and claims to know the details of his diabolic conception. It identifies his mother as originating from the tribe of Dan – a very widespread and nearly obligatory *topos* in descriptions of the Antichrist – and named Melitene/Nermiline, while his father is told to be a Roman merchant and eunuch (!), from the region of Pontus and named Hromelay³⁵. This naming tradition is found nowhere else besides Armenian texts. Satan intervened during their otherwise impossible intercourse and is, thus, the “real”, or rather, supernatural and diabolic father of the Antichrist. Thus, *AEW*, similar to *GCM/ACM*, combined two streams of traditions on the Antichrist. On the one hand, he was a Jewish pseudo-messiah, while, on the other, he was associated with the Roman Empire. Interestingly, a close textual parallel to *AEW* appears in *LE*. Its author too describes a diabolic conception of the Antichrist from the tribe of Dan: “ex semini viri, ex inmundam vel turpissimam virginem, malo spiritu vel nequissimo mixto, concipitur”³⁶.

From *AEW* the information on the origin and name of the Antichrist was passed on and reiterated in varying forms in other Armenian texts, such as the already-mentioned *PA*, an originally tenth-century *Vision of St. Nersēs* with numerous later versions, a twelfth-century *Sermo de Antichristo* ascribed to Epiphanius of Salamis, and an apocalyptic sermon authored by the thirteenth-century celebrated theologian Vardan Arewelc³⁷. That these texts depended on *AEW* and not directly *ACM* is borne out by the fact that they all know the name of the Antichrist and his earthly parents, details that were introduced by *AEW* and not found in *ACM* or its sources.

³³ See the comments in POTESTÀ – RIZZI, *L'Anticristo II*, p. 559 notes 19 and 20; BOUSSET, *Der Antichrist*, p. 90.

³⁴ For further Latin, Greek, and Syriac texts, see Bousset, *Der Antichrist*, p. 91-93. Bousset's hypothesis that these notions on the Antichrist originated in ancient Judaic traditions that themselves went as far back as the ancient Mesopotamian cosmogonic myths in a genealogical line of descent has been criticised and is no longer tenable. See, for example, BADILITA, *Métamorphoses*, p. 12-24. Nevertheless, Bousset's work remains fundamental as far as textual parallels and the identification of streams of tradition are concerned.

³⁵ M641, fols 235r-v; M2004, fol. 113r; M8387, fol. 48r.

³⁶ VERHELST, *Sancti Ephrem Prope fine mundi*, p. 526. Also the Greek Ephraem *Sermo in adventum domini* affirms the birth of the enemy (Ἐχθρὸς) from a foul virgin. FRANTZOLAS, *Ephraem Syrus*, p. 119.

³⁷ POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*, p. 163-167, 170.

Furthermore, none of these later Armenian texts identify the Antichrist with Devil/Satan, but rather ascribe his conception and actions to the latter. Yet, such identification, which could become the basis of an eschatological dualism between the supernatural principles of good and evil embodied by Christ and Antichrist respectively, must have been present in Armenian eschatological speculations too. Indeed, the author of the *Vision of St. Nersēs* adds a warning in his description of the Antichrist: “Now do not think that he is Satan or a demon from his army: no, but a human with a corrupted mind from the tribe of Dan”³⁸.

There are other shared motifs between *GCM/ACM* and *AEW*. In order to appreciate the type of relationship between these texts, two specific examples will be discussed below. These have been selected from among other possibilities because they occur rarely in other apocalyptic texts, and in one case seem to be exclusive to these two compositions. Thus, a close textual comparison will reveal whether or not the relationship between them may be described as direct.

4.2. *The Antichrist changes behaviour*

Some scholars who have dealt with the evolution of the image of the Antichrist in Late Antiquity have remarked a new motif introduced by *GCM*. This text affirms that the Antichrist will first exhibit a falsely docile, just and exemplary conduct as a way of leading people astray and attracting them to himself. Sure enough, this strategy will quickly augment his following, especially among the Jews, thanks to whom he will become king. As soon as this political goal is achieved, his behaviour will change radically. The false messiah will now act and appear as the exact opposite of what he had feigned to be³⁹. While *GCM* may have played a greater role in popularising this motif, it appears also in *GE*⁴⁰. It is, thus, not exclusive to *GCM*. The juxtaposition of *GCM/ACM* and *AWE* reveals the following⁴¹:

³⁸ The *Vision of St. Nersēs* is included in the *Life of St. Nersēs*. See *Life of St. Nersēs*, p. 722: Արդ մի կարծեմք, թէ սատանայ է նա կամ դէս ի զաւրաց նորա. ոչ, այլ մարդ ապականեալ մտաւք ի տոհմէն Դանայ.

³⁹ ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*, § 23-25. See comments in POTESTÀ – RIZZI, *L'Anticristo II*, p. 114-115. For an analysis of this *topos* in a few other sources see BOUSSET, *Der Antichrist*, p. 111-112; and BADILITA, *Métamorphoses*, p. 372-373.

⁴⁰ FRANTZOLAS, *Ephraem Syrus*, p. 119-120.

⁴¹ NB: 1. within [] are letters reconstructed by me; 2. in <> I have included otiose letters; 3. the underlined lemmata in the third column (Armenian B family) are absent in the Greek original and the Armenian A family; 4. the italicised words in the fourth column (*AEW*) underscore vocabulary reminiscent of *ACM*.

GCM § 23	ACM A family M2330, fol. 201r	ACM B family M4717, fol. 343r	AEW ⁴²
Καὶ τὰ πρῶτα μὲν αὐτοῦ γενή- σεται πραῦς, ἥσυχος, ἀγαπη- τικός, εὐλαβής, εἰρηνοποιός, μισῶν ἀδικίαν, βδελυττόμενος δῶρα, εἰδωλολατρίαν μὴ προ- σιέμενος, τὰς γραφὰς ἀγαπῶν, ἱερεῖς αἰδοῦμενος, πολιὰς τιμῶν, πορνείαν μὴ καταδε- χόμενος, μοιχείαν βδελυτ- τόμενος, καταλαλιάς μὴ προσέχων, ὄρκους παντελῶς μυσσάττομενος, φιλόξενος, φιλόπτωχος, ἐλεήμων.	Նախ զառաջինն լինի Հեզ, Հանդարտ, սիրական, պարկեշտ, խաղաղարար, անիրաւատեաց. Գարշի ի կաշառոց, Հեռանայ ի կոա- պաշտութենէ, սիրէ զգիրս, ի քաշանայս խնայէ, զայլս ծերոց պատուէ, ի շնու- թենէ Գարշի, զպոռնկութիւն ոչ ընդունի, զծառնութիւն ոչ առնու ի միտ, զերդումն ոչ կամի. աւտարասէր, աղքատասէր եւ ողորմած:	Նախ զառաջինն լինի Հեզ, Հանդարտ, սիրական, պարկեշտ, խաղաղար(ար), անիրաւատեաց. Գարշի ի կաշառաց, Հեռանայ ի կոա- պաշտութեանց. սիրէ զգիրս, ի քաշանայ<ն>ս խնայէ, զա<յ>լիս ծերոց պատուէ, ի շնութենէ Գարշի, զպոռն- կութիւն ատէ, զգոցս մաշու- մատնէ, զծառնութիւն ոչ ընդունի, զչարախաւսութիւն ոչ առնու ի միտ, զերդումն ոչ կամի, զստախօսեւն ոչ ախորժէ. աւտարասէր, աղքատասէր եւ ողորմած:	Եւ զառաջինն քարոզէ զպարկեւտութիւն մարդ- կան եւ զառաքինութիւն: Եւ ցուցանէ առ ամենայն ոք զխոնարհութիւն եւ զհեզութիւն յաւրինաց եւ ի մարգարէից, ուսուցանէ զամենեւեան, եւ քաղցր եւ ողորպական բանիւ ի գութ շարժէ զամենայն ոք: Եւ այնպէս կեղծա- ւորեալ դաւաճանութեամբ՝ բոտ իւր կամաց Հաճու- թեան խաբէութեան, զամե- նեւեան առ ինքն դար- ձուցանէ: Յալիսն ծերոց զթայ, զխոնարհս բարձրա- ցուցանէ, զմեծամեծս պատուէ, աղէատաց ողորմի, որբոց խնամ ածէ, դատա- տանի ունկն դնէ, իրաւամբ եւ արդարութեամբ դատէ զամենայն ոք:

The translation below aims to be literal so that the reader may appreciate how faithfully *ACM*, especially A family, follows *GCM*. Underlined lemmata in the second column appear only in the manuscripts of the Armenian B family. *AEW* certainly shares a similar blueprint on the Antichrist's falsely docile and just behaviour as *GCM*, but narrates the story with completely different wording and phrasing. The example comes to give weight to the hypothesis that the texts emerged in a similar *milieu* and relied on a common pool of shared ideas and concepts about the Antichrist and his deceitful character, but *GCM/ACM* is not necessarily the direct source of *AEW*.

⁴² Here and elsewhere I cite Agat'angel according to a critical text I have prepared for a forthcoming publication based on thirteen manuscripts of three recensions. However, I will also provide the relevant manuscript and folio numbers from a representative witness of each family. For this excerpt see: (A) M2004, fols 114v-115r; (B) M641, fol. 236v; (C) M8387, fols 50v-51r.

<i>GCM § 23</i>	<i>ACM</i>	<i>AEW</i>
And he will first appear gentle, calm, loving, pious, maker of piece, hating injustice, detesting gifts, hostile to idolatry, loving the Scriptures, revering priests, honouring the elders ⁴³ , not accepting fornication, detesting adultery, impervious to slanders, in no way accepting oaths, a friend of strangers and the poor, compassionate.	First he will be gentle, calm, loving, modest, maker of piece, hating injustice, detesting bribes, turning his back on idolatry. He loves the Scripture, cares for priests, honours the elders, detests fornication, hates adultery, <u>condemns thieves to death</u> , does not consider slanders, <u>does not consider maledictions</u> , does not wish [to hear] oaths, <u>does not accept lies</u> , loves strangers and the poor, compassionate.	First he will profess piety and virtue to men. And he will show to everyone humility and gentleness. He will teach everyone from the Law and the Prophets, and with sweet and mellifluous words will move everyone to compassion. And feigning thus, according to his deceitful will, he will turn everyone to his [side]. He will be compassionate to the elderly, will raise the humble, will honour the great [men], will pity the poor, care for the orphans, lend ear to justice, judge everyone rightfully and justly.

As soon as the “lawless one” seizes the political power, his character and behaviour will transform:

<i>GCM § 25</i>	<i>ACM A family</i> M2330, fol. 201v	<i>ACM B family</i> M4717, fol. 343v	<i>AEW</i> ⁴⁴
Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ὑψοῦται τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ ὁ πραῦς πρότερον γενήσεται σοβαρὸς καὶ ὁ ἀγάπην δώκων γενήσεται ἀνελεήμων. Ὁ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ γενήσεται ὑψηλὸς καὶ ἅπάνθρωπος καὶ ὁ μισῶν ἀδικίαν τοὺς δικαίους καταδιώξει.	Ապա զինի այսր ամենայնի բարձրացուցանէ զսիրտ իւր: Եւ որ յառաջն Հեզ էր, լինի զժն[դ]ակ: Եւ որ զՀետ երթայր սիրոյ, լինի անողորմ: Եւ [որ] խոնարհ էր սրտիւ, լինի ամբարտաւան ⁴⁵ եւ տմարդի: Եւ որ ատէ՛<այ>ր զանիրաւութիւն, զարդարսն Հալածէ:	Ապա յետ այնր ամենայնի բարձրացուցանէ զսիրտ իւր: Եւ որ յառաջն Հեզն էրէւեր, լինի զժնդակ: Եւ որ զՀետ երթայր սիրոյ, լինի անողորմ: Եւ որ խոնարհ էր սրտիւ, լինի ամբարտաւան եւ տմարդի: Եւ որ ատէր զանիրաւութիւն, զարդարս Հալածէ:	Եւ այժմ սկսանի փոխել զքնութիւն իւր՝ բարոյ նմանութեան աւծի եւ իժի, եւ սկսանի յայտնել զչարութիւն իւր: ... Այն, որ առաջի խոնարհ էր եւ Հեզ, լինի Հպարտ եւ ամբարտաւան: Այն, որ իմաստուն էր եւ խաղաղարար, լինի անաւրէն եւ ամբարիշտ: Այն, որ ողորմած էր եւ զթած, լինի անողորմ եւ բարկասիրտ՝ եւ ամենայն չարեաւք եւ անաւրէնութեամբ լի:

⁴³ Literally the “grey-haired [ones]” which is exactly what the Armenian translation renders as well.

⁴⁴ (A) M2004, fols 116r-v; (B) M641, fol. 237v; (C) M8387, fols 52v-53r.

⁴⁵ Corrected from ամպարտաւան.

<i>GCM</i> § 25	<i>ACM</i>	<i>AEW</i>
And after that he will exalt [himself] in his heart and the one who was previously gentle will become violent, the one who previously pursued love will become ruthless. The one who was humble in heart will become haughty and inhuman, the one who hated injustice will persecute the just.	And after all this he will exalt his heart. And the one who was previously gentle will become ruthless. The one that pursued love will become pitiless. The one that was humble in heart will become haughty and inhuman. The one who hated injustice will persecute the just.	And now he will start to change his nature like a snake and a serpent, and will start to reveal his evil ... The one who was previously humble and gentle, will become proud and haughty. The one that was wise and a peace-maker will become lawless and impious. The one that was compassionate and merciful, will become non-compassionate and irascible, full of all kinds of evil and lawlessness.

There are close parallels in the content of the narration and even some verbal echoes between *ACM* and *AEW*. However, we observe no direct relationship between these texts. Other Armenian apocalyptic compositions were aware of this motif too, but referred to it much more briefly, or did not exploit it at all. Thus, the *PA* limits it to one sentence: “the impious and lawless one, the militant of Satan, will grow up and he will show philanthropy to everyone”, but will act violently once he takes hold of political power⁴⁶. The *Vision of St. Nersēs* omits the motif altogether, while the *Sermo de Antichristo* reduces it to the Antichrist’s hiding his real identity which he reveals only upon seizing political power⁴⁷. *GCM/ACM* and *AEW* are the only two texts that are explicit and detailed on the Antichrist’s change of behaviour. Eschatological compositions preserved in other languages too make brief references to this motif without elaborating it in the way *GCM/ACM* or *AEW* do⁴⁸.

Another element associated with the “change of behaviour” *topos* that appears in *GCM/ACM*, where it agrees closely with *GE*, is also found in *AEW*. According to *GCM/ACM* § 26 upon his change of behaviour and after having performed false miracles, the Antichrist will address the

⁴⁶ M3839, fol. 215: “Իսկ պիղծն եւ անաբէնն եւ զաւրականն սատանայի զարգանայ հասակաւ եւ ամենեցուն առհասարակ մարդասիրութիւն ցուցանէ”.

⁴⁷ POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*, p. 170; FRASSON, *Sermo de Antichristo*, p. 92-94. Nevertheless, both the *Vision of St. Nersēs* and the *Sermo de Antichristo* depend on information from Agat’angel as I have demonstrated in POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*, p. 163-169.

⁴⁸ Significantly, the motif is briefly referred to in *LE* (VERHELST, *Sancti Ephrem Prope fine mundi*, p. 526). Other texts identified by BOUSSET, *Der Antichrist*, p. 112 are a Pseudo-Johannine *Apocalypse*, Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Fifteenth baptismal oration*, John of Damascus *On the orthodox faith*, and the Ethiopian *Apocalypse of Peter*. Thus, the diffusion of the *topos* was rather limited.

people gathered around him “with a powerful voice”, claiming to be the most potent king:

κραυγάσει φωνὴν ἰσχυράν, ὥστε σαλευθῆναι τὸν τόπον [ἐκεῖνον], ἐν ᾧ οἱ ὄχλοι αὐτῷ παρεστήκασιν
գոչէ հզար ձայնիւ, մինչեւ շարժի տեղին, որ ամբողջն կայցեն կանգուն⁴⁹
he will shout with a powerful voice, so that the place in which the multitudes stand near him will shake

Again, the dependence is not verbatim. In *AEW* we read:

Եւ գոչէ յանկարծակի տհեղազոչ ձայնիւ
he will suddenly shout with a bombastic voice

In all the texts the Antichrist proclaims himself to be an almighty king, or even God, uniting in his claims numinous (or rather diabolic) and political aspects of his *persona*.

4.3. *Showing the Crucifixion wounds to the Jews*

This is a rare motif in apocalyptic texts. Indeed, Athanasopoulos’ *apparatus fontium* indicates only biblical allusions in this location. It could, thus, be first developed by the author of *GCM*. It describes Jesus showing his Crucifixion wounds to the Jews upon his Second Coming in human form. The textual situation is even more complex here. The three recensions of *AEW* adduce numerous variant readings to the point that one may consider their texts as independent of each other in this location. None of the three recensions is dependent on *GCM/ACM* if not on the level of describing the same images and actions, but employing entirely different verbal formulations. Below are the texts for comparison:

<i>GCM</i> § 40 ⁵⁰	<i>ACM</i> M947, fol. 52r ⁵¹
Τῶν γὰρ Ἑβραίων ὁ δῆμος ὄψεται αὐτὸν ἐν σχήματι ἀνθρώπου, καθὼς αὐτοῖς ὥφθη ἐκ τῆς ἀγίας παρθένου διὰ σαρκός. Καί, καθὼς αὐτὸν ἐσταύρωσαν, δείξει αὐτοῖς τῶν χειρῶν καὶ τῶν ποδῶν τοὺς ἥλους, ὁμοίως καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῦ τῇ λόγχῃ νενυγμένην καὶ τὴν κάραν τὴν ἐξ κανθῶν στεφανωθείσαν καὶ τὸν τίμιον σταυρὸν εἰς ὃν αὐτὸν	Իսկ ամբողջն Հրեիցն տեսանէին զնա զկերպա[րա]նաւք ծարդոյ որպէս Երեւցաւ նոցա ի կուսէն ծարձնով, Էւ որպէս խաչեցին զնա: Եւ ցուցանէ նոցա զտեղիս բեւեռեացն զրաից Էւ զձեռացն Էւ զկողսն՝ խոցեալ գեղարդեամբ, Էւ զգլուխ իւր պսակեալ ի փշոց, Էւ զխաչն պատուական: Եւ միանգամայն տեսանեն ազգն Հրեիցն, Էւ լան Էւ կոծին անմխիթար ...

⁴⁹ ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*, § 26; for *ACM* see: M4717, fol. 344r and M2330, fol. 202r.
⁵⁰ ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*, § 40.
⁵¹ M2330 is incomplete and omits these last sections of the text.

GCM § 40	ACM M947, fol. 52r
<p>προσήλωσαν. Καὶ ἀπαξαιλῶς πάντα θεάσεται ὁ τῶν Ἑβραίων δῆμος. Καὶ κόψονται καὶ κλαύσονται ...</p> <p>And the people of the Hebrews will see him in human form, as he appeared to them from the Holy Virgin according to the flesh. And as the one that they crucified. And he will show them the prints of the nails of his hands and of his feet. Likewise, [he will show them] his side pierced by the lance, and his head crowned with thorns, and his honourable cross on which they nailed him. And once for all the people of the Hebrews will see all of this. And they will mourn and weep ...</p>	<p>And the crowd of the Jews will see him in human form, as he appeared to them from the Virgin in the flesh, and as they crucified him. And he will show them the signs of the nails of his feet and his hands, and his side pierced by the lance, and his head crowned with the thorns, and the honourable cross. And once for all will the nation of the Jews see [all of this]. And they will weep and mourn...</p>

Because the versions of *AEW* diverge in this location, the three witnesses are presented separately.

A family: M2004, fol. 129v	B family: M642, fol. 248v-249r	C family: M8387, fol. 74v
<p>... Եւ ժողովէ զամենեւեան ազգն Հրէից անՀաւատից, Եւ ցուցանէ նոցա զխոցումն բեւեռաց եւ զտիգումն կողից, զնախատինս եւ զանարգանս, զոր կրեաց յանաւրէն ժողովոյն ...</p> <p>Յայնժամ տեսեալ զայն ազգն Հրէից՝ ամալթալից եղեալ, լան դառնապէս, եւ բախեն զկուրծս իւրեանց ...</p> <p>... And he will assemble the entire nation of the unbelieving Jews and will show them the piercing[s] of the nails and of the lance on his side, and the insults and dishonour that he suffered from the lawless assembly.</p> <p>...</p>	<p>Եւ նախ Տէրն մեր Յիսուս Քրիստոս ցուցանէ զիւր սուրբ կողն Հրէից, զոր խոցել են, այլ և զվերս ձեռացն և զոտիցն, և զամենայն անարգանս և զչարհարանս, զոր նախատանօք տանջեցին և ճաշապարտից փայտս բեւեռեցին ...</p> <p>Սկերես ամալթալից լան և ողբան՝ բախելով զկուրծս իւրեանց, պապանձին և կապին լեզուք նոցա ...</p> <p>Then, our Lord Jesus Christ will show his holy side to the Jews that pierced it, as well as the wounds on his hands and feet, and all the dishonour and torments with which they harassed him and nailed on the wood of those condemned to death</p> <p>...</p>	<p>Եւ նախ զտիրասպան Հրէայսն դատէ և դատապարտէ, և ցուցանէ զխոցումն բեւեռացն և զտիգումն գեղարդեանն, զնախատինս և զարՀամարՀանս, զոր կրեաց ի դպրաց և ի փարիսեցւոց ...</p> <p>Յայնժամ տեսեալ զայն ամենայն ազգն Հրէից՝ լան և ողբան դառնապէս, և ձեծեն զկուրծս, սկերես ամալթալից ի վայր Հայելով ...</p> <p>First he will judge and condemn the Jews that killed the Lord, and he will show them the piercing[s] of the nails and of the lance on his side, the insults and the contempt that he suffered from scribes and Pharisees.</p> <p>...</p>

A family: M2004, fol. 129v	B family: M642, fol. 248v-249r	C family: M8387, fol. 74v
Then, when the nation of the Jews sees it, they will be ashamed, they will weep bitterly and beat their chests.	Their faces will darken with shame, they will weep and mourn beating their chests, they will be silenced and speechless.	Then, when the whole nation of the Jews sees it, they will weep and mourn bitterly, and beat their chests and be downcast with shame.

This example is emblematic for several reasons. Because it is a rare motif and so far not attested in other texts besides *GCM/ACM*, it sheds further light on the relationship between *GCM/ACM* and *AEW*, leading to a better-argued hypothesis on the shared *milieu* and relative date of their composition. No straightforward textual dependence is observable even in this textual unit, not to mention the presence of internal variations within different *AEW* recensions. Therefore, the impact of *GCM* and its Armenian translation (*ACM*) on the Armenian apocalyptic tradition remains vague. This conclusion could be extended to other cases of parallel motifs attested in *GCM/ACM* and *AEW*, and through *AEW* in other Armenian apocalyptic texts. The eventual debt of Armenian apocalyptic sources to *GCM* when shared motifs are well-known from numerous other sources and likely spread also orally, is even harder if not impossible to establish. Yet, the presence of rare *topoi* in Armenian texts indicate a rather good knowledge of traditions typical of the *milieu* where Ps.-Hippolytus and likely *AEW* were composed, regardless of the exact chains of transmission.

5. *Relative dating and context of composition of GCM and AEW: a hypothesis*

Thus, one should not underestimate the significance of *AEW*’s familiarity with numerous “eschatologically sensitive formulae” featuring in Ps.-Hippolytus but limited to very few other apocalyptic texts that form a cluster. Many of these were composed in a Palestinian-Mesopotamian geographical-cultural area⁵². This datum can help us propose a relative dating of *GCM* and *AEW*, as well as investigate the possible original language of *AEW*.

The specific motifs discussed above as well as others in both texts indicate an interest or concern with Jews and Judaism in the end-time drama,

⁵² Based on a theological and historical analysis BUGÁR, *Hippolytus Recast*, p. 216 proposed a slightly different geographical area – Syria and Asia Minor – which is perfectly plausible as well. Moreover, since the author discusses also Cyril of Jerusalem one is to presume that Palestine is included in this “Syria and Asia Minor” too.

although each text lays a different emphasis on the topic. Certainly, numerous Christian apocalyptic texts, starting with the earliest specimen, include references to Jews and Judaism in various contexts and with different functions. One of the best explored in scholarly literature is the image of the Antichrist as a Jewish pseudo-messiah, sitting in the Temple and declaring himself God, accepted by the Jews, and rejected by the true believers. This construct, based on 2 Thess 2:3-4 and its exegesis, reinforced and transformed due to such historical circumstances as the Bar Kochba revolt (132-135 CE) and others, had long and ramified developments in numerous languages and historical periods⁵³. Recent studies by L. Greisiger have laid the emphasis on the rule of Emperor Heraclius, especially his Persian campaigns (roughly 612-628), his restitution of the True Cross in Jerusalem (629/630) and his policy of forced conversion of Jews (632), as triggers for eschatological speculations⁵⁴. Heraclius' actions gave an impetus to the development of the messianic 'last Roman emperor' motif, on the one hand, and that of an anti-messiah – Armilus – in Jewish traditions, on the other. The dislike of the emperor was not limited to the Jews of the Byzantine Empire but also some non-dyophysite Christian communities shared these feelings⁵⁵.

The complex of ideas associated with the *topos* of a Jewish pseudo-messiah underlies the actions of the Antichrist also in *GCM/ACM* and *AEW* but the involvement of Jews in this process is placed within different political scenarios and a different eschatological *finale* is imagined for them. In a comparative perspective *AEW* dedicates much more space and discussion to Jews and their role in the eschatological drama than most apocalyptic texts, including *GCM*. *AEW* even includes a dialogue between the Antichrist and the Jews through which it presents also the Jewish point of view on their rationale for following this false messiah⁵⁶. Furthermore, to my knowledge only these two texts include a direct address of Jesus to Jews upon his Second Coming, as presented above. Despite these shared concepts, they envision a different verdict on the ultimate fate of the Jews at the Universal Judgment. *AEW* describes their eventual refusal of the Antichrist, proclamation of belief in Jesus as Christ (Messiah), and their heroic martyrdom at the hands of the Antichrist. This conversion *in extremis* will assure their inclusion in the "Book of life".

⁵³ BOUSSET, *Der Antichrist*, p. 108-115. For more details and texts in different languages see POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*, p. 172-184.

⁵⁴ GREISIGER, *Messias. Endkaiser. Antichrist*.

⁵⁵ GREISIGER, *Messias. Endkaiser. Antichrist*, p. 132-180; POGOSSIAN – LA PORTA, *Apocalyptic Texts*.

⁵⁶ POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*, p. 177.

Such solution stands in contradiction to the textual unit on Jesus showing his wounds to the Jews upon his Second Coming. On the contrary, *GCM/ACM* is more coherent from a literary perspective because it maintains a negative vision on the fate of the Jews throughout and sees them condemned to eternal damnation after the Second coming⁵⁷. Could this reflect different perspectives of two authors (or compilers) redacting an apocalyptic work with a similar pool of ideas and motifs, but fitting them into different historical situations?

It has been suggested that *GCM* was written at the end of the fourth century and based its image of the Antichrist on Julian the Apostate. This type of historicising has been rightly criticised, although the late fourth-century date has been considered likely by some scholars⁵⁸. Conversely, Whealey's suggestion of a late-seventh or early-eighth century date, accepted by Athanasopoulos, seems too late and rests on tenuous grounds⁵⁹. She considers Ps.-Hippolytus' original interpretation of the Sign of the Beast (666) to mean "APNOYME" (Renegade!), as a cryptic reference to Islam and forced conversions of Christians⁶⁰. Yet, with no other evidence or even veiled hints in the text to suggest a post-Islamic situation, one may imagine many other reasons and contexts that would prompt the author of *GCM* to preach against "reneging" Christ, including an intra-Christian, intra-confessional strife where the call to stay firm in one's faith could be addressed to a specific confessional community. It is not futile to remember that apocalyptic texts post-dating the mid-seventh century and attributed to early Christian authors usually yield enough anachronisms or allusions to the "sons of Hagar" or "Ismaelites" as to betray the *terminus ante quem* of their composition and interpret such allusions as *vaticinia ex eventu*. The most celebrated among such sources is the *Revelations of Ps.-Methodius*, but one may add the already-mentioned Syriac sermon attributed to Ephraem (SE), the PA, the *Sermo de Antichristo* attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis or the *Vision of St. Nersēs*, the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse*, or a Greek *Daniel Apocalypse*⁶¹. The most convincing time-frame for the composition of *GCM* has been proposed by Bugár who argues for the end of the fifth

⁵⁷ ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*, § 40.

⁵⁸ ANDREI, *De Antichristo di Ippolito*; critical remarks in BADILITA, *Métamorphoses*, p. 376-377, who cites also a B.A. thesis (tesi di laurea) by S. Gennari at the University of Siena completed in 1997 with the same hypothesis on the date (fourth century) and references to Julian the Apostate. I have not seen this thesis. POTESTA & RIZZI, *L'Anticristo II*, p. 114 also express doubts about this hypothesis.

⁵⁹ WHEALEY, *De consummatione*; ATHANASOPOULOS, *Ps.-Hippolytus*, p. 24-25.

⁶⁰ WHEALEY, *De consummatione*, p. 467.

⁶¹ For all these texts and relevant bibliography see POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*, p. 169, 183.

to the first half of the sixth century on the basis of textual, historical and theological analysis⁶².

A parallel study of *GCM* and *AEW* gives further weight to the likelihood of both texts' composition before the Islamic conquests in the eastern Mediterranean. Based on other textual units, especially the motif of the 'last Roman emperor' and his abdication on the Golgotha, I have hypothesised that *AEW* was most likely composed around the time of Heraclius' entry to Jerusalem and before Islamic conquests⁶³. A relative chronology of *GCM* pre-dating *AEW* but written in the same *milieu* fits well with the different perspectives of the texts not only on the Jews, but also *AEW*'s more developed political agenda and interest in the 'last Roman emperor'.

Furthermore, this discussion bears on the question of the original language of *AEW*. It is not known in any other language. However, as I have indicated elsewhere, the lack of any motifs, allusions or direct references to Armenian history or concerns, makes it difficult to posit this text as an originally Armenian composition⁶⁴. The translation of *GCM* into Armenian, which must be studied further to be dated, is a clear indication that such texts were of interest and were, indeed, translated into Armenian.

6. Conclusions

Several medieval Armenian texts composed between the tenth and thirteenth centuries include motifs reminiscent of themes developed in Ps.-Hippolytus *De consummatione mundi*. These texts include the *Vision of St. Nersēs*, the *Prophecies of Agat'on*, the *Sermo de Antichristo*, and an eschatological sermon authored by Vardan Arewelc'i, among the most well-known. But it is Agat'angel *On the end of the world* that adduces the closest parallels with *De consummatione mundi*. I started this article with the hypothesis that *AEW* could have been the channel through which Ps.-Hippolytan apocalyptic motifs started circulating in Armenian. In order to test it, this article drew attention to the existence of the Armenian translation of *De consummatione mundi* for the first time. The Armenian version is extant in at least two recensions and, moreover, one sub-family is interpolated with a text closely related to *AEW*. This indicates that already medieval scribes were aware of the affinity between *De consummatione mundi* and Agat'angel *On the end of the world*. Both texts describe the most notorious end-time antagonist – the Antichrist – in markedly similar

⁶² BUGÁR, *Hippolytus Recast*, p. 216.

⁶³ POGOSSIAN – LA PORTA, *Apocalyptic Texts*.

⁶⁴ POGOSSIAN, *Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic*, p. 174-175.

terms: 1. he is a pseudo-messiah accepted by the Jews, associated or even identical (in *GCM/ACM*) with the Devil or Satan; 2. he will first exhibit kind and gentle behaviour to lead people, especially the Jews, astray, but will radically change upon seizing political power, 3. shouting out with a loud voice and calling people to worship him. Both texts are concerned with the Jews and their role in the *eschaton*, although in *AEW* this is a greater preoccupation than in *GCM/ACM*. As a result, in both texts Jesus will address the Jews directly upon his Second Coming, reproaching them for the Crucifixion and showing them his wounds. Despite these similarities, a more minute textual analysis demonstrates that even in cases of rare apocalyptic motifs attested only in *GCM/ACM* and *AEW*, such as the description of Jesus showing his Crucifixion wounds to the Jews, no direct textual dependence can be postulated. Rather, *GCM* and *AEW* appear to be products of a similar or even the same cultural *milieu* that geographically encompassed Palestine and Mesopotamia, and share a number of specific eschatological notions due to their common knowledge of these stock themes. Because on the basis of other features *AEW* can be dated to around the time of Heraclius' restitution of the Cross in Jerusalem (629/630), further weight can be placed on the dating of *GCM* prior to that time. On the other hand, the affinities between *GCM* and *AEW* raise the question of the original language of *AEW* which could well have been Greek or Syriac, rather than Armenian. This issue, however, requires further research. In this respect, the existence of the Armenian version of Ps.-Hippolytus clearly indicates interest in apocalyptic texts composed in other languages and translated into Armenian even though they had no direct bearing on Armenian history or interests. A further comparative analysis of the language of *ACM* and *AEW* will surely provide new data for determining *AEW*'s original language of composition, as well as dating the translation of both texts. The study of *ACM* and *GCM* is at its beginning and this article hopes to contribute to that discussion and stimulate future research.

Abbreviations

- ACM* Armenian Ps.-Hippolytus *De consummatione mundi*
AEW Agat'angel *On the End of the World*
GCM Ps.-Hippolytus *De Consummatione mundi* / *Περὶ τῆς συντελείας τοῦ κόσμου* (*BHG* 812z, *CPG* 1910)
GE Greek sermon ascribed to Ephraem Syrus: *Sermo in adventum domini, et de consummatione saeculi, et in adventum antichristi* / *Λόγος εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ περὶ συντελείας τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου* (*CPG* 3946)

- LE Latin sermon ascribed to Ephraem Syrus: *Scarpsum de dictis sancti Efre[m] prope fine mundi et consummatione saeculi et conturbatione gentium* (CPL 1144)
- PA *Prophecies of Agat'on*
- SE Syriac sermon ascribed to Ephraem Syrus: *A mēmṛā of the holy saint Ephrem, the Syrian teacher, concerning the end, (final) consummation, judgment, and punishment; on the people of Gog and Magog; and about the Antichrist*

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Research Associate
ERC JewsEast Project
Ruhr-Universität-Bochum
Center for Religious Studies
Universitätstr. 90a
D-44789 Bochum
Germaniy
zarapogossian@gmail.com

Zaroui POGOSSIAN

Abstract — This article presents for the first time the Armenian version of an eschatological composition known as Ps.-Hippolytus *De Consummatione Mundi* (BHG 812z, CPG 1910) in comparison with its Greek original, and evaluates its possible impact on other Armenian apocalyptic texts, particularly Agat'angel *On the end of the world*. It first discusses briefly the textual tradition of the Armenian Ps.-Hippolytus and reveals that it is extant in at least two recensions. Their distinctive features are exposed. Then, the article explores some common themes, the so-called 'eschatologically sensitive formulae', that Ps.-Hippolytus and Agat'angel *On the end of the world* share, emphasising both text's engagement in anti-Jewish polemic. Such *topoi*, particularly in relation to the function of the Jews in the eschatological drama and their fate during the Last Judgement, are significant given that they are attested only in very few other texts. This could lead to the hypothesis of a direct dependence between these two texts. However, a more detailed comparison provides grounds to refuse this possibility. Nevertheless, a shared cultural-geographical *milieu* of the two texts' redaction may be hypothesised and a possible relative and absolute dating proposed, suggesting a date of the composition of Agat'angel *On the end of the world* at the time of Emperor Heraclius and the so-called last great conflict of Late Antiquity – Byzantine-Persian wars.

Keywords: Ps.-Hippolytus, eschatology, Antichrist, Jewish-Christian polemic, Greek-Armenian translations