Hellish Visions

Punishment in Western European Vision Literature, ca. 800–1200

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

I denna pro gradu-avhandling undersöks bestraffningar i visionslitteratur skriven i västra Europa mellan 800- och det tidiga 1200-talet. Fokus ligger på hur bestraffningar beskrivs i visionerna, vad bakgrunden till dessa beskrivningar är, hur bestraffningar kopplade till själslig rening, och därmed skärseldskonceptet, skiljer sig från bestraffningar kopplade till förtappelse, samt hur allt detta utvecklas under den undersökta perioden och även hur det relaterar till Jacques Le Goffs tes om att skärselden "föds" kring 1170-talet. Målet med avhandlingen är att bidra till historieforskningen kring såväl visionslitteratur som skärseldens utveckling genom att använda en infallsvinkel, bestraffningar, som tidigare inte använts på detta sätt.

Avhandlingens huvudsakliga källmaterial består av 18 visioner, varav sju är från 800-talet, tre från 900–1000-talet, sju från 1100-talet och en från början av 1200-talet. De flesta av dessa visioner är skrivna på latin och de beskriver i regel resor till den andra sidan, dvs. livet efter döden. Även om deras egentliga sanningshalt därmed kan ifrågasättas är detta något som inte påverkar deras användbarhet som källor i denna avhandling. Såframt denna avhandling kan sägas bygga på någon teori är det i själva verket just att visioner av detta slag är av värde som källmaterial för forskning, vilket historiker som Claude Carozzi, Alan E. Bernstein och Isabel Moreira tidigare visat prov på i sin forskning.

I avhandlingen konstateras i enlighet med tidigare forskning att lidande och bestraffningar under medeltiden sågs som ett sätt att återställa den av synd rubbade balansen i kosmos och att bestraffningar i visionslitteraturen, samt i livet efter detta mera allmänt, dels var avsedda att fylla denna funktion, dels att avskräcka från ytterligare synd. Visionslitteraturens ofta brutalt fysiska bestraffningar indelas i elva huvudkategorier och det påvisas att bestraffningarna vanligtvis bygger på traditionen inom genren, samtida i jordelivet tillämpade bestraffningar, olika mindre trevliga aspekter av dåtidens samhälle och/eller litterära samt bibliska källor.

Ytterligare påvisas att bestraffningarna i sig för det mesta inte kan kategoriseras som enbart renande eller enbart fördömande och att information om bestraffningarnas kontext, särskilt hur länge de varar, är nödvändig för att avgöra deras sanna natur. Överlag är temporära bestraffningar renande och permanenta bestraffningar fördömande, men även inom dessa kategorier finns utrymme för variation vad gäller bestraffningarnas längd.

Slutligen fastställs att det under den undersökta perioden sker en utveckling både vad gäller individuella bestraffningar och bestraffningar mera allmänt. En del bestraffningar blir vanligare senare, medan andra visar prov på nya element senare under perioden. Även bestraffningar som är helt nya inom genren tillkommer. Dessutom är beskrivningarna av bestraffningar oftast såväl mer detaljerade som mer morbida i de senare visionerna. Trots detta är bestraffningarnas natur i sig lika tvetydig under hela perioden. Eftersom bestraffningarna kontextualiseras allt mer i de senare visionerna är det dock lättare att avgöra om ett visst straff är renande eller fördömande då man läser visioner från 1100- och det tidiga 1200-talet än då man läser visioner från 900-talet. Denna ökade kontextualisering kan kopplas till en ökad spatial differentiering av den andra sidan och är på så vis även kopplad till den "födsel av skärselden" som Le Goff hävdat att sker kring 1170-talet. En av avhandlingens viktigaste slutsatser är, utöver att en ökad kontextualisering äger rum, dock att visionslitteraturens bestraffningar, denna koppling till trots, inte stöder Le Goffs tes om en "födsel" av skärselden efter 1100-talets mitt, utan istället reflekterar den numera allmänt vedertagna synen att skärseldens utveckling bör ses som en lång process.

Övriga viktiga slutsatser som dras i avhandlingen är att en ny kategori av bestraffningar, att bli tillredd som mat, börjar synas i visionslitteraturen som en följd av att västeuropéer i och med korstågen kom i kontakt med kannibalism, och att regelrätta skamstraff tycks dyka upp i visionerna först under slutet av 1100-talet. Båda dessa är ämnen som med fördel kunde utforskas vidare i framtida forskning.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords

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1. Introduction

Life after death is a concept that has intrigued humans for thousands of years, and throughout the history of Christianity the afterlife has occupied a special place in the imagination of Christians. Visions of the hereafter have long been a part of this tradition, although they are by no means exclusive to, or first seen in, Christianity. During the Middle Ages in particular, vision literature was very popular throughout Western Europe. The visions produced in this period built on a tradition reaching back to include among others the *Revelation of St Paul*, also known as the *Apocalypse of Paul*, an early account depicting Paul's journey to the otherworld, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great.[1] In the medieval period, a strive for salvation seems to have characterised the lives of many and the prospect of eternal damnation appears to have loomed large in the minds of both laymen and ecclesiastics. In this milieu, journeys to the otherworld, as expressed in visions, functioned as didactic tools as well as means of urging correction among their readers. These functions were fulfilled partly through showing the punishments endured by the damned and those suffering through purgation. Such depictions were often accompanied by tales of what the person suffering had done to deserve such punishment, thereby creating examples of how not to live one's life. Through showcasing the horrors of damnation and purgation, the authors of the visions aimed to ensure that their readers turned their lives around already in this life, all the while acknowledging that all was not necessarily lost for those who did not have time to correct all of their misdeeds.

This notion, that redemption post-mortem is possible and generally to be achieved by means of punishment, is apparent already in several early visions and characterises for instance most otherworldly visions from the Carolingian period.[2] However, according to Jacques Le Goff – whose seminal work *La naissance du Purgatoire* has shaped the discourse on the history of purgatory since its publication in 1981 – purgatory as a distinct place in the afterlife emerged only around the 1170s. Following Le Goff many scholars have researched the development of purgatory and traced its emergence to earlier points in history, one noteworthy example among them being Isabel Moreira, who in her book *Heaven's Purge* considers notions of purgatory during late antiquity. Using the scholarly discussion surrounding purgatory as a

[1] Ganz 2000, 183; Dutton 1994, 60, 62.

[2] See for example the Vision of Paul, the Passion of Perpetua, the Vision of Drythelm, and the Visio Wettini. For a discussion on post-mortem redemption and punishment in the afterlife, see for example Moreira 2010a, 15–62.

backdrop, it is with the punishments of the afterlife depicted in vision literature and their role in the development of notions of purgation and purgatory that this thesis is concerned.

1.1 Focus, aims, and research questions

The focus of this Master's thesis is how otherworldly punishments are depicted in vision literature written between the ninth and the early thirteenth centuries and how these depictions relate to developing notions of purgatory during the period. It is my aim to here shed light on changes in depictions of this kind and to explore what such changes might signify for the development of notions pertaining to the hereafter. Moreover, part of this study is constituted by an exploration of the extent to which the 'Birth of Purgatory', which Jacques Le Goff situates in the 1170s on the basis that the noun *purgatorium* begins being used around this time and the area in his view becomes spatially differentiated partly as a result, is reflected in depictions of punishments of purgation and damnation in contemporary vision literature.[3]

I have chosen to limit myself to visions from the ninth to the early thirteenth century because, although there are a number of extant visions of the afterlife from prior to the ninth century, the period from the ninth to the early thirteenth century boasts a particularly large amount of extant visions detailing journeys to the otherworld.[4] For instance, a total of nine unique visions depicting the afterlife survive from the Carolingian era alone. Due to there being more extant visions available from the ninth century onwards, this period provides a more extensive foundation than the previous centuries for analysing trends in vision literature and tracing developments with regards to punishments and purgation. Furthermore, in general, the period from the ninth to the early thirteenth century constitutes a suitably manageable period for an investigation of this kind and allows for a long enough lead up to, and time following, the 1170s to determine if a correlation exists between the depictions of punishments of purgation and damnation in vision literature and the development of a clearly distinguishable purgatory. Additionally, the early thirteenth century constitutes a natural endpoint for this thesis as the predominant nature of visions changes starting from the middle of the twelfth century and visions become more mystical and focused on heavenly encounters particularly from the early thirteenth century onwards.[5] Indeed, Alison Morgan has pointed out that we know of no new visions of the kind under consideration here written after 1206.[6] In terms of geography, the

[3] Le Goff 1984, 133-153, 171.
[4] For lists of extant visions see for instance Gardiner 1993 and Dinzelbacher 1981.
[5] Dinzelbacher 1981, for an overview of the differences between the two see the table on page 229.
[6] Morgan 1990, 3–4.

extant visions also largely dictate the kind of focus that is possible. That being the case, I am here focusing on the development in visions written in the area of the Carolingian Empire as well as the British Isles.

I am not here interested in giving a full account of what contemporaries of the visions under consideration might possibly have believed – the visions, which were generally written by and for ecclesiastics, cannot with the evidence at hand be construed as fully representative of popular beliefs. Nor is it my primary intention to, like Paul Edward Dutton has done for the Carolingian visions, closely investigate the context out of which these visions were born as well as their relationship with the politics of their time. Although such an investigation would doubtlessly be worthwhile, it is simply too big a task to tackle with the entire period chosen here in mind. Consequently, although aspects of context will be considered, my focus lies with the contents of the visions, specifically the punishments depicted, and what they can reveal about developing notions of purgation, and by extension purgatory. Succinctly, one might say that I throughout this thesis will seek to answer the following primary research questions:

1. How is punishment depicted in vision literature written between the ninth and early thirteenth century, and why is it depicted in this way?
2. Can punishments of purgation be distinguished from punishments of damnation in the vision literature?
3. Are there changes over time in how punishments in the hereafter are depicted in vision literature and, if so, how do they relate to Jacques Le Goff's notion of purgatory being born as a place around the 1170s?

In answering these questions, it is my aim to add to the field of research dealing with vision literature and descriptions of the hereafter therein. To the best of my knowledge, no extensive investigation of punishments depicted in vision literature during this period exists, as it is generally something considered at most as a part of a broader exploration of a different topic. Additionally, I here intend to contribute to the discussion concerning the 'Birth of Purgatory' by approaching the topic from a new and different perspective. In *The Birth of Purgatory* Jacques Le Goff utilises only a limited amount of visions from the period under consideration here to support situating the 'Birth of Purgatory' in the 1170s. From the Carolingian period, for instance, Le Goff uses two visions, the *Visio Wettini* and the *Visio Karoli Grossi* (the Vision of Charles the Fat), and from the twelfth century he references four visions, three of

which are from the period prior to the 1170s. Through investigating portrayals of punishments in vision literature, I hope to not only add to the discussion by expanding the vision material considered, but to also broaden the scope of the discussion by shifting the focus from a more geographical viewpoint to a penal one.

Although my thesis seeks to expand on and to some extent test the validity of Le Goff's research and assertions concerning the emergence of purgatory as a distinct place, I will follow him in not using the term 'purgatory' for the period prior to the 1170s. This is because I believe he is correct in maintaining that the term itself only emerges around this time.[7] Using it to describe a similar phenomenon in visions from the ninth to the early twelfth century would therefore be anachronistic. Consequently, I will throughout this thesis use expressions such as places of purgation, or simply refer to persons suffering in purgation when dealing with the period leading up to the 1170s.

In addition to this introductory chapter, this thesis consists of a background chapter, three main chapters, and a conclusion. The background chapter sets the scene through a more in-depth introduction of vision literature as well as medieval concepts of the afterlife. After this the thesis is structured so that the first main chapter, chapter three, deals with the nature and rationale of punishment in vision literature. It asks why punishment in the hereafter is necessary, what types of punishment the souls suffering through purgation in the visions experience, and why punishment takes this particular form. It separates the punishments of the vision literature into eleven different categories and discusses for example the biblical, literary, visionary, societal, and punitive sources underlying them. Chapter four then explores how, if at all, punishments of purgation and punishments of damnation differ from each other in the vision literature. It investigates if punishments can be distinguished without references to the duration of punishment being made and concludes that for the most part the nature of punishments in the vision literature is ambiguous. The vast majority of punishments are used both in a purgative and in a damnatory context, and without contextual information it is generally impossible to tell what camp a punishment belongs to. The third and final main chapter, chapter five, takes the insights of the previous two chapters and asks if it is possible to detect any development over time in how punishments are depicted in the visions. It also reviews to what extent the emerging picture of the development of punishment correlates with Jacques Le Goff's notion that purgatory was born in the late twelfth century. It notes that

[7] Le Goff 1984, 133–153, 362–366.

during the period considered there are developments concerning punishments in the vision literature both on the level of individual punishments and on a more general level. It also concludes that while punishments continue to lend themselves to ambiguity throughout the period, there is a shift towards more contextualisation of the punishments later in the period and this results in it being easier to determine the nature of punishments later on. Finally, it observes that this is linked to an increased spatialization of the otherworld, a phenomenon which underlies Le Goff's 'Birth of Purgatory', but that the changes in punishments, rather than indicate that purgatory is born in the late twelfth century, support the notion that notions of purgation and purgatory develop over a far longer period.

1.2 Previous research

As the discussion above indicates, Le Goff's notion that purgatory is born as a distinct place around the time when the term *purgatorium* begins being commonly used in Latin in the late twelfth century will function as a kind of reference point for parts of this thesis. In addition to Le Goff, the debate which his book, *The Birth of Purgatory*, has sparked also informs this thesis. Before using Le Goff's conclusions, or those of his critics, it is, however, necessary to expand further on what they entail. In this context it is also worth putting forth a definition of purgatory. In short, the fully developed doctrine of purgatory entails an intermediary state in the afterlife where souls, which are to be saved but at the time of death are burdened by sin, suffer through punishment in order to be worthy of entering heaven and partaking in eternal salvation. Through intercession, for example prayers, alms, and masses, the living can influence the length or severity of the punishments of those undergoing purgation in purgatory.[8]

In *The Birth of Purgatory* Le Goff argues that purgatory as a distinct place is born no earlier than the 1170s. He bases this assertion partly on his study of medieval sources for the use of the noun *purgatorium*. While conducting this study he found that the noun *purgatiorium* first made its appearance in literature around 1170, following a period during which 'purgatorial places' had been used instead of the older 'purgatorial fire'.[9] To Le Goff words are of key importance to the development of ideas, but while he connects the use of the noun *purgatorium* to the full emergence of the concept, he also sees the 'birth' of purgatory in the twelfth century as a result of societal changes. Le Goff recognises the long history of many of

[8] Le Goff 1984, 6–7, 11; Jorgenson 1986, 310.
[9] Le Goff 1984, 133–153.

the different elements of purgatory but stresses the importance of its spatial differentiation and maintains that this was something which occurred in the twelfth century through the work of theologians such as Peter Comestor. In the twelfth century purgatory became a place that was intermediary both topographically and judicially.[10] A tripartite otherworld to match a tripartite society on earth was born.[11]

In the wake of *The Birth of Purgatory* plenty of research on whether or not purgatory can be said to have been born in the late twelfth century has been done. Both Graham Robert Edwards and Brian Patrick McGuire have for instance argued against Le Goff and stated that one should not speak of the birth of purgatory but rather perceive of its development as an evolution, a point of view that I adhere to.[12] According to Edwards, Le Goff's argument for a 'Birth of Purgatory' in the twelfth century falls short of the mark partly because it rests on what he considers to be 'very generalised assertions about medieval society and its mental attitudes' and, importantly, on misreadings of Augustine and other theologians. As a result of what Edwards terms 'Le Goff's minimising presuppositions' and failure to properly consider connections to earlier relevant developments, Le Goff ends up side-lining what Edwards views as the true perspective in which the changes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries should be placed. To Edwards the changes Le Goff identifies in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, thus, constitute just a part of a longer evolution.[13]

McGuire also thinks Le Goff misses the mark in specifying a clear 'birth' of purgatory. In his view, the twelfth-century developments to notions of purgation and purgatory are important, but they do not constitute a 'central turning point in the Western view of this life and the next.' Notions of a kind of purgatory, he states, existed from early Christianity onwards and the changes of the twelfth-century were not as considerable as Le Goff suggests. In fact, there was not a clear shift to a tripartite view of the afterlife in the late twelfth century, for both a dual and a quadruple view of the otherworld continued to exist alongside this new sense.[14]

Another prominent critic of aspects of Le Goff's theory is A. Ja. Gurevich, who wrote an article for the *Journal of Medieval History* in 1983 entitled 'Popular and scholarly medieval cultural traditions: notes in the margin of Jacques Le Goff's book'. Although Gurevich recognises the importance of Le Goff's study, he also points to what he considers to be its

[10] Le Goff 1984, 171.
[11] Le Goff 1984, 154–176; McGuire 1989, 61–62.
[12] Edwards 1985; McGuire 1989.
[13] Edwards 1985, 638–646.
[14] McGuire 1989, 65–66.

shortcomings. Of particular relevance here is that Gurevich, in contrast to Le Goff, who focuses on scholarly and theological writings, emphasises the importance of vision literature in the development of purgatory.[15] Indeed, he contends that even though the term *purgatorium* does not appear in visions from the early Middle Ages, such as Bede's *Vision of Dryhthelm*, the notion of purgatory is there. The functions of purgatory may be fulfilled in distinct areas of hell, but the point is that they are fulfilled all the same. Thus, he maintains that Le Goff is right in claiming that scholasticism played an important role in the development of purgatory, but rather than invent purgatory, the scholastics organised ideas that were already present and thereby they changed the imagery of the otherworld.[16]

The importance Gurevich places of vision literature is echoed in Isabel Moreira's *Heaven's Purge: Purgatory in Late Antiquity* and Alan E. Bernstein's *Hell and Its Rivals: Death and Retribution among Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Early Middle Ages*.[17] Both of these books are vital to this thesis, not least because they cement the idea that investigating visions for information about the afterlife is a worthwhile endeavour. In fact, if this thesis can be said to be based on any theory, it is that vision literature deserves scholarly attention and that the visions can and do reflect trends in theology and society in general, something which the research of both Moreira and Bernstein shows.[18] Without a belief in this as true, there would be little point to this thesis, as a fundamental part of its aim is to mine the visions for information about punishments therein and how they relate to the society out of which they arouse.

Both Moreira's and Bernstein's books are also important because of their contributions to the debate surrounding the development of purgatory and their consideration of the foundation for a number of the punishments evident in the vision literature at hand here. Crucially, in *Heaven's Purge* Moreira argues for the connection between the treatment of slaves and lower-class criminals in late antiquity and how souls were treated and punished in the hereafter of the vision literature.[19] By doing so, Moreira not only highlights an important motif underpinning punishment in the hereafter, but also exemplifies how, as was mentioned above, the imagery of the visions and society at large are connected. In her book, Moreira also argues for the significance of Bede in the formation of purgatory and in general she focuses on a

[15] Gurevich 1983.
[16] Gurevich 1983, 83.
[17] Moreira 2010a; Bernstein 2017.
[18] Bernstein 2017, 199–201; Moreira 2010a, 115; Gardiner 1989, xii–xiv.
[19] Moreira 2010a, 49–57.

period, late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, far predating the period primarily considered by Le Goff.[20] Bernstein's primary contribution to this thesis is his consideration of the underpinnings of several of the punishments meted out in early medieval visions as well as his categorisation of these punishments.[21] Although my decision to categorise punishments in this thesis was not originally inspired by Bernstein and my categories do not always follow his, his categorisation and explanation of the sources underlying punishments have been a great resource during the process of writing this thesis.

Of relevance to the debate following *The Birth of Purgatory* is also Claude Carozzi's *Le Voyage de l'âme dans l'au-delà d'après la littérature latine (Ve-XIIIe siècle)*. Carozzi has written a number of works pertaining to medieval vision literature and conceptions of the afterlife as well as the apocalypse in the Middle Ages and is a great contributor to the cementation of vision literature as a valid research topic. Thereby he has done this thesis a great service. In this particular book Carozzi considers an extensive corpus of journeys to the otherworld. Unlike Le Goff, Carozzi uses the term purgatory to refer to places of purgation in sources that are much older than the late twelfth century. Indeed, when discussing developments between the sixth and eighth centuries, Carozzi speaks of a development from a purgatorial fire to a 'hell-purgatory'.[22] This divergence from Le Goff is noteworthy, however, I would be hesitant to follow Carozzi in using terms such as 'hell-purgatory', as it, to the best of my knowledge, is not what people of the time used and I am inclined to follow Bernstein's assertion in *Hell and Its Rivals* that we should avoid applying terminology that does not reflect contemporaries views onto them.[23] Nevertheless, this work has been an important contribution to the field of research both concerning vision literature and the development of purgatory. However, as its primary focus lies with geography, there are limits to its usefulness to this thesis. Moreover, due to its expansiveness and my far from perfect knowledge of French, I have unfortunately been unable to make full use of its contributions.

Finally, among the contributors to the debate sparked by Le Goff should also be mentioned Barbara Newman and her article 'Hildegard of Bingen and the "Birth of Purgatory"'.[24] This is an interesting study in that it focuses on a female visionary who was active shortly before the 1170s and the 'Birth of Purgatory' according to Le Goff. It is, moreover, fascinating in that

[20] Moreira 2010a, 147–176.
[21] Bernstein 2017, 232–239.
[22] Carozzi 1994, 253–279. The original French terms are 'feu purgatoire' and 'l'Enfer purgatoire'.
[23] Bernstein 2017, 170.
[24] Newman 1993.

Newman argues for the centrality of Hildegard of Bingen in the development of purgatory in the twelfth century by making use of a vision neglected by, or unknown to, Le Goff.[25] It's contribution to this thesis is primarily to be found in its influence on the corpus of source material. Indeed, due to this article I have included Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber Vitae Meritorum* among the sources considered.

In addition to studies of purgatory and debate over the theories of Jacques Le Goff, a lot of research has been done on the topic of the otherworld in general. To this category can be counted Alan E. Bernstein's overview 'Heaven, hell and purgatory: 1100-1500', which traces developments concerning the afterlife in the period from 1100 to 1500.[26] Howard Rollin Patch's book *The Other World: According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature* also belongs in this category.[27] In addition to surveying how the otherworld is treated in other medieval sources, Patch has an entire chapter dealing specifically with the otherworld of vision literature. Here he summarises the contents of medieval otherworldly visions and notes similarities and differences between them. A more recent book dealing with concepts of the otherworld is John Casey's *After Lives: A Guide to Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory*, which traces the development of notions of the afterlife primarily from a Christian perspective.[28] These books and articles have informed my general understanding of the otherworld.

On the topic of punishment during the Middle Ages, I have made use of titles such as *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Mental-Historical Investigations of Basic Human Problems and Social Responses*, edited by Connie L. Scarborough and Albrecht Classen, and *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, edited by Ruth Mazo Karras, Joel Kaye, and E. Ann Matter.[29] Both of these works have informed my understanding of the form and purpose of punishment during the period here considered and have been valuable for my analysis of how real life punishments affected punishments meted out in the hereafter. Additionally, Mitchell B. Merback's *Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* and *Shame between Punishment and Penance: The Social Usages of Shame in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*, edited by Bénédicte Sère and Jörg Wettlaufer, have been important in helping me understand specific

[25] Newman 1993, 91–92.
[26] Bernstein 2009.
[27] Patch 1950.
[28] Casey 2009.
[29] Classen & Scarborough 2012; Karras et al. 2008.

aspects of punishments considered in this thesis.[30] Merback's work has illuminated the use and effect of 'punishment as spectacle', whereas *Shame Between Punishment and Penance* has been invaluable to my analysis of shame and shaming punishments in the vision literature.[31]

Finally, previous research concerning vision literature in the Middle Ages is of course also essential to this investigation. At least since the 1980s medieval vision literature, as well as medieval oneiric experiences in general, have received plenty of scholarly attention. Indeed, today a search of the International Medieval Bibliography for the words 'vision literature' garners 440 hits.[32] One seminal work on vision literature among these hits is Peter Dinzelbacher's *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter* from 1981. In this book Dinzelbacher divides medieval vision literature into two primary types of visions. The first type was popular from the sixth to the twelfth century and is represented by visions which portray vivid otherworldly journeys designed to bring about change in the life of the visionary. These journeys are generally one-offs and are not anticipated by the visionary. The second type emerged in the twelfth century and became popular during the later Middle Ages. Visions of this kind are characteristically shorter, do not come as surprises, and can be repeated. They tend to be less detailed in terms of the geography of the otherworld and usually focus more on the emotional experiences of the visionary as well as their meeting with heavenly figures.[33] Dinzelbacher's work has impacted this thesis particularly in that the distinction he identifies between two types of visions have affected the period and visions considered. Additionally, it has been important in allowing me to form a better understanding of the genre in general.

Other than Dinzelbacher and authors like Bernstein, Moreira, and Carozzi, historians such as Jesse Keskiaho and Carolly Erickson have contributed to the study of vision literature.[34] Jesse Keskiaho has contributed to the field with his book *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages: the Reception and Use of Patristic Ideas, 400–900*. In this work he points to the importance of Augustine and Gregory the Great for early medieval interpretation of dreams

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[30] Merback 1999; Sère & Wettlaufer 2013.
[31] Merback 1999, 135; Sère & Wettlaufer 2013.
[32] BREPOLiS Medieval Bibliographies 25.10.2016.
[33] Dinzelbacher 1981, 147, 185–186, 229.
[34] Eileen Gardiner have also made great contributions to the accessibility of information on and translations of visions through her books *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook*, published in 1993, and *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*, published in 1989. For this thesis both of these books have been very helpful, particularly in allowing me to survey relevant visions and pointing me in the direction of relevant primary sources as well as secondary literature.

and visions, and explores how the models found in the works of these authors became standard interpretive frameworks in the time period. Keskiaho's work is important for this thesis in that understanding the interpretive frameworks with which he deals, and the way in which later visions built on earlier ones, is essential to being able to study the visions of the period at hand here.[35] Of similar importance for understanding how visions were perceived is also Carolly Erickson's *The Medieval Vision: Essays in History and Perception*, which for instance points out how our perception of visions differs from that of their contemporaries.[36]

Other than the works listed above, there are plenty of works – pertaining for example to individual visions and to the other topics discussed in this chapter – which have informed my understanding of the topic at hand. These works can be found in the bibliography of this thesis and, although they do not warrant specific mention here, they constitute part of the foundation for this research.

1.3 Sources and method

The primary source material for this thesis is unsurprisingly a number of visions from the period between the ninth and the early thirteenth century. Despite the limited amount of visions surviving from this time, there are so many of them that I have here been forced to limit the source material further in order to make the scope of this thesis manageable. In selecting the corpus for this thesis, I have carefully considered the extensive amount of visions listed in Eileen Gardiner's *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook* and by adhering to a couple of primary principles I have then chosen which visions to include and which to leave out.[37] Four visions were a given at the start of this process; these were the ones from the twelfth century that Le Goff utilises in *The Birth of Purgatory* and which I will discuss further a bit later on. In selecting the other visions, I have considered matters of relevancy, specifically if the visions describe punishments, purgation, and/or damnation; the nature of the vision, or if it is a vision at all; the geographical setting in which the vision arose; the accessibility of the vision; and the constraints of space and time on my own and this thesis' part.

[35] Keskiaho 2015. I am very grateful to Jesse Keskiaho for reading through an early version of my thesis and taking the time to give me feedback. His comments have greatly helped me improve this work, and any flaws or mistakes that remain are entirely my own.
[36] Erickson 1976.
[37] Gardiner 1993.

Following this selection process the visions from the ninth century that are considered here are: Heito of Reichenau's version of the *Visio Wettini* (824) as well as Walafrid Strabo's later version of the same; the *Visio Bernoldi* which was written by Hincmar of Reims; the *Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon,* the authorship of which no consensus has been reached on; the *Visio Karoli Grossi* (The Vision of Charles the Fat), which was most likely produced shortly after the death of Charles the Fat in 888; the *Visio Rotcharii*, which was probably produced in the second half of the ninth century; and the *Vision of Anskar*, a vision contained within *The Life of Anskar* written by Rimbert soon after Anskar's death in 865.[38] All of these visions stem from the Carolingian Empire. This is because, of the extant ninth-century visions that deal with punishment, purgation, and damnation, the majority originate from the Carolingian Empire. These visions are available in print in both the original Latin and in English translations. The original manuscripts vary and are stored in different locations. Heito's version of the *Visio Wettini*, for instance, survives in several manuscripts among which can be mentioned Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek: Cod. Aug. 111, f. 92r-97r.[39] Due to the enormity of the task of consulting the original manuscripts for all the visions under consideration in this thesis, I have chosen to rely on printed editions of the original mostly Latin sources as well as English translations of these.

Of the Carolingian visions the two versions of the *Visio Wettini,* and the *Vision of Charles the Fat* are the most famous as well as the most extensive. However, all of the Carolingian visions under consideration here are united in that they depict travels to the otherworld and relate what the hereafter is like, often adding a political dimension to the visions through who they depict in different situations in the afterlife.[40] How the afterlife is depicted and what is focused on in the visions varies somewhat from vision to vision. In the *Vision of Anskar,* for example, the account of the place of purgation is very brief – we are told it contains the blackest darkness and that Anskar is there forced to experience the most enormous pressure and choking.[41] In the *Visio Bernoldi* on the other hand we find several descriptions of

[38] For more information on these visions see Gardiner 1993, 38, 45, 90, 195, 197, 228.
[39] For further details on surviving manuscripts of the Visio Wettini see R.M. Pollard's in progress edition of Heito of Reichenau's version of the vision. I would here also like to add a note of thanks to Richard M. Pollard for kindly allowing me to use his as of yet unpublished translations of the two versions of the Visio Wettini. I am very grateful to him for this kindness.
[40] For the role of politics in Carolingian vision literature see Dutton 1994.
[41] Vita Anskarii, 3.

different forms of punishment, although the visionary himself never experiences any of them.[42]

Following the ninth century, the tenth century is something of a wasteland with regards to extant visions of the afterlife that contain punishments and notions of purgation and damnation. Indeed, not a single complete vision containing notions of purgation survives from this century. According to Gardiner, the second part of the *Vision of Adamnán* – an Irish vision of approximately 500 words – does, however, date from the early tenth century.[43] The first part of the vision dates from the eleventh century, and it is to the eleventh century that one is also forced to turn in order to find other relevant sources. Even then, there is but two relevant visions available, both contained in the *Vision Book of Otloh of Emmeran*. These are the *Vision of the Monk Isaac* and the *Vision of a Beggar*.[44]

For the twelfth and early thirteenth century the situation is different. Several visions that deal with relevant topics survive. For my discussion I will make use of the four contemporary visions Le Goff utilises in *The Birth of Purgatory*.[45] These are the vision Guibert of Nogent tells us his mother had experienced in his autobiography, *De vita sua*, from the early twelfth century; *The Vision of Alberic of Settefrati*, which Alberic experienced at the age of ten in around 1110 and later wrote down; *The Vision of Tnugdali* (the vision of Tundale), which was written by an Irish Benedictine monk purportedly in 1149; and the *Purgatorium Sancti Patricii* by H. of Saltrey (c. 1179-1181 or 1189-90).[46] In order to expand further on the picture which emerges in Le Goff's study, however, I will also consider a couple of other visions. These are *The Vision of the Monk of Evesham*, which was supposedly written in 1196 and was quite well known in the Middle Ages; the visions contained in Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber Vitae Meritorum*, which was written between 1158 and 1163; *The Vision of Ailsi* by Peter of Cornwall, which was written in the 1190s; and finally *The Vision of Thurkill*, an early thirteenth century vision dated to October 1206 by both Roger of Wendover and Ralph of Coggeshall.[47]

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[42] Visio Bernoldi, 1–5. Again, I am very grateful to Alice Rio, the supervisor of my Bachelor's dissertation, for allowing me to use her translation of the Visio Bernoldi and for opening my eyes to the fascinating world of vision literature in the first place.
[43] Gardiner 1993, 23.
[44] Gardiner 1993, 149.
[45] Le Goff 1984, 181–201.
[46] Gardiner 1993, 31, 115, 151, 210.
[47] Gardiner 1993, 29, 137, 204. For Hildegard of Bingen's Liber Vitae Meritorum, see Newman 1993.

These then are the eighteen visions considered in this thesis, but there are many more that I have been forced to exclude. At times this has been easy, as in cases when the visions deal with topics that are not relevant to my investigation or do not include specific enough mentions of punishments, purgation, and damnation. Based on these criteria, I have chosen to exclude the *Vision of an English Presbyter* (839), the *Vision of St. Sadalberga* (recorded in the ninth century), the *Vision of Ansellus Scholasticus* (between 1032 and 1052), several visions from the *Vision Book of Otloh of Emmeran* (eleventh century), the *Vision of Leofric* (late eleventh century), and the *Vision of Boso of Durham* (1095).[48]

Some visions I have also been able to dismiss based on the nature of the vision itself, or indeed, the fact that it is not a vision at all. *The Voyage of Brendan* (ninth century, with the earliest surviving manuscript from the tenth century) belongs in this category as it is an *imrama*, a sea voyage in search of the Otherworld described in medieval Irish literature, not a vision.[49] Similarly, the *Vision of Walkelin* (1091) is excluded from the investigation because it per Dinzelbacher's definition is an apparition rather than a vision.[50] I have also chosen to exclude the *Vision of Heriger* (tenth or eleventh century), for while it is made up of otherworldly visions, it is a poetic satire and constantly accounting for this – to the extent that it is even possible – in my analysis would detract from the actual purpose of the thesis.[51]

Other visions I have chosen to exclude because they are the sole surviving visions from a particular geographical area during the period at hand and they might therefore skew the results of the investigation. These visions are the *Vision of Bonellus* (eleventh century) from Spain and the *Vision of Olav Asteson* (early thirteenth century) from Norway. On occasion, issues with the dating have also forced me to leave visions out of this thesis and especially the *Vision of Merlino* has suffered this fate, as I have been unable to find a date for it. Moreover, both the *Vision of Laisrén* (recorded in the early tenth or late ninth century), which also only survives in fragmentary form, and the *Vision of Ezra* (recorded in the tenth to eleventh century) have been excluded as there is a considerable discrepancy between when the visionaries lived and experienced the visions and when they were recorded, thereby making it more difficult to explore potential developments in the motifs depicted.[52]

[48] Gardiner 1993, 35, 49, 99, 128, 198.
[49] Gardiner 1993, 51–52; Whitty 1914, 329.
[50] Dinzelbacher 1981, 29–38.
[51] Gardiner 1993, 121.
[52] Gardiner 1993, 47, 101, 124, 133, 146.

Then there are those visions which simply are too difficult to access and those that closely resemble a vision written prior to the period at hand. In the former category the *Vision of Stephanus de Marusiaco's Father* (before 1261) and the *Vision of a German Count* (before 1073) can be found. In the latter are two visions closely resembling the *Vision of Drythelm*: the *Vision of Orm* (c. 1126) and the *Vision of the Monk of Melrose* (1160). Finally, there are several visions that I have been forced to exclude due to space and time constraints on the part of the thesis and myself. These have been necessary decisions to make and although it, of course, is a shame that I have not been able to make use of all potentially relevant source material, I feel confident that my decision to also exclude these visions has not been detrimental to the overall aim of the thesis, but has rather helped make it more accessible to the reader. On these grounds I have excluded the *Visio Eucherii* (ninth century), the *Vision of the Boy William* (1146), the *Vision of Christina Mirabilis* (twelfth to thirteenth century), the *Vision of an English Novice* (last decade of the twelfth century at the earliest), the *Vision of Gottschalk* (1189-1190), the *Vision of Gunthelm* (middle of the eleventh century), and the *Vision of John, Monk of St. Lawrence of Liege* (1148-1158).[53]

In order to investigate the sources that I have chosen and answer my research questions, I will, throughout the thesis conduct an in-depth analysis of the punishments depicted as part of the hereafter in the visions and how they relate to punishments in the real world and to each other. In using this methodology, I am drawing on the methods used in the research of the likes of Moreira.[54] As I will also be exploring punishments and if they can be classified as either purgative or damnatory, as well as how the punishments and their role develop over time, my research is primarily of a qualitative nature. I will, however, also be categorising and to some extent quantifying punishments described in the visions in order to better be able to analyse the source material and create an overview of what kind of punishment was employed in the hereafter of vision literature. I will be approaching the topic thematically, considering first the rationale and nature of the punishments meted out, then its relation to purgation and damnation, and finally matters of development over time. Despite primarily approaching the topic thematically, particularly the final chapter before the conclusion deals with considerations of chronology. Overall it could be said that I will be adhering to a traditional historical method of closely reading the sources and analysing them for both their contents and the origin of those contents.

[53] Gardiner 1993, 50, 94, 98, 107, 108, 118, 123, 142, 148, 201.
[54] See for instance Moreira 2010a, 39–62.

2. Background

One of the keys to understanding the visions at hand here as well as their depictions of punishment, is the ability to understand how they fit into the tradition of vision literature. This is important because every visionary or visionary author is in some way influenced by this tradition. Certain features of having visions and of vision literature become staples of the genre and are internalised in the culture to such an extent that they appear in nearly all visions. Other than an awareness of the tradition of vision literature it is also necessary to be aware of basic medieval concepts of the otherworld and some of the history behind them. Some basic knowledge in these areas makes it easier to follow the discussion on punishments in the hereafter and their role in vision literature which this thesis focuses on. Thus, in order to help the reader understand the context of the main topics of this thesis, I will in this chapter expand on the key areas outlined above – the tradition of vision literature and the medieval concepts of the otherworld.

2.1 The tradition of vision literature

Vision literature is here used to refer to written accounts of visions which are said to occur while the visionary is asleep but are not considered mere dreams. These visions are instead perceived of and described as revelations of the divine in one form or another.[55] There are different types of divinely inspired visions, but the ones at hand in this thesis are the so-called otherworldly visions. These are visions in which the visionary is transported to the otherworld and, generally accompanied by a guide, such as an angel or a saint, allowed to see and/or experience what the different areas of the other side are like. Once the purpose of the vision is fulfilled – the visionary has for instance been given a message to relate to someone or has been made to see the error of their ways – the visionary wakes up. If the visionary, for whatever reason, does not comply with the instructions they were given during the vision they tend to receive new visions until they do. Vision literature of this kind is not always true in the sense that someone has actually had the particular vision the author purports to report.[56] However, for the purposes of my thesis the visions do not need to be true in this sense. As my interest lies with their contents, their authenticity as actual visions is inconsequential. Even if a vision is not strictly true, it still reflects contemporary notions of the otherworld and punishment therein.

[55] Keskiaho 2015, 3.
[56] Patch 1950, 80.

The tradition of having visions and writing about them is ancient. It exists in a wide range of cultures, but for my purposes it is only necessary to speak of the classical as well as the Judeo-Christian tradition. Within the classical tradition it is worth noting that there was a lack of consensus regarding the reality of dreams and visions.[57] Nevertheless, visions and otherworldly journeys featured in the works of prominent ancient authors. Both Homer and Virgil wrote of descents into the underworld, and Plutarch wrote specifically of otherworldly visions.[58] In his *Moralia*, Plutarch includes the Vision of Thespesius, in which the sinful Thespesius travelled through the otherworld whilst presumed dead. There he saw, among other things, souls ascending among the stars, demons mixing white and purple rivers, as well as lakes of boiling gold, cold lead, and iron respectively.[59] Cicero similarly contributed to this genre through the Dream of Scipio, which relates the story of how Scipio the younger falls asleep and sees his deceased grandfather in the heavens. His grandfather tells him among other things of his future, of how the heavens are constructed, and of the immortal nature of the soul.[60]

In addition to visions of various kinds the classical era also saw some commentary on visions in general. When commenting on the Dream of Scipio, Macrobius famously divided dreams into five categories. These categories were the enigmatic dream, the prophetic vision, the oracular dream, the nightmare, and the apparition. The last two were seen as products of the dreamer himself, whereas the enigmatic dream, the prophetic vision, and the oracular dream were deemed to provide actual insight into the future and how one should conduct oneself.[61] These categories were to be repeatedly used as interpretive tools by medieval Christian thinkers contemplating the distinction between true visions and mere phantasms.[62]

Within the Judeo-Christian tradition we find that although no visions of the underworld per se exist in the Bible, there are references to and descriptions of prophetic visions in the Old Testament.[63] In the Book of Revelation, moreover, we are treated to a vision of heaven and are told of the different stages of the apocalypse. In this account evil is portrayed both as a dragon and as a monster,[64] and these features appear to have influenced medieval authors of

[57] Keskiaho 2015, 3–4.
[58] Spearing 1976, 6–8; Patch 1950, 81.
[59] Patch 1950, 81.
[60] Spearing 1976, 8–9.
[61] Erickson, 36–37.
[62] Erickson, 37.
[63] Keskiaho 2015, 3.
[64] Book of Revelation, 12:7–9, 13:1–5.

vision literature as we find descriptions of similar beasts in multiple visions. The entire Book of Revelation is, as the name suggests, a 'true vision' of what is to come, and John is told that he must relate it to his contemporaries. Consequently, the Book of Revelation functions very much like the medieval visions, which are often intended to instruct the visionary, or have them instruct others, based on what they have seen. Despite these obvious connections between vision literature and the Book of Revelation, Fritz Kemmler perceives the most essential biblical reference point for Christian authors of otherworldly vision literature to have been Christ's descent into Hell and his subsequent resurrection. Although this otherworldly journey is key to the Christian faith, Christ's sojourn in Hell is never described. This, Kemmler argues, enables vision authors to fill in the gap in a way that encourages people to lead a better life and to strive for salvation.[65] The harrowing of Hell is for instance the topic of *The Vision of Ansellus Scholasticus* (1032–1052), in which a monk joins Christ on his journey to Hell.[66]

Among early Christian visions the most famous is the late antique *Vision of St Paul* (alternatively the *Apocalypse of Paul*) in which Paul, the apostle, was transported to the otherworld.[67] He came first to the third heaven and from there he was led by an angel to the City of Christ. Later they moved on to where the sinners were being punished and Paul saw sinners immersed to varying degrees in a river of fire. In addition to people suffering in this fiery river, he saw others who were stuck in pits of great depth and some who were being tortured by evil angels.[68] This and much more he saw, and throughout his experience he asked his guide about what these men and women had done to deserve their punishments and found out that their individual crimes had determined the severity and nature of their punishments.[69] Several of the features of this vision, such as a sinner's punishment corresponding to their crimes and the damned receiving a break from their torment once a week, later became general features of medieval vision literature.[70] The *Vision of St Paul* was, however, by no means the only early Christian vision. For instance, Perpetua also had a number of visions which are related in the *Passion of Perpetua*. In one of these visions she saw her brother, who had died at the age of seven, being held in a dark place where he was both hot and thirsty but unable to drink from the fountain contained there because he was too short to reach. She later

[65] Kemmler 2008, 129–131.
[66] Gardiner 1993, 35–38.
[67] Hall 2005, 137–138.
[68] Vision of St Paul, 23–25, 31–32, 34–35.
[69] Vision of St Paul, 32, 34–35; Hall 2005, 137–138.
[70] Hall 2005, 138.

had another vision in which her prayers for his soul had saved him from his torment.[71] The notion that you can aid the people suffering in visions through praying for them is another feature which was to remain important in medieval vision literature.

In the context of medieval vision literature, it is impossible to not mention the contributions of Gregory the Great (d. 604). The fourth book of his *Dialogues*, which he wrote in 594, not only contains vision accounts and influential thoughts on dreams and visions in general, but has also been seen to have profoundly impacted all Christian authors writing of the otherworld after him.[72] Indeed, Peter Brown argues that the *Dialogues* contributed greatly to the development of a sense of increased distance between this world and the next.[73] Not only that, scholarship has long maintained that the *Dialogues* were highly important to the emergence and establishment of visions of the afterlife as a distinct narrative genre.[74]

Visions of the otherworld increased in popularity during the early Middle Ages probably due at least partly to the fact that as the return of Christ continued to be elusive, it became increasingly important to know what happened between the time of death and Judgement Day and this was a question the visions could help answer.[75] During this time, influential Christians such as the historian Bede and the missionary Saint Boniface contributed to the genre of vision literature. Bede, who lived in the late seventh and early eighth century, wrote both *The Vision of Fursey* and *The Vision of Drythelm*. The first of these otherworldly journeys depicts a landscape of fire filled with demons and angels fighting over the souls of the departed.[76] Fursey travels through this fire protected by three angels, but before the angels manage to intervene a demon pulls him close enough to the fire that he is burned. After this Fursey is advised on how to do penitence and gain salvation, and when he awakes from the vision the burn marks are still present on his body as a reminder. *The Vision of Drythelm* is to be found in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and in it Drythelm, accompanied by a guide, travels first to a place which 'is not Hell as you imagine' and subsequently sees a great fiery pit, which later turns out to be the mouth of Hell.[77] The theme of fiery pits is present also in Saint

[71] Passion of Perpetua, 7–8.
[72] Keskiaho 2015, 12–13; Brown 1996, 38–39.
[73] Brown 1996.
[74] Keskiaho 2015, 13.
[75] Keskiaho 2015, 10; Trumbower 2010, 29; Binski 1996, 182; Ombres 1976, 131.
[76] Le Goff 1984, 113.
[77] Le Goff 1984, 113–114.

Boniface's the *Vision of the Monk of Wenlock* (717 CE), in which a monk saw, among other things, fiery pits where souls shaped like black birds were forced to suffer.[78]

While the vision literature up until this point is often considered to be primarily didactic in purpose, in the vision literature of the Carolingian Empire of the ninth century it has been argued that hopes and fears for the hereafter mixed with political criticism to form a decidedly political strand of vision literature.[79] These types of visions came into being following the death of Charlemagne in 814 and based on the survival of contemporary sources they seem to quickly have become the dominant form of vision literature in the Carolingian period. In these visions the authors often attempt to chastise prominent political figures, such as Louis the Pious,[80] or justify political decisions such as the transfer of power to a new line of royals.[81] Perhaps because of the popularity of visions of this kind, the majority of extant ninth-century visions dealing with the afterlife stem from the Carolingian Empire.[82]

The following centuries on the other hand showcase more geographical diversity, as well as more extant visions. Often the visions also exhibit greater detail with regards to both punishments and the landscapes thereof. However, according to Alison Morgan the tenth and eleventh centuries constitute a break from the previous centuries in that during this time there is no clear trend in the otherworldly vision literature.[83] As I noted in the introduction, there are also quite few available otherworldly visions from these two centuries that are relevant to this thesis. That is not to say, though, that there are no other visions from this time. In fact, Gardiner lists a total of twelve visions from the tenth and eleventh century.[84] In addition to the *Vision of Adamnán,* we find for instance the *Vision of Heriger*, a poetic satire written in Latin in what is now Germany in the tenth or eleventh century. The eleventh century sees the authorship of among others the *Vision of Ansellus Scholasticus* and the *Vision of a German Count.* During the eleventh century the first collection of otherworldly visions was also put together by Othlo, a monk at Ratisbon.[85]

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[78] Patch 1950, 101.
[79] See Dutton 1994; Morgan 1990, 3.
[80] The Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon.
[81] The Vision of Charles the Fat.
[82] The statement that the majority of extant visions from the ninth century originate from the Carolingian Empire is based on a study of the visions listed in Gardiner 1993 and Dinzelbazcher 1981.
[83] Morgan 1990, 3, 11–12.
[84] Gardiner, Hell-On-Line.
[85] Morgan, 1990, 3.

The twelfth century then is when vision literature as a genre peaks. This is when the highest amount of visions is produced, and the individual visions are at their longest. The visions, as has been noted by Morgan, go from being mainly didactic or political in character to becoming literary instead, thereby making way for Dante Alighieri´s *Divina Commedia*. In the twelfth century there is also a shift in the type of person experiencing visions. While their authors remain ecclesiastical, their subjects are no longer primarily representatives of the Church; instead the visions are had by peasants, children, knights, and the occasional monk. In the midst of these changes to the genre, Morgan also identifies this period as the time when otherworldly vision literature as a genre began to die. Indeed, she states that the *Vision of Thurkill* was the last original vision with a full account of the otherworld to be written before Dante's *Comedy* – which itself is more of a literary work than a vision of the kind considered here. Nevertheless, the tradition itself appears to have remained alive, as old visions were still being copied and included in histories and encyclopaedias.[86]

Starting from the middle of the twelfth century and coming into full force in the thirteenth century, an even more fundamental change in the nature of vision literature than the one regarding visionaries mentioned above occurs. As Dinzelbacher has shown in *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter* this is the time when a second category of visions takes over. While vivid visions of the hereafter – courtesy of visionaries who had been unable to foresee that they would be going on a journey through the realm of the afterlife – had dominated the genre up to this point, subsequently visions would be shorter, expected by the visionary, and not as focused on the geography of the afterlife. The focus would instead lie on the people present in the hereafter and the visionary's interaction with them.[87] From this time on, visionaries would also be predominantly women rather than men, as the case had been up until this point.[88]

The functions of the type of visions under consideration here are varied. On the one hand, otherworldly vision literature encourages people to make improvements in their lives. Indeed, as Eileen Gardiner has noted, 'Vision literature often projects the idea of the perfectibility of the human condition.'[89] Visions offer visionaries and those reading or hearing the visions an opportunity to experience the otherworld, learn what they have done wrong in this life, and make amends for their shortcomings before it is too late. Through heeding the warnings

[86] Morgan 1990, 3–4.
[87] Dinzelbacher 1981, 147, 185–186, 229.
[88] Dinzelbacher 1981, 226. For more on women as visionaries see for instance Petroff 1986, 3–59.
[89] Gardiner 1993, xxxi.

received in a vision one can possibly avoid damnation or minimise one's time in purgation. Visions are thus both didactic and redemptive in nature. On the other hand, they can have other functions. The Carolingian vision literature with its clearly political nature is an easy example. These visions make examples out of rulers, critique kings, and admonish the most powerful person in the realm to do better. They can also contain critique of less powerful, although still significant, figures. Beyond the obvious of chastising those in power, this can also be seen as having the effect of further imparting the point that it is necessary for everyone to do better in this life, as even those who are to be thought of as examples of sort are imperfect in this regard.

Finally, it is here essential to point out the difference in perception which separates the modern reader of vision literature from the medieval one. As Carolly Erickson has noted, we must recognise that while we perceive of a visionary as seeing something other than reality, to contemporaries visions were a part of reality, their contents just as real as what could be seen with the eye on any given day.[90] When dealing with medieval visionary literature we are thus not necessarily dealing with pieces of fiction, although some of the accounts probably were made up and to our sensibilities they might all appear to have been just that. What we have at hand are accounts of what contemporaries saw as potentially real journeys and in our enquiry regarding how they reflect medieval developments of purgation we must keep this in mind. Indeed, new copies of manuscripts containing older visions were often subjected to slight changes in order to make the visions adhere to what was considered normal at the time.[91] Consequently, visions can also be seen to reflect what was considered real in terms of the otherworld within a certain scriptorium at a certain time.

2.2 Medieval concepts of the Afterlife

When trying to picture what people during the Middle Ages thought happened after death it is easy to think of Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia* as a first reference point. With its nine circles of Hell, twelve stages of purgatory, and nine spheres of heaven, it is indeed the most complex of medieval otherworldly accounts.[92] Consequently, it is necessary to go beyond it and explore notions of the otherworld prior to its inception. In doing so it is important to remember that no entirely uniform view of the otherworld existed at any given time during the

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[90] Erickson 1976, 29–30.
[91] Gardiner 1993, xxvi.
[92] Gardiner 1993, xvii.

Middle Ages, just like no such uniform view exists today.[93] Moreover, the views that did exist were subject to change. Additionally, the evidence we have for the medieval period is often ecclesiastical, or at the very least elite, in nature and the images that arise from it are therefore not necessarily representative of popular views.

On the most basic level, what we can tell of medieval notions of the otherworld is that it throughout the period featured both heaven and hell. This was in line with the Roman otherworldly tradition of Hades and the Elysian Fields but in contrast with the Jewish tradition of a single *Sheol* in which all the dead were harboured.[94] Regarding whether heaven and hell were corporeal places, on the other hand, opinions differed. For example the Irish theologian John Scottus Eriugena, who was active within the Carolingian Empire, provides us with evidence for such differences in opinion when he sharply critiques the popular notion that hell is of physical rather than mere spiritual nature.[95] There were also differing opinions regarding whether the deceased entered their final resting place immediately after death, or if their fate was only decided at the Final Judgement.[96] With regards to the geography of the otherworld Christian tradition tended to associate hell with the earth, specifically its middle, and heaven with the sky.[97] In otherworldly visions, where the geography of the afterlife was most clearly articulated, the distinction between different areas of the otherworld were, however, often vague. A visionary could perceive the abode of the saints while standing in an area of hell and the sweet smell of flowers could enter from the former into the latter.[98] The borders were highly fluid, yet each area appears to have had certain distinctive features. It is to these characteristics as well as the history of the different areas of the Christian otherworld that I now turn.

2.2.1 Heaven and the prospect of salvation

During the Middle Ages, as during later times, Christians held on to the hope of heaven and the salvation that awaited the righteous there. While a person might suffer through poverty, illness, and injustice in this life, heaven promised a better existence in the next. Salvation and entry into heaven ultimately entailed freedom from sin and death, being reunited with God,

[93] Muessig and Putter 2007, 3 point this out with regards to notions of heaven.
[94] Le Goff 1984, 2.
[95] Dietrich and Duclow. 2002, 360.
[96] Bernstein 2017, 16–18.
[97] Dinzelbacher 1986, 70. For an example on heaven or the heavens being associated with the sky, see Muessig 2007, 58.
[98] Visio Bernoldi, 3.

and being allowed to bask in His presence for all eternity.[99] The more precise details of what heaven looked like could vary between accounts. In some, particularly earlier, accounts heaven was a garden, while in others, it was a walled city.[100] Sometimes there were different strata to heaven, with certain groups of the blessed being separated from each other by gates.[101] Indeed, often during the Middle Ages, heaven was not a singular space, but consisted rather of several heavens, commonly numbered between three and seven.[102] In some accounts heaven or the heavens contained 'nothing material' at all, while in others it contained arches seemingly of gold and silver, etc.[103]

At its core, the tradition of a heaven attainable by humans, as it was and is expressed in Christianity, stems from a mixture and development of ideas originating from the Near East and Greek philosophy. Traditionally, as in ancient Mesopotamia, heaven was reserved for the gods, and only very rarely – on two occasions according to Mesopotamian belief – had a human been allowed into the heavenly realm. In ancient Egypt, however, heaven developed from being a place that, in addition to the gods, only pharaohs could reach, to becoming a place that was open to people in general. Within Judaism, a comparable development also occurred. Through the influence of Zoroastrian and Greek thought, heaven in Judaism went from being closed off and reserved only for YHWH to – as described in the Book of Enoch and elaborated further in later thought – being a place into which a human could be welcomed by God.[104] Against this backdrop Jesus propagated a kingdom of heaven in which God is present and rules over the righteous, and this notion was expanded on and its contents were debated by later theologians, not least during the Middle Ages.[105]

For our purposes here, the role of salvation throughout the Middle Ages, and especially during the period under investigation, are more interesting than debates over physical attributes and experiences of heaven. This is so because what heaven looked and felt like is not really relevant to the nature and development of punishment in the hereafter or its link to developments of notions of purgation and purgatory. The role of salvation in society, on the other hand, is. Indeed, the existence of heaven and the possibility of salvation was vital to the development of purgation and purgatory as without these concepts to strive for, there would

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[99] McGinn 2007, 16–19; Dronke 2007, 44; Moreira 2010a, 44, footnote 25.
[100] Muessig and Putter 2007, 3, 11–12; Easting 2007, 76–78.
[101] Vision of Adamnán; Carey 2014, 197.
[102] Dinzelbacher 1986, 70.
[103] Vita Anskarii, 3; Visio Wettini (1), XV.
[104] Casey 2009, 245–260.
[105] Casey, 2009, 261–268; Muessig and Putter 2007, 6–7.

have been no need for purgation.[106] The punishments of the hereafter also lose their purpose as deterrents, if there is nothing better to aim for. There is no point to leading a just life, if the end result is the same no matter what you do.

During our period we see the importance of salvation for instance in the Carolingian empire, where vision literature containing references to punishments and purgation was also written in abundance. In 789, more than three decades before the Carolingian vision literature began to emerge, Charlemagne issued the *Admonitio Generalis* in which he addressed 'all the ranks of ecclesiastical piety and dignitaries of secular power' and requested that the 'pastors of Christ's churches and leaders of His flock and brightest luminaries of the world […] strive with vigilant care and sedulous admonition to lead the people of God to the pastures of eternal life'. He feared that if care was not taken in this regard 'the wolf who lies in wait' would find someone going against the Church's teachings and devour them.[107] Charlemagne feared that his people might be swayed to stray from the right path and thus face damnation. This he sought to prevent. Similarly, the authors of Carolingian and other vision literature sought to steer the lives of their audience towards salvation. This strive for salvation was a common feature of Carolingian literature in general; it can be found in the so-called princely mirrors, in Dhuoda's handbook for her son William, in the court theologian Alcuin's *Ad Pueros Sancti Martini*, in the letters of Einhard, and in several other sources.[108] The fascination with salvation so clearly expressed in Carolingian literature goes hand in hand with the significant amount of attention paid to punishment and purgation in the vision literature of the time.

Similar links between the focus on salvation and the development and importance of notions concerning purgation and purgatory can be found during the tenth and eleventh century as well as the twelfth and thirteenth century. This will be discussed further in the subchapter 'Purgatory and the possibility of a second chance' but suffice it here to say that during these centuries significant developments to the concept of purgatory were made at the same time as focus on ensuring salvation was particularly high. In other words, to any given society, the prospect of salvation mattered a great deal for the significance and relevance of purgation, and

[106] Le Goff 1984, 2–3.
[107] Admonitio Generalis, 209.
[108] Princely mirrors were written to instruct and admonish rulers. See for instance *De institutione regia*. In the *Liber Manualis* Dhuoda both urges her son William to live a good life in order to achieve salvation and emphasises the importance of praying for the sake of the salvation of others; *Ad Pueros Sancti Martini*; Thirty-one of the seventy-three letters linked to Einhard in *Charlemagne's Courtier* by Paul E. Dutton contain wishes for the eternal salvation of the letter's recipient; See also for example '*The report of Compiègne by the bishops of the realm concerning the penance of emperor Louis (833)*'; *The decrees of the Council of Aachen (816)*; Theodulf of Orleans's poem *On the Court*; and Florus of Lyons's poem *Lament on the division of the empire.*

the punishments suffered therein. Purgation only mattered if something better, salvation, waited on the other side, otherwise it was not purgation at all, it was damnation.

2.2.2 Hell and the fear of eternal damnation

The history of hell and damnation warrants their own extensive studies and naturally a number of such studies already exist.[109] What can be said about this history here is highly limited, but in order to be able to follow the discussion in the subsequent chapters of this thesis it is essential to know that the development of notions of hell in the Middle Ages is intrinsically connected to the development of notions of purgatory, as their functions and appearance at times and to an extent overlapped and complemented each other.[110] Moreover, it is useful to know that Christian concepts of hell are in part indebted to the ones previously prevalent in Egypt and the ancient world. The hell of the Egyptians, for instance, harboured 'pits of fire, abysses of darkness, deadly knives, rivers of boiling water, fetid exhalations, fire-breathing dragons, frightful monsters, and creatures with the heads of animals', and nearly all of these features later became typical of medieval Christian descriptions of hell and its punishments.[111]

Christian hell and damnation were at their core an amalgamation of punishments, foremost of which was being kept from the presence of God.[112] Descriptions of hell in the Middle Ages could, however, take slightly different forms. Nevertheless, certain features were often used to describe hell when seen as an actual place rather than a more abstract state. Foremost amongst these was the close association of hell with fire. In fact, the motif of hell and its punishments as in some way related to fire is nearly universal.[113] In the Christian tradition we find that in the New Testament, hell is on several occasions described in this way. In the Book of Revelation, hell is described as a lake of fire and brimstone and in the Gospel of Matthew, hell is described as an eternal fire awaiting the Devil and his angels.[114] As will become evident in this thesis, fire was also a prominent feature of the underworld in medieval vision literature. In such accounts you often find burning lakes and rivers of fire.

Other than fire, the hell of the Middle Ages frequently contained contrasts such as extreme hot and extreme cold between which souls were ushered. Furthermore, demons with

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[109] For a bibliography of some titles dealing with this topic see Hell-On-Line.
[110] Bernstein 2017, 228–232.
[111] Budge as quoted in Le Goff 1984, 20.
[112] Brown 1996, 62–63; Bernstein 2017, 238–239.
[113] Gardiner 1993, xxviii.
[114] Book of Revelation, 21:8; Matthew, 25:41.

pitchforks or other sharp objects were regular inhabitants of this plane. Hell was a land of punishment, and different forms of torture were everyday features. Damnation, after all, was not supposed to be pleasant. Along with different punishments, hell was also generally described as being full of putrid smells and hair-raising noises.[115] Other features included forges, furnaces, hammers, and smoke as well as different types of monsters.[116]

In terms of geography, hell was generally associated with earth and the underground, and following biblical precedent it was often divided into two, upper and lower hell.[117] According to Gardiner, hell during the Middle Ages was also perceived of as 'a series of descents ending at the pit of hell where the devil himself dwelt.' Moreover, medieval authors and thinkers often thought of purgatorial punishments similar to those prevalent in the later purgatory, as being features of hell.[118] For a large part of the Middle Ages, it was even conceivable that one might be saved from hell. Indeed, according to medieval tradition Adam was rescued from hell when Christ's blood trickled down on his skull, which had been buried beneath Golgata.[119] Furthermore, in the early 1200s we find that popular stories of a wife praying her husband out of hell circulated and caused the theologian Caesarius of Heisterbach certain theological concerns, as hell – and damnation therein – by this time was supposed to be permanent. In line with this, Alan Bernstein has in fact noted that visionaries often could not 'tell the difference between souls suffering eternal punishment and those experiencing temporary purgation.'[120] This poses certain questions about the punishments depicted and the development of purgation and purgatory which will be explored more closely in the main chapters of this thesis. Among these questions can be counted what the relationship between punishments of purgation and punishments of damnation is, as well as if and how it changes in the vision literature under consideration in this thesis.

2.2.3 Purgatory and the possibility of a second chance

While the notion of purgation through fire is ancient and exists in a number of cultures – there among Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Greco-Roman culture – [121] the fully-fledged Catholic doctrine of purgatory, is not. Purgatory as such does not exist in the Bible, but certain biblical

[115] Gardiner 1993, xxviii.
[116] Gardiner 1993, xxviii; Le Goff 1984, 20.
[117] Carozzi 1994, 283.
[118] Gardiner 1993, xvii.
[119] Stefan Schröder during the introductory lecture to the course *Medieval Encounters II: Images of the 'Other' in the Times of the Crusades* at the University of Helsinki, 31.10.2014.
[120] Bernstein 2009, 204, 210–211.
[121] Zaleski 1987, 63–65.

passages, such as 2. Maccabees 12:41-46 and Luke 16: 19-26, have been used in support of its existence.[122] As a doctrine of the Church, purgatory was loosely defined during attempts at reunifying the Catholic and Orthodox Churches at the Council of Lyons in 1274 and at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439, but it was not until the Council of Trent in 1545–1563 that the Catholic Church as an institution fully defined what the doctrine of purgatory entailed.[123] As the concept and its use in the Catholic Church was then under attack from protestants, it became necessary to establish exactly what it entailed in order to counter the claims levied against it. Still, prior to the Council of Trent belief in purgatory had been both popular and commonly held within the Catholic Church, and much ink had been spilled discussing it, particularly in the late Middle Ages. The Orthodox Church, however, had never accepted the notion of purgatory in the Catholic sense, maintaining at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438 that purgation could only occur in the spiritual sense, for instance through punishments of shame. References to purgatorial fire or other physical punishments could only be accepted if they were allegorical.[124]

Purgatory in its fully developed form can be defined as an intermediary state in the hereafter in which the souls of those who have died penitent, but without having atoned for their sins, suffer through punishment in order to be worthy of entering heaven and partaking in the eternal salvation. A key feature of purgatory is that the living community can - through intercession in the form of suffrages, that is to say prayers, alms, and masses - impact on the fate of those undergoing purgation there.[125] Indeed, in several of the medieval visions at hand in this thesis the visionary was asked by souls suffering in purgation to relate their request for intercession of precisely this kind to someone still living.[126] This is not surprising, as this world and the next were intrinsically linked in the minds of people living in the Middle Ages. This link, and the possible effect of the actions of the living on the dead suffering through purgation, gave rise to the practice of buying and selling indulgences.

The development of purgatory within the Christian tradition is multifaceted, as the doctrine of purgatory essentially is an amalgamation of several different beliefs and features of the otherworld. One of the key elements of this concoction is, of course, the element of being purged of one's sins. Indeed, conceptions of purgatory are closely tied to notions of sin and

[122] Le Goff 1984, 41–43.
[123] See Le Goff 1984, 41; Marshall 2002, 8; Decrees of the Council of Ferrara-Florence, Sixth Session.
[124] Ombres 1984, 10.
[125] Le Goff 1984, 11.
[126] See for instance the Visio Bernoldi and the Vision of Charles the Fat.

redemption as well as ideas concerning the fate of sinners in the other world. However, to the earliest Christians concerns of purgation in the afterlife were unnecessary, as they believed Judgment Day, when sinners were sentenced to eternal damnation and the righteous to salvation, was imminent, thereby rendering purgation in the hereafter useless.[127] In the end, Christ's return proved elusive and it thus became necessary to define more clearly what happened in the hereafter before the end of time.[128] Since Christianity's early days several famous Christian theologians have contributed to the development of such ideas.

Of the early Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria (d. before 215) maintained that there are two kinds of sinners, those who have committed sins that can be corrected and those who have committed sins that cannot. In the afterlife those who have committed the latter will go through a fire that consumes and everybody else will pass through a fire that 'sanctifies'. Not long after Clement of Alexandria, Origen (d. 253/254) argued that all souls will go through a purifying fire, since no one is completely free from sin.[129] Origen may later have been dismissed by the Church for maintaining that everyone, including the devil, will eventually be saved, but he was part of the process of establishing a framework for purgatory nonetheless.[130] Indeed, in Clement and Origen we already find that notions of purgation through fire and notions of there being different kinds of sins, two elements that were important to the establishment of purgatory, are mixing.

By the fourth century notions of purgation in the afterlife were established enough that Ambrose of Milan (d. 397) in his commentary on I Corinthians 3 noted that 'when he [Paul] says "but only as through fire" he shows that he is saved in the future though he will undergo the punishments of fire (poenas ignis); so that purged by fire he becomes saved, and he is not tortured forever in eternal fire like the unbelievers.'[131] Later in the fourth and fifth century Augustine provided some of the most crucial theological insights for the development of purgatory.[132] While his view of purgatorial fire was similar to that of Ambrose of Milan, Augustine also believed in, and argued for, the efficacy of suffrages, a key component of the idea of purgatory. These suffrages, he maintained, do not have the same effect on every dead soul; their efficacy depends on the manner in which a person has lived. In the *Enchiridion*

[127] Binski 1996, 182.
[128] Binski 1996, 182; Ombres 1976, 131.
[129] Le Goff 1984, 54.
[130] Moreira 2010a, 28–30.
[131] Jorgenson 1986, 317–318.
[132] Le Goff 1984, 61–85.

Augustine divided the souls of the dead into three categories: those who have lived so well as to not require suffrages, those who have lived so badly as to not be able to benefit from them, and those who have lived a life in between these extremes and who are therefore in need of, and able to benefit from, suffrages.[133] According to Augustine, for suffrages made on one's behalf to be effective at all, one would have had to live a life founded on Christ and made canonical penance in this life.[134] These thoughts – in conjunction with the fact that Augustine made a differentiation between the fire of purgation and eternal punishment, all the while stating that the purgatorial fire would be harsher than anything man could suffer in this life – ensured that it was largely on the writings of Augustine that later medieval theologians were to base their views of purgatorial fire and purgatory.[135]

As with the tradition of vision literature, we also find that, both during his life in the sixth and seventh century and later, Gregory the Great, as the influential figure that he was, played a role in the establishment of the tradition of purgation in the afterlife as well. He is known to have written that although one is presented for judgement exactly as one is upon departure from this earth, some smaller faults can be purged in a purgatorial fire, 'purgatorius ignis'. This, he argued, must be so because Matthew 12:32 indicates that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven in this age nor in the future. Therefore, Gregory deduced that there are faults that will be forgiven both in this age and in the future.[136] Additionally, Gregory also included several stories pertaining to purgation in his *Dialogues*, which came to be important to the development of purgatory.[137] Gregory the Great thus added his voice to the line of influential theologians who helped establish post-mortem purgation and importantly also lent further weight to the 'scriptural' foundation of the concept.

But not only obviously theological works and commentary of this kind were important for the development of notions of purgatory and purgation. Indeed, Moreira has argued that from the time of the Church Fathers to the eighth century otherworldly vision literature also gained importance as a theological instrument in this regard. She has noted that particularly the seventh and eighth centuries were ones when interest in vision literature was high among both ecclesiastics and laity and that this made these centuries fruitful for the emergence of

[133] Jorgenson 1986, 318–319, 320.
[134] Le Goff 1984, 73, 77.
[135] Jorgenson 1986, 318–319; Le Goff 1984, 61.
[136] Jorgenson 1986, 325.
[137] Le Goff 1984, 90–95.

purgatory as a more established feature of the hereafter.[138] It is far from farfetched then, to argue that the following centuries and the intense interest in visions exhibited in for example the Carolingian empire also played an important role in cementing notions of purgatory and purgation. Afterall, the otherworld of the visions was both a reflection of contemporary theological thought and the result of a longstanding tradition, and through their descriptive nature and wide readership, they furthered a certain view of the hereafter.[139] Thus, they were vital in shaping the landscape and features of the afterlife, those of purgatory and purgation included.[140]

Among the influential figures behind the development of notions of purgation and purgatory during these centuries Bede should be mentioned. In the eighth century he, according to Moreira, was the first person to give purgatory 'an orthodox, theological justification, an imaginative rendering of the place of purgatory in the afterlife, and a clearly articulated explanation of how purgatory operated as a place of intercession.' In Bede's writings centuries of earlier thought converged and he, alongside his contemporary Boniface, both contributed to the establishment of purgatory and purgation as accepted features of the Christian afterlife and developed the concept of the otherworld altogether by adding new features to it.[141] In his hands the length of a sinner's sentence in purgatory was recognised as a maximum of from their death until Judgement Day, but with the possibility of having that sentence shortened through the intercession of friends.[142] The ultimate destination of those in purgatory was salvation in heaven, and it was through being cleansed by means of purgation that this end goal would be achieved. Here then, Bede had already perceived of a system containing the fundamental features of purgatory. Moreira even argues that, despite Le Goff's view that the *Vision of Drythelm*, which Bede authored, does not contain 'purification in the proper sense of the word', the strongest argument for viewing the upper hell Bede describes in the vision as a kind of purgatory, is that 'by reference to other works, Bede himself clearly did so'.[143]

Following Bede, the eighth and ninth centuries were, as mentioned above, a time of continued focus on vision literature and consequently a time when ideas of purgation were further

[138] Moreira 2010a, 16, 99.
[139] Moreira 2010a, 16; Gardiner 1993, xxvi.
[140] Le Goff for instance credits Bede and among other things his visions with having played an important role in the construction of the geography of the afterlife. Le Goff 1984, 102.
[141] Moreira 2010a, 16, 147, 149.
[142] Moreira 2010a, 161; Le Goff 1984, 103.
[143] Moreira 2010a, 156, 161.

established particularly in the Carolingian empire. It was at the turn of the ninth century that purgation started to be adapted to fit the individual sinner; the punishment meted out began more and more to fit the crime rather than merely being a more general consignment to suffering by means of fire.[144] By the tenth and eleventh century, however, another important feature of purgatory was being defined more in depth at the monastery of Cluny. Although the efficacy of suffrages and intercession had already been a feature of notions of purgation for quite some time, it was at Cluny during these centuries that the monastic community and the prayers they could offer took on a role of special importance for both the living and the dead. The monastic community became the ultimate intercessors capable of offering up prayers around the clock. At the same time the Church started to actively take an interest in all the members of its flock, as evidenced and further enforced by Abbot Odilo of Cluny's (962-1049) introduction of the feast of All Souls in 997.[145] For the development of purgatory, the communion of the living and the dead, and its further establishment, as well as the inclusion of the general population, not just the aristocracy, was crucial. The former constituted part of the very foundation of purgatory and the latter enabled its spread and manifestation outside of ecclesiastical contexts.[146]

Further enabling the spread of notions of purgation, and the afterlife in general, outside of ecclesiastical circles was the rise of mendicant orders, such as the Franciscan and Dominican orders, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Through their efforts, knowledge of purgation and purgatory spread to groups previously less familiar with its existence. Popular imagination now filled with hope for salvation and fear of hell and purgatory.[147] From now on purgatory was to provide a society fixated on achieving salvation with a way for average Christians to reach this goal. It is also around this time that Le Goff has argued the 'Birth of Purgatory' took place, as this is a point in history when several significant developments affecting purgatory happened. Linguistically a change occurred in the twelfth century – according to Le Goff specifically by the 1170s – in that the noun '*purgatorium*' began to be used instead of more descriptive compounds like '*purgatorius ignis'*, purgatorial fire. Additionally, according to Le Goff, the late twelfth century was the time when purgatory became established as a distinct place in the afterlife and a tripartite view of the hereafter

[144] Moreira 2010a, 61–62.
[145] McGuire 1989, 66–75.
[146] McGuire 1989, 67–68; Le Goff, 1984, 46.
[147] Huizinga 1996, 156; Bernstein 2009, 207–208.

emerged. [148] This occurred around the same time that society at large, in the eyes of Georges Duby, was being divided into three orders: those who pray, those who work, and those who fight.[149] Purgatory became a topographically and judicially intermediary place where those not quite perfect at their moment of death endured the cleansing punishments of purgation.[150]

As purgatory became more fully developed, it also became a point of contention between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church. Through these differences of opinion, we garner both definitions of the phenomenon and a certain timeline for its establishment on a more official level within the Catholic Church. Thus, in 1204, following the fourth crusade, a byzantine clergyman named Constantine Stilbés did not mention purgatory as one of 104 differences between the churches.[151] Nor did the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 mention purgatory among its teachings.[152] By the 1230s, however, the topic of purgatorial fire sparked a debate between Bardanes, the metropolitan of Corfu, and Fra Bartholomew, a Franciscan, during the former's visit to Italy. From then on, purgatory was to be the cause of several debates between the two churches and on the Latin side attempts were made to get the Orthodox Church to start using the term 'Purgatorium'.[153] Around this time, Pope Innocent IV in 1254 identified purgatory as 'that transitory fire [by which] are purged small and tiny sins which burden souls even after death, if they have been released [that is, absolved] during one's lifetime' and declared that for Catholics, belief in it was necessary.[154] In 1267 Pope Clement IV, for his part, included purgatory in a statement of faith which was later to be used as a starting point for talks between the two churches.[155] In 1274 such talks were conducted at the second Council of Lyons and the Council declared that the Holy Roman Church taught that the souls of those who had died 'truly repentant and in the love of God', but before 'making satisfaction for their sins' would be 'purified after death by purgatorial or cleansing punishment' and that this punishment could be 'lightened by the prayers of the living.'[156] When the two churches similarly discussed the matter of purgatory at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439, the

[148] Le Goff 1984, 5, 135, 171.
[149] McGuire 1989, 61.
[150] Le Goff 1984, 171.
[151] Ombres 1984, 1–2.
[152] Binski 1996, 186.
[153] Ombres 1984, 1–4.
[154] Bernstein 2009, 209; Bernstein 2017, 169.
[155] Ombres 1984, 3–4.
[156] Binski 1996, 186.

statement issued regarding the Catholic Church's teachings on purgatory remained largely unchanged.[157]

The debates between the two churches as well as the inclusion of purgatory in statements of faith issued by popes seem to indicate that at least by ca. 1300 purgatory had become fully established as part of Catholic teachings. Still, it took until the Council of Trent in 1563 for Purgatory as such to become dogma.[158] The first decree of session XXV of the Council declared that there indeed is a Purgatory and that the doctrine thereof is sound and should be 'believed, maintained, taught, and every where proclaimed by the faithful of Christ.'[159] It did not, however, go beyond the second Council of Lyons and the Council of Ferrara-Florence in specifying what exactly Purgatory contained.[160] Through the efforts of the Catholic reformers present at the Council of Trent and those active after it, the seventeenth century saw Purgatory become an even more important part of Catholic teachings than it already had been.[161]

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[157] Decrees of the Council of Ferrara-Florence, Sixth Session.
[158] Le Goff 1984, 357.
[159] Council of Trent, Session XXV, The First Decree.
[160] Le Goff 1984, 357.
[161] Moreira 2010a, 8.

3. Punishment: its rationale and nature

Purgation, as it was viewed by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, requires suffering, for without it, it cannot constitute atonement for the crime that is sin. As Moreira has argued, during the medieval period purgatorial suffering, and suffering in general, was a way of restoring balance to the world. The cosmic balance had been upset by the sins of individuals during their lifetimes, but also by the original sin caused by the Fall of Man and inherent in every human. There was a debt of pain to be paid and that debt was only made greater by the fact that Christ had suffered on the cross for the sins of all mankind. Thus, to the people of the Middle Ages it was a given that in order to be cleansed from sin a price had to be paid, a price that after death could only be paid through enduring involuntary torment.[162] It is this torment that is the subject of this chapter. More specifically, it is to the rationale and nature of purgatorial and damnatory punishment that this thesis now turns. In this chapter the various kinds of torment evident in the vision literature will be investigated and special attention will be given to why punishment takes the forms it does in the visions. Eleven categories of punishment will be established and a mixture of the tradition within the genre, real-world punishments, features of contemporary society, and literary and biblical sources as well as a wish to deter from sin will be identified as underlying the punishments. In order to make the chapter more readable, the examples of a particular form of punishment listed are not always exhaustive, as relaying every instance of each punishment would take up far too much space and make it more difficult to follow the discussion.

3.1 The rationale of punishment

According to Briggs, Harrison, McInnes and Vincent, punishment during pre-modern times can be said to have four purposes. Of these, three are predominant during the period at hand here: deterrence, retribution, and ritual cleansing. The fourth, reform within the system – often through imprisonment and rehabilitation efforts – they argue, only begins to take form towards the end of the pre-modern period.[163] In the vision literature of the ninth to thirteenth century, however, all four of these purposes can be said to already be present. Indeed, much of the rationale of the visions was meant to be to deter Christians from leading sinful lives. This was to be achieved through showcasing the horror of the punishments awaiting those who did not live in accordance with God's will. The torments evidenced in the visions thus

[162] Moreira 2010a, 41–43.
[163] Classen & Scarborough 2012, 11.

functioned similarly to public executions and punishments during the Middle Ages and beyond; they were intended as deterrents from crime and sin.[164] The element of retribution, of the punishment fitting the crime, is likewise both a feature of the medieval penal system and the otherworldly vision literature. Certain crimes warranted certain types of punishments in this life, just as certain sins warranted certain punishments in the next. Thus, a thief who got caught could expect to potentially lose a hand or worse as punishment here on earth, while an adulterer might, like Charlemagne in the *Visio Wettini*, expect to have their privates mauled in the hereafter.[165] The punishment did not just fit the crime in terms of severity, it also correlated to the nature of the crime so that punishment was often exacted on the part of the body that had committed it.[166] Moreover, while in the visions all punishment endured as a means of purgation is in some ways intended as a form of ritual cleansing, so too, Briggs, Harrison, McInnes and Vincent argue, is punishment in general during this period. Punishment around this time constitutes a form of penance through which the offender earns the forgiveness of society. The notion that one must endure punishment in order to free oneself of sins or crimes committed, then, is endemic to the societies under consideration here, not just with regards to the afterlife but as concerns earthly life as well. Finally, although Briggs, Harrison, McInnes and Vincent place the emergence of a reform-based rationale to punishment towards the end of the pre-modern era, it is clear that the otherworldly visions of our period centre on the reformability of souls. Through enduring punishment in the hereafter, the soul becomes rehabilitated from sin and sinfulness, and is able to become one of the blessed. In this sense, the purgatorial planes of the afterlife are much like the rehabilitating prisons becoming prominent later on. Punishment in both of these instances is a vehicle for reform.[167]

The assortment of punishments evident in the vision literature at hand here is impressive. Corrective torment in visions from the ninth to thirteenth centuries takes the form of everything from highly physical punishments, such as dismemberment, to the more intangible suffering of enduring shame, guilt, and remorse. Still, while there is a significant amount of diversity to be found as regards the nature of punishment, there is also a great amount of commonality in the kinds of punishments favoured in the visions. Partly this is due to certain punishments being enshrined in the tradition of vision literature and Christian imagery of the

[164] Classen & Scarborough 2012, 6–9.
[165] Geary 2008, 84; Bernstein 2017, 110–111; Visio Wettini (1), XI; Visio Wettini (2), 446–465.
[166] Bernstein 2017, 100, 110–111.
[167] Classen & Scarborough 2012, 11.

afterlife, partly it is due to for instance traditional as well as contemporary systems of crime and punishment influencing the descriptions.[168]

Particularly relevant to the types of punishments described in the vision literature of our period is the treatment of slaves and lower-class criminals in antiquity and the early Middle Ages. As Moreira has shown in *Heaven's Purge*, many of the torments endured in the afterlife of the visions mirrored punishments meted out to those in bondage during late antiquity and would have been readily recognisable as such to a contemporary or medieval audience. Indeed, while free men and women of antiquity generally could not be punished for their crimes or shortcomings with the ferocity displayed in the vision literature, the bodies of the unfree and criminals of the lowest class very much could. This, the most vulnerable segment of society, was liable to endure torture of all kinds. Strangulation, burning, whipping, deprivation of food and drink, dismemberment, being put in chains, et cetera. – all of these were potential punishments of slaves or lower-class criminals in this life, and in the hands of the vision authors they became punishments of sinners in the next.[169] This development was not immediate; it was linked to an upending of a system, present earlier in antiquity, whereby high social rank could exempt a person from liability to torture or the death sentence. By the beginning of the fifth century, however, high social status was no longer a guarantee of less severe punishment, and in life, as in death, most everyone could be reduced to a state previously reserved for slaves.[170] Still, while on earth there were also other means of atoning for one's crimes, such as paying a fine or coming to a compromise with the affected party,[171] in death no such options existed. The sentence of punishment could be shortened through the intercession of others, yes, but there was no true means of escape.

In Christian theology, the equation of free persons with slaves was further emphasised by the use of terminology referring to Christians as "slaves" of God. While the Greek term 'doulus' and the Latin term 'servus' have often been translated as servant in biblical translations, Alan Bernstein notes that classicists translate these as slave. In biblical and theological context, God is the master and the Christian is His slave.[172] As this is the case, it is perhaps not surprising that punishment in the hereafter could be as harsh as the torment endured by slaves on earth without causing considerable cognitive dissonance to Christians. Indeed, as it was

[168] Bernstein 2017, 99–134.
[169] Moreira 2010a, 49–57.
[170] Moreira 2010a, 49–57; Bernstein 2017, 122–123.
[171] Geary 2008, 81; Peters 2008, 6.
[172] Bernstein 2017, 126–127.

commonly accepted in the Middle Ages that suffering was inevitable due to the sinful nature of man and the pain endured by Christ, harsh punishments either in this life or in the next were merely to be expected. No matter how good a Christian a person was or whether they were destined for salvation or damnation, the debt of pain owed had to be paid and the general consensus was that it was better to pay it through penance or suffering here on earth. For in death, even the free were reduced to slaves and punishments were meted out accordingly.[173]

The treatment of slaves and lower-class criminals was of course not the only source of imagery that the vision literature drew on. Punishments could also be modelled on biblical, mythological, poetic, ascetic, and purely imaginary sources. Sometimes different punishments were combined.[174] The sources of specific punishments will be explored further a bit later in this chapter as attention is directed to individual punishments and their prevalence in the vision literature. Before turning to this investigation, however, it is here important to say something about the entity suffering in the purgation and damnation of the visions. For while it was the soul that suffered through torment in the hereafter, in the vision literature it was seemingly corporeal.[175] Thus, it could experience pain and endure torments an immaterial soul otherwise could not. In fact, this was one of the issues the Orthodox Church of the later Middle Ages had with purgatorial punishments as envisioned by the Catholic Church. The corporeality of the soul was necessary for the punishments of the afterlife to be of a physical rather than spiritual nature, but to the Orthodox, the souls of the dead were disembodied, and purgation could only be purely spiritual. While the Orthodox could perceive of shame, darkness, torment of conscience, and fear of the future as means of purgation, most of the kinds of punishments envisioned by the authors of our sources were impossible for them to accept.[176] Still, the imagined connection between body and soul which enabled corporeal punishments in the visions was not without precedent. Indeed, the ascetic tradition perceived of the body both as 'an ally and an adversary in times of spiritual reckoning', thereby clearly indicating a union between the two at the reckoning that was the afterlife.[177] As we shall see, in the vision literature of our period, the afterlife certainly was a time of reckoning and due to the 'corporeality' of the soul the punishments described in the visions could be, and were, for the most part, brutally physical.

[173] Moreira 2010a, 41–43.
[174] Moreira 2010a, 56; Bernstein 2017, 99–100, 104.
[175] Bernstein 2017, 200.
[176] Ombres 1984, 8, 10.
[177] Moreira 2010a, 50.

3.2 The nature of punishment

3.2.1 Fire

The most universal means of punishment featured in the vision literature is unsurprisingly that of fire and burning.[178] As was mentioned in chapter two with regards to the history of medieval conceptions of the afterlife, fire as a feature of the hereafter has long roots in several different cultural and religious traditions, and it was an essential feature of both medieval purgatory and medieval hell in Western Europe. Among the visions under consideration here, all but two mention punishment by means of fire. The sole exceptions to the use of fire as punishment is the ninth-century *Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon*, which does not mention fire, but does not exclude it either, and the eleventh-century *Vision of a Beggar*.[179] The former, which is quite short and clearly meant to serve the political purpose of admonishing Louis the Pious, only mentions two specific punishments. Both of these pertain to famous Carolingian persons and are, at least in one case, clear instances of the punishment fitting the crime, thereby perhaps partly explaining the complete absence of fire. The punishments of everyone else in the vision are simply referred to as them enduring torment or punishment.[180] The *Vision of a Beggar*, for its part, is similarly short and also details very few punishments, the enclosure in a metal structure being foremost among them.[181] Still, even with the parameters of the visions being what they are, it is interesting that they do not mention fire in any way, particularly seeing as other visions with similar intents, and even shorter descriptions of punishment, do. Of course, very little can be definitively deduced from this state of affairs. For the purposes of this thesis, suffice it to say that the *Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon* and the *Vision of a Beggar* are anomalies among the visions when it comes to their lack of fire as a means of punishment.

In the other visions we see fire used for the purpose of punishment in several ways. In some visions, like the two versions of the *Visio Wettini*, the *Vision of Adamnán*, and the *Vision of Ailsi*, we are faced with rivers of fire, in which sinners are submerged and tormented. In his vision Ailsi sees innumerable souls held in a river of fire, from which they cannot escape, crying 'ob immensitatem et intolerabilitatem caloris et incendii quo urebantur, excoquebantur, incendebantur', that is, because of 'the immense and intolerable heat and fire in which they

[178] Gardiner 1989, xviii.
[179] Vision of a Beggar, 365–366.
[180] Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon, 179–180.
[181] Vision of a Beggar, 365–366.

were being burnt roasted, and set on fire.'[182] The sinners in Ailsi's vision were submerged in the fire to various degrees depending on how long they had been there and their crimes.[183] Similarly, in the *Vision of Adamnán*, there is a river of fire which punishes and purges sinners in accordance with the weight of their sins, holding the wicked prisoners in a whirlpool in its middle for sixteen years.[184] In Wetti's vision the river of fire was, like the river in Ailsi's vision, also full of countless souls, among them priests affixed to stakes, and women who had had relations with the priests sunk up to their genitals in the fire.[185] This motif of a river of fire in the hereafter goes back to the Greco-Roman tradition that there are four fiery rivers in Hades, and while it originally featured in Christian eschatology as part of the Judgement Day, it quickly became adapted as a feature of the immediate hereafter in the vision literature.[186] The use of immersion by degree in a river of fire, as in the *Vision of Ailsi*, likewise had longstanding traditions. As a means of grading punishments and making them match the severity of particular sins, this convention had been used since the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*.[187]

Like in the visions just mentioned, a river of fire is also mentioned in the *Vision of Alberic of Settefrati*, but here we also find lakes of fire, flaming pits, and fiery furnaces with the same purpose of punishing those who have sinned through having them burn.[188] These types of vehicles for punishment by fire are not uncommon, the flaming pit motif can for instance also be found in the *Visio Bernoldi* and fiery furnaces appear in the *Vision of Adamnán* as well.[189] Indeed, fire as a punishment could easily be administered through other means than that of a fiery river. Thus, in some visions there simply is a fire that burns without further details about its nature being given. Such is for instance the case in the *Vision of Anskar*.[190] In other visions the fire is controlled by demons and they are the ones to set it on the sinners. In the *Visio Rotcharii* a 'very black servant', that is to say a demon, stokes fire from the feet of the tormented to their breasts, while in *St Patrick's Purgatory* demons drag Owen, who is visiting St Patrick's Purgatory to gain remission for his sins, backwards and forwards through a fire

[182] The Vision of Ailsi, 13.
[183] The Vision of Ailsi, 13–14.
[184] Vision of Adamnán, 18.
[185] Visio Wettini (1), VI; Visio Wettini (2), 314–323.
[186] Zaleski 1987, 63–65.
[187] Bernstein 2017, 236.
[188] Vision of Alberic of Settefrati, VI, VII, X.
[189] Visio Bernoldi, 4; Vision of Adamnán, 17.
[190] Vita Anskarii, 3.

using iron hooks.[191] In the *Vision of the Monk Isaac* there are no demons, but chains of fire and fiery seats, 'catenis igneis' and 'sedilia ignea', are used as means of punishment.[192]

The act of burning sinners and using fire as a means of punishment in the hereafter is not only reflective of a longstanding literary and theological tradition medieval writers and readers of vision literature would have been aware of, it is also a punishment they might have come face to face with in their daily lives. During the period considered, being burned alive was part of the arsenal of punishments available within the criminal justice system. In late antiquity being burned alive had been reserved for slaves and lower-class criminals, but as with punishments in general, the line between who could be subjected to punishments of that kind had blurred by the late fourth century.[193] Nevertheless, being burned alive at the stake was considered a disgraceful death sentence, just like being hanged and being broken on the wheel.[194] While being burned to death later came to be associated with the punishment of heretics – and even later with that of witches – prior to the first burning of heretics in the medieval west in Orléans in 1022, being burned at the stake did not hold connotations of confessing the wrong belief.[195] Still, the stigma associated with a death sentence of this kind made the punishment perfect for sinners depicted in the vision literature, as setting a deterring example was part and parcel of the purpose of the visions. It would be to deny that the experiences shared in the visions were very real to contemporaries to suggest that the incorporation of fire and the burning of sinners in the visions were calculated decisions,[196] however, it is clear, that the combination of visionary, eschatological, and penal traditions contributed to making punishment by fire a crucial feature of the hereafter both in vision literature and in the culture at large.

3.2.2 Being cooked

Other than burning in fire, the visions are also full of punishments somehow related to fire, but with less basis in the actual treatment of criminals in this world. Among these can be counted souls being cooked, boiled, roasted, melted, baked in ovens, or fried in pans in the afterlife. In the *Vision of Thurkill* one of the punishments a man had to suffer on account of his pride, was having his limbs fried in a pan with grease and pitch after they had been torn

[191] Visio Rotcharii, 179; Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 339–343.
[192] Vision of the Monk Isaac, 369.
[193] Moreira 2010a, 51, 57–60.
[194] Classen & Scarborough 2012, 9.
[195] Moore 2008, 35–37; Classen & Scarborough 2012, 9.
[196] Gurevich & Shukman 1984, 52.

from his body. Others in this vision were set to boil in cauldrons due to a variety of sins.[197] Similarly, we are told in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* that some sinners are fried in pans, 'in sartagine frigebantur', while others are roasted in front of a fire, and yet others are melted like metals, 'ut solent metalla, liquefaciebant eos'.[198] In *St Patrick's Purgatory* some of those undergoing punishment are also fried in frying pans, while others are baked in ovens.[199] And in the *Vision of Ailsi* souls are cooked, 'excoquebantur', roasted, 'torrebantur', and melted.[200]

Pinpointing the tradition underlying these kinds of punishments is a less than straightforward endeavour. Imagery of this kind is not found in the *Vision of Paul* – or the original and longer *Apocalypse of Paul* – which makes no mention of souls being cooked, boiled, et cetera.[201] In the *Apocalypse of Peter*, there is mention of a furnace, but it is very brief and nothing like for instance the highly developed description of sinners being fried in pans that we find in the *Vision of Thurkill*. This mention of a furnace is also clearly related to fire more generally, and holds no connotations of sinners being treated like foodstuff, which some of the visions under consideration here seem to suggest is the treatment awaiting sinners in the hereafter.[202] Indeed, neither of these early vision accounts contain frying pans or ovens in which sinners are intended to be cooked.

Although the imagery of souls being boiled, subjected to boiling water, roasted, or melted can perhaps be explained as a mere extension of the use of fire and water as means of torment and purification, accounting for the inclusion of punishment by frying pans and ovens in the hereafter is far more difficult.[203] In a chapter on the cauldron's use in vision literature in *Dante and the Medieval Other World*, Alison Morgan has observed that the cauldron-motif becomes widely used only from the early twelfth century, and that spits, ovens, and frying pans as an extension of this motif are added to the genre around the same time. She sees this increased popularity of cooking-related imagery as a result of the popularisation of the view of the devil 'as a small black creature with bat wings and a long fork, ready to attack the souls

[197] Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 199–201, 204–205; (tr.) 227, 231–232.
[198] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 104, 109.
[199] St Patrick's Purgatory, 141. This reference does not appear to feature in the Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii.
[200] The Vision of Ailsi, 15.
[201] Apocalypse of Paul.
[202] Apocalypse of Peter, 8–9.
[203] Zaleski 1987, 63. For further imagery related to boiling see for instance the Visio Rotcharii, 179, in which demons pour boiling water over sinners.

of the damned'.[204] While I do not want to dismiss this explanation completely, I would here like to add another to complement it.

Morgan is not wrong in stating that the twelfth century marks a watershed in the use of cooking-related punishments in the hereafter. Indeed, in the visions considered here, the imagery of sinners being punished in ovens and frying pans are only present in visions dating from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. However, while this might be a time when the view of the devil changes, it is also a time when, according to Cătălin Avramescu, the Crusades brought the practice of cannibalism among other peoples to the attention of Europeans. Thus, in *La Chanson d'Antiochie*, written in the late twelfth century, the crusaders feared being cooked and eaten by their allies, the army of King Tafur, who are said to prefer human flesh to nightingales.[205] In light of this, it does not seem like too much of a stretch to suggest that this awareness and fear of cannibalism seeped into the vision literature of the time as well, giving rise to the images of sinners fried in pans and baked in ovens. It is even possible that this impacted the view of the devil, bringing about the new motif of him armed with a fork that Morgan speaks of. By linking cannibalistic tendencies to the devil and demons and insinuating that it was the fate of sinners to be treated as food and eaten, the visions made the hereafter, and the original denizens of it, even more dreadful, thereby making the incentive to lead a good life all the greater. While the demons are never referred to as eating any part of the sinners in the vision literature – instead simply deriving immense pleasure from tormenting them in ways normally reserved for something to be eaten – this does not automatically invalidate the notion that what is being referenced is cannibalism. It is likely that a contemporary audience would have been able to infer a connection to cannibalism simply from the behaviour and punishments depicted. Indeed, considering the lack of precedent for punishments of this kind and the fact that this imagery begins to emerge in the visions at a time when European culture in general was being exposed to cannibalistic practices, which were being documented in other forms of literature and art as well,[206] one would be remiss to simply overlook the connection. Unfortunately, further study of this topic falls outside the scope of this thesis, but it would surely make for an interesting line of inquiry in future research.

[204] Morgan 1990, 16–17.
[205] Avramescu 2009, 10.
[206] Mills 2005, 86–87.

3.2.3 Cold

The punishments mentioned up to this point are all united in that they somehow pertain to heat. As an extension and essential part of fire, heat plays a highly important role in the punishments of the hereafter, however, heat is by no means a necessary feature of punishment there. In fact, on several occasions punishment takes the opposite form, that is to say extreme cold. Thus, in the *Vision of Tundale* some sinners suffer due to frost and snow, while in the *Vision of Alberic of Settefrati* many sinners are frozen in blocks of ice and immersed to such a degree that Alberic can barely see the top of their eyes, 'innumeros quasi congelate glaciei acervos conspexi tante nimirum altitudinis, ut vix eorum cacumina oculis aspicerem.'[207] Sometimes the means of punishment also takes the form of a river of ice, as in the *Vision of Ailsi*, at others it is caused by poor weather or a river that is said to be cold, as in *St Patrick's Purgatory*.[208] This use of cold as a punishment is present already in the *Vision of Paul* and appears, according to Bernstein, to be connected to the belief that the outer darkness of Matthew 8:12, 22:13, and 25:30 is cold, thereby setting a precedent for the use of cold as part of a repertoire of punishment in the hereafter.[209]

3.2.4 Exposure to the weather

Also included in this repertoire and in some ways connected to the cold described above is the punishment of having to endure harsh weather. This notion of the weather as a means of punishment can be found in Virgil's *Aeneid* in which the punishment of some in the hereafter is to be exposed to the winds.[210] The origin of this punishment is also potentially linked to the Plague of Hail in Exodus, when God sent a storm of thunder, hail, rain, and lightning to ransack Egypt as a way of punishing the Pharaoh and the Egyptians for not allowing the Israelites to leave.[211] Another biblical precedent for the employment of challenging weather as a form of punishment is to be found in the Book of Revelation 16:21, in which hail is once again described as a plague brought upon people by God.[212] In the vision literature, being subjected to severe weather could be depicted as a punishment in and of itself, as in both versions of the *Visio Wettini* where an abbot is forced to 'suffer grim winds, rain, and all the harshness of the weather', 'Ibidemque eum omnem inclementiam aeris et uentorum

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[207] Vision of Tundale, 367; Vision of Alberic of Settefrati, III.
[208] Vision of Ailsi, 14; Tractatus De Sancti Patricii, 498–503.
[209] Bernstein 2017, 238.
[210] Bernstein 1993, 71.
[211] Exodus 9: 13–35.
[212] Book of Revelation 16:21.

incommoditatem imbriumque pati.'[213] However, it can also be a sort of extension of the punishment of having to endure cold, as – as was mentioned above in connection to *St Patrick's Purgatory* – sometimes the weather is the cause of the cold sinners are forced to suffer. It is here additionally worth pointing out that both the harshness of the weather and the cold itself were made even worse as punishments by the fact that sinners in the visions were often naked or at best dressed in rags, thereby fully exposing them to the cruelty of their torments.[214]

3.2.5 Alternating punishments

Sometimes punishment in the vision literature also takes the form of sinners alternately being subjected to hot and cold. The authority of this punitive alternation is drawn from Job 24:19 and it had by the start of our period already been included in several visions, such as the *Vision of Paul* and the *Vision of Drythelm*.[215] In addition to Job, behind this form of torment also lies a potential connection to the apocalyptic imagery of fire and hail (and blood) as well as to the writings of Jerome.[216] The alternation of punishments of this kind is to be found on a number of occasions in the sources at hand. In the *Visio Bernoldi* we are told of forty-one bishops who are at times trembling from too much cold and at others burning from too much heat.[217] No further specifics are given as to the means by which their punishment is conducted, but in the *Vision of Adamnán* the punishment is meted out through the use of girdles which alternately scorch the sinners with cold and heat.[218] In the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* on the other hand, the cold is said to be caused by snow, hail, and raging storms, while the heat is caused by fire. In this vision a third punishment is also added to the rota: being submerged in a stinking lake and having to endure its stench.[219] In the *Vision of Thurkill* a similar trifecta of punishments between which sinners are forced by demons to alternate is included, with the distinction that here the heat is caused by being boiled in burning pitch and "other melted substances" and all the punishments occur in cauldrons.[220]

[213] Visio Wettini (1), X; Vision Wettini (2), 391–399.
[214] Moreira 2010a, 55–56.
[215] Easting and Sharpe 2013, 179–180.
[216] Moreira 2010a, 154.
[217] Visio Bernoldi, 2.
[218] Vision of Adamnán, 26.
[219] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 105–107.
[220] Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 204–205; (tr.) 231–233.

3.2.6 Stench

This addition of a third form of torment exemplifies another fairly common punishment in the afterlife of the vision literature, that of being subjected to a foul and unbearable odour. In fact, the use of stench as a punishment in this way is present already in the *Vision of Paul*, where the smell emanating from a well is said to be so unbearable as to be the worst punishment of all.[221] Later works making use of horrible smells as punishment include the *Vision of Tundale*. Here we see that in connection to the punishment of being alternately forced to endure great cold and great heat, the author found it necessary to add a line about the stink of pitch and brimstone present in the place where sinners were being tormented by fire. Moreover, in the same vision some lines earlier, we are told of a fire that emits a stench so strong that no man can imagine its intensity.[222] This theme is also echoed in Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber Vitae Meritorum*, in which a boiling swamp spews out "the worst stink" as part of the punishment for wrong doing.[223]

While at first glance it may appear surprising that stench should be afforded importance as a means of punishment in the vision literature, this is primarily because, as Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott argue in *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, the modern reader has become desensitised to the importance of smell. Prior to modernity, however, smell was a highly significant part of Western culture and during the Middle Ages smells, and stench, was a part of everyday life, even permeating the homes of contemporaries.[224] It was even thought that smells corresponded to inner truth, a fact which surely played a major role in why the punishment of sinners in the visions could be so hair-raisingly stinky. Sins, and the moral corruption they signified, stunk. They might stink more or less depending on the severity of the sin, but some stench was always there. Thus, at least part of the stink of torment in the hereafter was undoubtedly caused by the sinners themselves, and their punishment was to endure the physical, smelly, manifestation of their own misdeeds as well as that of all the other sinners being punished alongside them. To make matters worse, sinners were also likely to be subjected to the even more horrifying smell emanating from the greatest sinner of all, the Devil, and his demons. The smell of the sinners and their punishments stood in stark contrast to the so called 'odour of sanctity', which constituted a tell-tale sign of holiness and made heaven an even more appealing place to the

[221] Vision of Paul, 41.
[222] Vision of Tundale, 359–380, 330–336.
[223] Liber Vitae Meritorum, The Fifth Part, 47.
[224] Classen et al. 1994, 62–66.

medieval person.[225] In the visions this aromatic distinction between the fates of the blessed and of sinners is frequently made clear, and in this way the use of stench as a punishment further deterred the readers of vision literature from leading sinful lives. Indeed, their punishment would not only consist of having to endure the stink of their sins, the smell would mark them as sinners to everyone within smelling distance.

3.2.7 Metals

More popular than the use of smell as punishment in the vision literature was the employment of different kinds of metals to torment the inhabitants of the hereafter. Everything from baths of lead and other melted metals to the more conventional use of chains, hooks, spits, and nails were acceptable options. Sometimes, as in the *Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon*, molten gold or other metals might even be poured down the throats of sinners who had committed the sin of greed.[226] At other times they would be set to suffer in rivers of boiling metals, as in the *Vision of Charles the Fat*.[227] Alternatively they could also be enclosed in a leaden casket, 'archa plumbea', like one of the monks in the *Visio Wettini*.[228] As these examples suggest, there is sometimes a connection between punishment that makes use of metals and the sin of greed. However, such a connection is not omnipresent in the visions. Thus, in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* no specific sins were required for a sinner to have red hot nails driven into their bones, and in the *Vision of Thurkill* sinners in general had glowing nails piercing their bodies.[229] Neither was any specific sin mentioned as the reason some sinners were hung from iron hooks, 'uncis ferreis', and others were affixed to hot iron wheels in *St. Patrick's Purgatory*.[230] That being said, both the hooks of St. Patrick's Purgatory and the hot iron chains of the *Vision of Ailsi* targeted the body parts which had committed the sins being punished, 'in membris illis per que cum essent in seculo peccauerunt.'[231] Finally, in the *Vision of a Beggar*, some sinners were enclosed in a structure of hot metal without windows on account of their crime, resistance, 'ubi habitaculum instar candentis ferventisque metalli constructum erat, nulla fencstrarum [fenestrarum?] foramina retinens.'[232]

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[225] Classen et al. 1994, 2–4, 52–54.
[226] Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon, 180.
[227] Vision of Charles the Fat, 18–23.
[228] Visio Wettini (1), VIIII.
[229] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 104; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 199; (tr.) 226.
[230] Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 433–435, 449–451.
[231] Vision of Ailsi, 15.
[232] Vision of a Beggar, 365.

Clearly then, a number of different punishments fall under the umbrella of torment by some means of metal and consequently their origins can be expected to vary to some extent. Generally speaking, a connection to the use of metals as part of the justice system is to be found in the practice of the ordeal, where exposure to a hot iron bar or ring was the most common means of trying to prove one's innocence.[233] And while the sinners of the afterlife were beyond the point of proving their innocence, their exposure to hot, or cold, metals could potentially lead to their redemption. Of the means of punishment depicted in the vision literature chains are some of the most realistic. They have precedent in both biblical, mythological, visionary, and penal context. Thus, in Jude 1:6 fallen angels are chained until the Final Judgement, while in Roman mythology chains in conjunction with fire were commonly used to express divine ire and power. In the vision literature chains feature already in the *Vision of Paul* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and in the physical world chains had a long tradition of being used to confine both slaves and criminals.[234] The use of nails, for its part, features in Redaction 6 of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which is a more fully developed version of the *Apocalypse* surviving in its entirety in only one manuscript.[235] Nails also bring to mind the crucifixion of Christ and the nails driven through his hands and feet. What had once been done to Christ was now being done to sinners in the hereafter. Like nails, hooks are present already in the Vision of Paul, and the torment of being affixed to a hot wheel goes back to the myth of Ixion, whose punishment for trying to seduce Hera was to be bound to a wheel of fire rolling through the sky.[236] The somewhat different punishment of breaking on the wheel was moreover a common form of execution during the Middle Ages and later, and during antiquity the *trochos*, also a wheel, was used as a torture device.[237] Unlike the wheels of the vision literature, however, these wheels were not frequently made of iron. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to dismiss their importance to the imagery at hand.

As a form of punishment, the use of molten metals differs from the ones outlined above, not the least because to modern sensibilities it seems far less realistic. However, the punishment of immersion in molten metals is to be found as early as in the writings of Plutarch (born before 50 CE), specifically in his *On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance*. In this treatise, souls are immersed in ponds of boiling gold, frozen lead, and molten iron.[238] The basis for this

[233] Classen & Scarborough 2012, 7.
[234] Bernstein 2017, 237; Moreira 2010a, 53–55.
[235] Bernstein 2017, 219, 237.
[236] Vision of Paul, 34; Merback 1999, 162.
[237] Merback 1999, 158–168.
[238] Bernstein 1993, 73–83.

motif in Plutarch is unclear, but later, during Constantine's reign, a parallel to one of the punishments employing melted metals in the vision literature is to be found. Not unlike the punishment befalling Count Bego in the *Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon*, where he has gold poured down his throat on account of his greed, Constantine is known to have ordered molten lead to be poured down the throats of those guilty of facilitating the 'seduction or rape of girls.' As they had wrongfully used their ability to speak, that ability was to be taken away and metal was to be harnessed in the process.[239] Additionally, Theodulf of Orleans, writing during the Carolingian era, acknowledges in his poem *Paraenesis ad judices* that the law allows for the punishment of filling the mouths of criminals with molten lead. He, however, finds this practice to be too harsh.[240] Thus, while on earth *damnatio ad metalla* might mean the ancient practice of being consigned to work in the mines or quarries until death, in the hereafter of the vision literature punishment *ad metalla* took a different form entirely, one that unquestionably was horrifying enough to act as another deterrent to sin.

3.2.8 External agents

Part and parcel of the meting out of punishment in the otherworld is what Bernstein calls 'external agents.' These are everything from demons to dragons, snakes, toads, and worms, and their jobs are to make the torment of the hereafter even greater by attacking the sinners already suffering.[241] Demons are the most common of the tormentors. Indeed, in nearly all the visions considered here demons are present. To name but a few examples, in the *Vision of Adamnán* demons strike sinners over the head with fiery clubs, in the *Visio Rotcharii* one demon both douses sinners in fire and pours boiling water over them, and in *St. Patrick's Purgatory* demons constantly vex both the knight Owen and the sinners residing in Purgatory.[242] Generally speaking then, demons are usually the administrators and supervisors of punishment in the hereafter, but as they fulfil these tasks they also become part of the punishment itself. Essentially, they are the jailers, torturers, and executioners of the afterlife. And as the Christian tradition would have them, they are quintessentially evil. For while the concept of demons goes back to antiquity – or even as far back as the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* – the demons of ancient Greek writings were not necessarily evil, instead the word was used to denote either a negative, positive, or neutral being.[243] Early Christianity, however, began perceiving of demons as solely negative and consequently enabled their later role in

[239] Bernstein 2017, 122.
[240] Geary 2008, 83–84.
[241] Bernstein 2017, 236–237.
[242] Vision of Adamnán, 26; Visio Rotcharii, 179; Tractatus De Sancti Patricii.
[243] Bernstein 1993, 13; Vos 2011, 5.

vision literature, where they not only repeatedly strike the bodies of sinners but strike fear into readers' hearts as well.[244]

Other than demons, different kinds of animals, both real and imaginary, also play a role as tormentors in the visions. Thus, in the *Visio Wettini*, Charlemagne's nether regions are mauled by an unspecified animal, 'et uerenda eius cuiusdam animalis morsu laniari, reliquo corpore inmuni ab hac le siones manente.'[245] And in the *Vision of Tundale* snakes with heads of iron, tails adorned with small nails, and mouths full of fire eat their way out of the women they are set to torment.[246] In a similar vein, in *St. Patrick's Purgatory* massive toads attempting to use their 'ugly beaks' to tear out the hearts of sinners are described. In the same context fiery serpents and dragons are also included as tormentors.[247] All three of these – toads, snakes, and dragons – can be traced to the Book of Revelation, but in the vision literature snakes and dragons are far more common than toads or frogs. The image of the serpent or snake is of course also linked to the Fall of Man and the devil. And the water beasts of the *Vision of Tundale*, who emerge from the water ready to swallow souls, as well as other visionary beasts of a slightly different nature, offer yet another connection to the Book of Revelation.[248] To the historian, punishments like these, moreover, bring to mind the practice in the Roman Empire of sentencing slaves and lower-class criminals to *damnatio ad bestias* and it is possible that this at least partly affected the use of such imagery in the visions.[249]

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly for the modern reader, the final external agent to be specifically mentioned here is the worm. Odd as it may seem to us, worms feature frequently in the visions under consideration here. For instance, in Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber Vitae Meritorum* 'cutting worms' are set to punish those who have made themselves guilty of avarice, while in the *Visio Bernoldi*, Charles the Bald has his flesh eaten by worms so that all that remains of him when Bernold has his vision is sinews and bones.[250] The size of these worms is not specified, but in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* the worms described are said to be immense with venomous gnawing teeth, 'istos monstruosi vermes venenosis rodebant dentibus' and in the *Vision of Alberic of Settefrati* the worm mentioned is also said

[244] Vos 2011, 5–6.
[245] Visio Wettini (1), XI.
[246] Vision of Tundale, 965–989.
[247] St Patrick's Purgatory, 140.
[248] Vision of Tundale, 555–583; Book of Revelation, 12, 13, 16: 13–14.
[249] Moreira 2010a, 51.
[250] Liber Vitae Meritorum, the Fifth Part, 50; Visio Bernoldi, 3.

to be immense, 'vermis erat infinite magnitudinis.'[251] This motif of worms is to be found already in the *Apocalypse of Paul*, in which worms, and at times devouring worms, are mentioned on several occasions.[252] The imagery goes back even further, however, for there is a biblical foundation underlying it. Indeed, in Mark 9:48, following Isa. 66:24, Gehenna is said to be the home of undying worms that devour.[253] To the medieval reader of vision literature the inclusion of worms as tormentors would consequently not have been odd at all, but rather a feature to be expected, although no less frightening for it.

3.2.9 Dismemberment

The external agents outlined above, particularly the demons, could sometimes inflict the punishment of dismemberment on sinners suffering in the afterlife. The Monk of Evesham, for example, witnessed devils cutting those being tormented to pieces before tearing the flesh off their bones.[254] Tundale for his part saw butchers, using a variety of instruments, striking the heads, arms, legs, and other body parts clean off the 'bodies' of souls.[255] And Thurkill, as we have already seen in connection to the cooking of sinners, witnessed demons deriving great pleasure from tearing the limbs off sinners before frying them in a frying pan.[256]

Despite the oftentimes outlandish details of the visions, this means of punishment mirrored very real punishments in the world of the living. As Moreira has pointed out, a common punishment for theft in antiquity was to have your hands cut off, a punishment which befell among others one of Caligula's slaves.[257] Moreover, Theodulf of Orleans provides us with evidence that dismemberment as a punishment was fully within the limits of the law during the Carolingian period, and he appears to think it was a punishment used unnecessarily often and too harshly, with criminals sometimes having both a leg and a hand taken off at the same time.[258] In the vision literature also, there is precedent for removing limbs from sinners. In the *Vision of Paul*, sinners who have had their hands and feet cut off are held in a place of ice and snow, and are eaten by worms.[259] While having limbs severed from your body was not a particularly honourable punishment to endure, interestingly enough, being decapitated was

[251] Vision of Monk of Evesham, 104; Vision of Alberic of Settefrati, VIIII.
[252] Apocalypse of Paul, 36, 37, 39, etc.
[253] Bernstein 2017, 233.
[254] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 109.
[255] Vision of Tundale, 731–749.
[256] Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 199–201; (tr.) 227.
[257] Moreira 2010a, 52.
[258] Geary 2008, 83–85.
[259] Moreira 2010a, 52; Apocalypse of Paul, 39.

perceived of as an honourable way to die throughout our period and beyond.[260] Despite this, however, there is nothing to indicate that the sinners having their heads chopped off in the *Vision of Tundale* are any better off than their companions. Thus, in death honourability did not mean the same thing with regards to punishments as it did in the here and now. As the sinners were already dead, there was no such thing as a fast death to escape further suffering, and, in a similarly excruciating fashion to dismemberment, sinners could also be cut, pierced, beaten or flayed on account of their sins. Interestingly, however, blinding, which for instance during the Carolingian period was a common punishment often resulting in death, does not feature in the vision literature here considered.[261]

3.2.10 Shame

Far more intangible than the punishments outlined above is that of enduring shame. Like many of the other punishments listed here, shame is also connected to the earthly punishment of crimes in the Middle Ages. Indeed, public humiliation and the shaming of criminals, the harshest of which was public flogging, was more common than public executions during the medieval period.[262] Public humiliation was an element both in the punishments meted out by the courts and in those administered by the church. For instance, a priest charged with heresy in the eleventh or twelfth century could be publicly stripped of their vestments in an outward display of shaming and establishing of disgrace.[263] A commoner who had committed a crime could similarly be disgraced by being forced to endure a continuing shaming punishment entailing wearing a symbol marking them as a criminal for the rest of their lives. Bearers of false witness were punished in this way by being required to wear tongues made of red cloth on their breasts and shoulders until their death.[264] In this vein was also the use of torture or branding that left the criminal with permanent marks signifying their disgrace for the entirety of their lifetime, a method that was a common way of dishonouring enemies in the Bible – and the ancient Near East where much of it was written – and continued to be an important part of punishments throughout the Middle Ages.[265] Additionally, humiliation and shaming punishments constituted part of the medieval practice of penance and in this context it could have both positive and negative meaning for the individual. Voluntarily submitting oneself to penance involving humiliation could be honourable, as in the case of Louis the Pious'

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[260] Classen & Scarborough 2012, 9.
[261] Geary 2008, 81.
[262] Classen & Scarborough 2012, 6–9.
[263] Moore 2008, 36.
[264] Classen & Scarborough 2012, 7–8.
[265] Moreira 2010a, 55; Classen & Scarborough 2012, 8; Merback 1999, 213.

penance of 822, but undergoing penance of this kind could also be shameful, especially if one was, as Louis the Pious in 833, forced to do so.[266]

In light of all of this, it is not surprising that shaming as a form of punishment – highly popular as it was not just in the Middle Ages, but in ages then past and ages to come as well – should have bled into the repertoire of torment present in the vision literature. Some punishments depicted in the vision literature, such as stench and the dismemberment discussed above, functioned as ways of shaming sinners by marking them as such for both readers and fellow inhabitants of the otherworld to notice. In this way these punishments mirrored the torture or branding that permanently marked criminals on earth. The most developed example of a shaming punishment in the visions, however, is to be found in the *Vision of Thurkill*. Here the visionary, and the reader, is faced with an arena of shame where sinners are forced to play out their sins for an audience of jeering and cursing devils.[267] This arena is very much in line with the notion of 'punishment as spectacle' being used for didactic purposes, which is present in Mitchell B. Merback's *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel*. By giving punishment a public and performative – shaming – dimension, it served to deter onlookers from future crime or, in this case, sin.[268] Indeed, while the immediate audience in the *Vision of Thurkill* consisted of devils and other sinners, the extended audience was everyone reading the vision, and they still had time to better themselves and do penance on account of their sins. In a way, all the punishments outlined in vision literature had an element of public humiliation to them, because the punishments of the hereafter were inevitably on display as deterring examples for the often very large audience of the genre.[269] Additionally, as the idea was that the friends and family of sinners, as well as potential acquaintances and monastic communities, should pray, give alms, and have masses sung for the deceased, the shame of their sins would often be known to an entire community of people trying to rectify their misdeeds. Consequently, the vision literature is also full of examples of sinners asking for intercession to be made on their behalf, thereby further publicising their predicament.[270] In doing this, however, they mostly did not seem troubled by shame as much as by other torments. Nevertheless, that is not to say that the situation they found themselves in was not inherently shameful.

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[266] See Meens 2013, 89–102.
[267] Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 198–204; (tr.) 226–231.
[268] Merback 1999, 135; Classen & Scarborough 2012, 9.
[269] Gardiner 1989, xiii–xiv.
[270] See for instance the Visio Bernoldi and the Visio Wettini (1), X.

Shaming punishments were not the only way in which shame could feature as a punishment in the hereafter of the vision literature. In the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* we are told of a lawyer who is not undergoing a shaming punishment per se but is rather, in addition to his other punishments, heavily burdened by shame, 'confusione intolerabilius premor.' As he puts it, remembering his fault is his greatest torment.[271] Indeed, experiencing shame was perceived as a great punishment, even capable of making a person worthy of grace – a view propagated already by Augustine – and to feel shame was also seen as a mark of true penance throughout our period.[272] In this sense, then, the lawyer's experience in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* was not out of step with the worldview of the time. Shame as an explicitly stated source of torment is, however, unusual in the vision literature, where punishments are generally of a physical nature even when part of their function is to shame the sinner. In fact, if one overlooks the multitude of other punishments this lawyer is forced to endure, the portrayal of shame in this passage echoes the Greek Orthodox notion that enduring shame was one of few possible torments of sinners between their death and the Final Judgement.[273] This link to Orthodox belief is interesting precisely because depictions of this kind in the visions are highly uncommon in a Latin context. This in turn makes one wonder why it is used here and if there is any possible connection to Greek Orthodox thought. A proper answer to this question would require further research which unfortunately is not possible within the scope of this thesis. Still, while this kind of treatment of shame is uncommon in the vision literature, it is worth mentioning here because it adds yet another dimension to punishment in the afterlife and points to the fact that not all punishment there was inherently physical in nature.

3.2.11 Oblivion

Another not inherently physical punishment forced upon souls in the hereafter is oblivion. Those suffering this punishment are for all intents and purposes abandoned and forgotten by both God and the saints and angels. They are cast out into the dark and shall remain there without any chance of relief. Despite the lack of physical torment, this is the worst punishment of all. Being subjected to this punishment essentially means being lost forever and never being allowed to know God's or Christ's presence.[274] In the Bible, the image of God forsaking those who have forsaken Him can be found in the Book of Judges, and in the

[271] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 111.
[272] Sère & Wettlaufer 2013, xxxiii–xxxiv.
[273] Ombres 1984, 10.
[274] Brown 1996, 62–63; Bernstein 2017, 238–239.

vision literature, oblivion as a punishment is to be found as early as in the *Apocalypse of Paul*.[275]

In the vision literature at hand here, this sense of being forsaken is often something we are told that the visionaries themselves experience. Anskar, for example, is abandoned by his guides and left to suffer darkness, memory loss, and pressure and choking. He suffers this completely alone for what he believes to be three days before his guides return to his side.[276] Similarly, Ailsi is separated from his travelling companions in a valley obscured by a dark cloud and while he is said to not despair, knowing that he will eventually be helped by God and St Stephen, he comes very close: 'lassus et fere desperans et deficiens.'[277] As it is visionaries being subjected to this punishment in these examples, their suffering is merely temporary. However, such is not the case for sinners who have already passed. Thus, in the *Vision of Tundale*, while the visionary himself experiences a temporary state of oblivion and abandonment when his guiding angel leaves him, some souls are forced to endure this state without end as they are held and punished by demons or the devil.[278] This account contrasts significantly with Hildegard of Bingen's description of oblivion in the *Liber Vitae Meritorum*, as the latter is not accompanied by the same kind of gruesome additional punishments. Indeed, in the *Liber Vitae Meritorum* oblivion is the punishment of those who have not been baptised and they are held in 'the darkness of unfaithfulness'. In this account, only those who have committed sins in addition to not being baptised are punished further through also being subjected to a certain smoke.[279]

As Hildegard of Bingen's description suggests, there is a connection between the punishment of oblivion and that of being kept in darkness, as the latter is often a way of illustrating the former. Nevertheless, darkness is not automatically an indicator of oblivion, for being kept in darkness can be a punishment in and of itself or be connected to other punishments. Darkness is, however, a feature specific to punishment in the visions, and as such it functions as a contrast to the light of the state of the blessed, not unlike the way darkness is often made out to be the opposite of light in the New Testament.[280] Being kept in darkness, a state of oblivion, or both, thus rounds out this investigation into the nature of punishment in the

[275] Judges 10:13; Apocalypse of Paul, 41; Bernstein 2017, 238–239.
[276] Vita Anskarii, 3.
[277] Vision of Ailsi, 13.
[278] Vision of Tundale, 1125–1436.
[279] Liber Vitae Meritorum, the Sixth Part, 9.
[280] Bernstein 2017, 237–238.

afterlife of the vision literature, and brings us to the question of how punishments of purgation differ from punishments of damnation in the visions.

In short, then, as the world order has been upset by sin, punishment and pain are necessary features of the Christian reality, particularly the afterlife. In the vision literature the role of punishment is partly to restore balance and to deter from future sin. While punishment in the visions is generally decidedly physical in nature, it is the soul that suffers this punishment. The foundation for much of the brutality in the visions can be traced to the treatment of slaves and lower-class criminals in antiquity, and within the Christian context free persons were reduced to slaves, especially in the way they were treated in the hereafter.

Punishment in the visions from the ninth to the early thirteenth centuries is often terrifying and commonly draw on a tradition of punishments within the genre of vision literature, contemporary punishments in the real world, unpleasant features of contemporary society in general, and/or literary as well as biblical sources. The punishments described in the visions from this period can be divided into eleven categories that on some occasions overlap to a certain extent. Still, even when they overlap, they warrant being treated on their own because they are different enough, or have foundations that are different enough, that they should not be conflated.

Finally, while the majority of the categories listed in this chapter are ones commonly discussed in some form in the context of features of the otherworld, this chapter also adds some new categories to the repertoire considered by Bernstein and Moreira. These are the punishments of being cooked, which, although discussed by Morgan, is not to the best of my knowledge commonly considered in this type of context; the punishment of being exposed to stench; and the punishment of shame.

4. Differences in punishments of purgation and punishments of damnation

As we have seen, the vision literature of our period is rich with punishments. For our purposes, though, merely knowing that a plethora of torments await the sinners depicted in the visions is not enough. It is here necessary to investigate potential differences between punishment undergone for the purpose of purgation and punishment suffered for the purpose of damnation. Without consideration of the punishments of the hereafter and their relation to the concepts of purgation and damnation, a vital part would be missing from this thesis. That said, answering the question of how punishments of purgation differ from punishments of damnation is not always as straightforward as it may sound.

4.1 The ambiguity of punishment

The task of differentiating between purgatorial and damnatory punishments should be easiest in those instances when we are explicitly told that a soul is suffering either purgation or damnation. Such is the case in Heito of Reichenau's version of the *Visio Wettini*, in which we are told of monks suffering in a community for their purgation as well as an abbot exposed to the weather on top of a mountain explicitly for his purgation, 'quod in summitate eius esset deputatus ad purgationem suam, non ad damnationem perpetuam.'[281] However, while it cannot get much clearer than this, the problem is, that simply because a form of punishment has once been referred to as representative of either purgation or damnation, we cannot automatically infer that it always is. Indeed, on the other side of the mountain in the *Visio Wettini* a bishop is suffering in damnation, presumably enduring a physical punishment not unlike that of the abbot in all respects other than its duration.[282] Moreover, as Bernstein has pointed out, punishments that the visionaries associated with damnation often turned out to be purgatorial in the visions.[283] In order to effectively deter people from sin, purgatorial punishments had to be basically the same as those of damnation.[284] Thus, in the *Visio Wettini* as well as in the *Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon* the visionaries were confused to find Charlemagne in suffering, and their guides had to inform them that his punishment was merely for his purgation, not evidence of damnation as they seemed to fear.[285] This confusion

[281] Visio Wettini (1), VIII, X.
[282] Visio Wettini (1), X.
[283] Bernstein 2009, 204.
[284] Bernstein 2017, 230.
[285] Visio Wettini (1), XI; Visio Wettini (2), 446–465; Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon, 179–180.

is likewise present in *St Patrick's Purgatory* where demons trick Owen into thinking that a pit shooting up sinners in a cloud of flame and stench only to have them fall right back down into it again is the entrance to hell, and that those suffering in it do so in damnation. In the end this turns out to be a fabrication, for another group of demons admit to it having been a lie and confess that the entrance to hell is in fact located a bit further afield.[286]

Considering this confusion, the question here becomes whether or not we can make any distinction at all between punishments in the hereafter, or if in fact all the punishments listed in chapter 3.2 have the same potential of being both purgatorial and damnatory. Looking for instance at fire as a form of punishment, we find that already in the third century a distinction was made between a fire that consumes and a fire that cleanses.[287] In the vision literature considered here – and, as Bernstein has noted, in vision literature as well as Christian literature in general – this use of fire for two different purposes is very much present and without further specifics it is impossible to tell by the mere presence of fire whether the punishment a sinner is enduring is purgatorial or damnatory.[288] Thus, if it was not for the fact that the fire of chapter X in the *Vision of Tundale* is said to among other things be in the deepest of depths and the sinners in it to already be judged and beyond saving, it would, as fire, be indistinguishable from the fire which purges sinners in a river in the *Vision of Ailsi*.[289] While the fact that the fire in the *Vision of Tundale* emerges from a pit could be seen as an indicator of its eternal nature – as pits are often connected to hell in medieval literature – again it is not the fire itself that indicates this. Besides during the Middle Ages punishment occurring in hell was not automatically synonymous with the punishment being eternal in nature and consequently, even a potential connection to hell in the imagery does not necessarily equal damnation. The nature of punishment through fire therefore remains ambiguous.

Being cooked and/or treated like foodstuff is likewise not used in merely one context in the vision literature. Indeed, while both *St Patrick's Purgatory* and the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* depict these punishments as purgatorial, grouping them together with other punishments of purgation, the *Vision of Ailsi* states that these punishments are never-ending, with sinners being 'regrown' for the sole purpose of living through the punishments again.[290]

[286] Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 531–540.
[287] Le Goff 1984, 54; Moreira 2010a, 19–20.
[288] Bernstein 2017, 233–234.
[289] Vision of Tundale, X, 1137–1190; Vision of Ailsi, 13.
[290] St Patrick's Purgatory, 141; Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 104; Vision of Ailsi, 16.

Easting and Sharpe have interpreted this endlessness as indication that these punishments occur in hell, and this seems like the logical conclusion.[291] Even if that was not the case, the reference to the punishment being eternal, indicates that in the *Vision of Ailsi* being cooked is a damnatory punishment. Similarly, in the *Vision of Thurkill* being cooked, either in a frying pan or in a cauldron, appears to be reserved for those enduring damnation.[292] Among the visions that depict sinners treated as foodstuff or being cooked more generally, then, there are examples of both these punishments being purgatorial and them being damnatory.

Moving on to the next category in chapter 3.2, in *Hell and Its Rivals* Bernstein categorises cold as a possible indicator of both temporary and eternal punishments.[293] In the vision literature at hand here, this is also the case, although in the visions considered, cold is perhaps more commonly reflective of purgatorial punishment than of damnation. Cold is, for instance, utilised as a means of purgation in the *Vision of Ailsi*, in which a freezing river cleanses sinners, and in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham*, where snow, hail, and storms cause intense cold that forms part of a cleansing punishment.[294] By contrast, in the *Vision of Tundale* cold is also used to herald that Tundale draws nearer to hell as the author of the vision states that Tundale nearly froze to death as he arrived were the damned were detained.[295] To find evidence of the dual nature of cold as a punishment one would, in fact, not have to look any further than this vision, for earlier in the vision cold is also employed to purge sins.[296]

So far then, the punishments depicted in the vision literature are not limited to being expressions of merely purgation or damnation; in the visions they can very well be both. This trend continues with the punishment of being exposed to the weather, for as was detailed above with regards to the *Visio Wettini*, exposure to the weather can be both purgatorial, as expressly stated in the case of the abbot suffering on a mountain, or damnatory, as can be deduced from the punishment of the bishop on the other side of the mountain. Indeed, one does not even have to rely on a mere inference as evidence of the weather being employed as a punishment of damnation. For in the *Vision of Adamnán* some sinners are said to be

[291] Easting and Sharpe 2013, 180.
[292] Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 199–205; (tr.) 227–232.
[293] Bernstein 2017, 238.
[294] Vision of Ailsi, 14; Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 106.
[295] Vision of Tundale, 1137–1148.
[296] Vision of Tundale, 365–368.

eternally set upon by a sharp wind, thereby indicating that this is a condition of their damnation.[297]

In a discussion on the *Vision of Drythelm* in *Heaven's Purge*, Moreira suggests that the following category in chapter 3.2, the alternation of punishments and specifically that of heat and cold, can be seen to indicate an intermediate place, a place of purgation, because it is 'neither fully one or the other.'[298] According to this logic, alternating punishments, at least of heat and cold, could by extension be interpreted as purgatorial because they do not conform to a single category. However, as Moreira herself points out and Peter Brown also notes in his Tanner Lectures on Human Values, there is precedent for viewing fever, with its intermittent bouts of heat and chills, as a reference to hell and damnatory punishment.[299] Consequently, on a theoretical level, the alternation of hot and cold is not necessarily reflective of just one of the states under consideration here. Among the visions, the *Visio Bernoldi* is a clear example of a purgatorial use of alternating heat and cold. Here the monks that are subjected to this alternation are saved from their punishment through the actions of Bernold, thereby putting their punishment firmly in the purgatorial category.[300] By contrast, the same sinners that are eternally set upon by a sharp wind in the *Vision of Adamnán* are also subjected to alternate heat and cold as part of their never-ending, apparently damnatory punishment.[301] Alternation with the addition of stench as a third form of punishment, as in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* as well as the *Vision of Thurkill*, appears to likewise be of a potentially dual nature, for in the former it is grouped together with purgatorial punishments in the 'second place of punishment', while in the latter it is administered to those seemingly already damned.[302] The category of alternating punishments, thus, further adds to the ambiguity of the nature of torments administered in the hereafter of the vision literature.

No change to this state of affairs is brought about by the use of stench as punishment. Indeed, punishment by stench can easily indicate both purgation and damnation. This is not particularly surprising considering the connection of stench to sin and the notion that sin and sinners stink, the Devil worst of all.[303] Of the visions, for example Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber Vitae Meritorum* as well as the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* depict sinners punished

[297] Vision of Adamnán, 26.
[298] Moreira 2010a, 154.
[299] Moreira 2010a, 154; Brown 1996, 38.
[300] Visio Bernoldi, 2.
[301] Vision of Adamnán, 26.
[302] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 105–108; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 204–205; (tr.) 231–232.
[303] Classen et al. 1994, 2–4, 52–54.

by a horrible stench in a purgatorial context.[304] Both *St Patrick's Purgatory* and the *Vision of Tundale*, on the other hand, use stench as an indicator of damnation, as yet another punishment the damned are forced to endure. Thus, in *St Patrick's Purgatory*, the river that is the entrance to hell emits a foul stench and one can only assume that the stench is even worse on the other side of the entrance.[305] In the *Vision of Tundale* the entrance to hell similarly lets out a stench so foul that Tundale cannot endure it for long. Here damnation stinks, however, in the same vision stench is on several occasions also used as part of a purgatorial punishment.[306]

Punishment by metals is likewise ambiguous in nature. At times, as in the *Vision of Charles the Fat*, the imagery itself is unclear. In this vision sinners are immersed by degree in a river of boiling metals and while immersion by degree is a common feature of purgatorial punishments, there is nothing else in this section of the vision that specifically points to this punishment by metal being purgatorial in nature.[307] At other times, we are instead told the true nature of a punishment belonging to this category. Thus, we are made aware that the enclosure in a leaden casket that is depicted in the *Visio Wettini* is a purgatorial punishment because, although it will last until Judgement Day, it is specifically stated that it is to be suffered for the sake of purgation.[308] Additions to the purgatorial category can be found in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham*, in which being consigned to baths of molten metals is a purgatorial punishment, and in *St Patrick's Purgatory*, in which being skewered by iron hooks or attached to an iron wheel is likewise purgatorial in nature.[309] By contrast, punishments similar to these are linked to damnation in the *Vision of Ailsi*, where they occur in hell and those suffering them are beyond saving, and in the *Vision of Thurkill*, where those already damned are forced to endure punishments of this kind as well.[310]

Both external agents and the dismemberment oftentimes caused by them also reflect this ambiguity of punishment. Looking solely at demons or devils as tormenters, it is clear that they, as Bernstein has also suggested,[311] fulfil roles as administrators of both purgation and damnation, often even in the same vision. Thus, in *St Patrick's Purgatory*, the *Vision of the*

[304] Liber Vitae Meritorum, The Fifth Part, 47; Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 105–108.
[305] Tractatus De Sancti Patricii, 537–540.
[306] Vision of Tundale, 332–334, 1175–1180.
[307] Vision of Charles the Fat, 18–23.
[308] Visio Wettini (1), VIIII.
[309] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 104; Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 433–435, 449–451.
[310] Vision of Ailsi, 16; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 198–199; (tr.) 226.
[311] Bernstein 2017, 236–237.

Monk of Evesham, and the *Vision of Tundale* demons first torment sinners suffering purgation, only to later torment others enduring damnation.[312] In a slightly different vein, in the *Visio Rotcharii* a demon administers punishment from which it is at least possible to escape, as Charlemagne has done, however, it is unclear if all of those suffering do so in purgation or if there are those who suffer the same punishment eternally as part of their damnation.[313] In fact, several of the earlier visions that contain punishments meted out by demons are a bit unclear on what these punishments constitute a part of, although the indication often seems to be that demons are linked to damnation.[314] In the *Vision of Ailsi* this link is made clear as demons only torment those suffering eternally in hell and, similarly, in the latest of the visions considered, the *Vision of Thurkill*, demons only punish the damned, while those undergoing purgation are punished through other means.[315] As demons are commonly the ones responsible for the dismemberment of sinners, one might assume that by extension this punishment too has the potential to be both purgatorial and damnatory. Such an assumption would indeed be correct, for in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* as well as the *Vision of Thurkill* the context in which dismemberment at the hands of demons occurs is damnatory, while in the *Vision of Tundale* it is purgatorial.[316]

The other external agents discussed in chapter 3.1.8 are not necessarily indicative of one state or the other either. While the beast attacking Charlemagne in the *Visio Wettini* is representative of a purgatorial punishment, we would have no way of knowing this had Wetti himself not been confused by the situation and therefore been told by the angel that the punishment is for the former emperor's purgation.[317] In *St Patrick's Purgatory* and the *Vision of Tundale* snakes, toads, and dragons as tormentors also all have a purgatorial purpose, but it is through context and written statements to this end that we are able to figure this out.[318] Likewise, we find out that the dragons of the *Vision of Adamnán* are damnatory because all twelve dragons reside in hell where souls are said to be punished for eternity as they are swallowed in turn by each dragon until the last one delivers the soul to be swallowed by the

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[312] Tractatus De Sancti Patricii, see for instance 449–463 and 537–575; Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 103–105, 108–110; Vision of Tundale, 365–374, 1137–1236.
[313] Visio Rotcharii, 179.
[314] See for instance the Visio Bernoldi, 4 and the Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon, 180.
[315] Vision of Ailsi, 16; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 193–205; (tr.) 222–232.
[316] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 109; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 199–201; (tr.) 227; Vision of Tundale, 731–749.
[317] Visio Wettini (1), XI; Visio Wettini (2), 446–465.
[318] Vision of Tundale, 965–989; Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 390–403.

Devil.[319] In the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* snakes are similarly responsible for part of what appears to be damnatory punishments, but these are only named as such in the roundabout way of stating that suffering in the third place of punishment where this occurs has no end.[320]

The final external agent discussed in the previous chapter, the worm, is no less ambiguous as a realiser of punishment. In Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber Vitae Meritorum*, the *Visio Bernoldi*, and the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham*, worms as punishers are purgatorial in nature, being used in contexts were the aim of punishment is souls being purged.[321] In the *Vision of Ailsi*, by contrast, there is a worm that doesn't die in hell, however, it is nowhere stated what its role is in administering punishments, if indeed such a role exists.[322] Considering the history of worms being used in descriptions of hell to illustrate permanent decay, it is possible that the worm in the *Vision of Ailsi* merely fulfils this purpose. Still, because worms on occasion tend to be part of the punishments in vision literature, it is also possible that the reader is supposed to be able to infer its role as a punisher just from its mention.[323] Whether that is the case or not is impossible to definitively tell, but it is clear that due to its historical and visionary use, the worm as an agent of punishment lends itself to interpretation.

As a punishment, shame could also be expected to lend itself to the ambiguity that has been outlined in this chapter. This is so, because undergoing humiliation as a form of penance could be interpreted as both shameful and honourable during the Middle Ages, and shaming punishments were a way of rehabilitating a person who had committed a crime into society, thereby indicating its redemptive nature.[324] The difference between voluntary penance and the use of shame as a punishment in the hereafter is, of course, that the latter is not voluntary, but rather forced upon the sinner due to the fact that they have not sufficiently performed the former. Already in this life, as was mentioned in chapter 3.2.10, shaming punishments could also be more permanent, marking a criminal for the entirety of their lifetime, and thus forcing them to endure shame more permanently and presumably less voluntarily. In the vision literature, explicit mention of shame as a punishment is not particularly common, occurring as it does in our sources only in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham*. Here, the lawyer who is

[319] Vision of Adamnán, 19–21.
[320] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 109.
[321] Liber Vitae Meritorum, the Fifth Part, 50; Visio Bernoldi, 3; Vision of Monk of Evesham, 104.
[322] Vision of Ailsi, 16.
[323] Bernstein 2017, 233.
[324] Meens 2013, 89–91, 101–102; Sère and Wettlaufer 2013, xxxi–xxxvii.

forced to endure shame on account of his actions in life appears to be doing so in damnation, for he is in the third place of punishment where there is no end to suffering: 'quos eo loco vita perdita cruciari cogebat, quarum vicissitudinum nullus erat finis, non meta aliqua, nec terminus ullus.'[325] In this damnatory state, shame is the worst out of all the punishments he is forced to suffer.[326]

As the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* is the only vision that explicitly deals with shame as a punishment, it might be tempting to classify the use of shame as punishment as inherently indicative of damnation. Such an inference would be difficult to substantiate, however, as just one example can hardly constitute a rule. Moreover, while the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* is the only vision under consideration to plainly mention shame as a punishment, it is not the only one to make use of what could be considered shaming punishments and public humiliation. Indeed, as was mentioned in chapter 3.2.10, all visions detailing punishments of sinners can be said to contain an element of public humiliation, as these sinners are publicly shamed before the audience of the visions. In the *Vision of Thurkill*, the audience additionally consists of an arena full of devils, which further adds to the public shaming spectacle. The fact that the sinners in this arena are forced to re-enact their sins – the cause of their shame – to the amusement of their heckling captors before any further punishment occurs, indicates that this is a conscious choice of using shaming as a punishment.[327] Had the object here been to simply deter readers of the vision from making the same bad choices, it would have been enough to simply detail the crimes and sins at hand in the context of just the additional punishments that follow after the performative, shaming punishments. After all, that is the formula used in all other visions considered here. Thus, there can be hardly any doubt that in the *Vision of Thurkill* public humiliation and shaming are used very intentionally as punishment of the damned, who are being forced to take part in the devils' so-called sports.

Of the two visions that explicitly use shame and shaming as a means of punishment, then, both do so in a damnatory context. In all the other visions considered, any connection to shame as punishment must be inferred. If, for instance, the use of stench and dismemberment in the vision literature is to be interpreted, as I have suggested earlier, as a way of marking sinners in a way similar to how criminals could be marked in medieval society in order to

[325] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 109, 110–112.
[326] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 111.
[327] Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 198–204; (tr.) 226–231.

humiliate and shame them,[328] this conclusion must be drawn purely from circumstantial evidence. Indeed, the visions themselves say nothing of dismemberment also functioning as a shaming punishment, but knowing that punishments of this kind were used for shaming purposes in the societies in which the visions were written, it seems likely that contemporaries would have been able to make the connection. Likewise, considering the importance of smell in medieval society and the clear connections made between smell and inner truth, the stench surrounding sinners in the hereafter would presumably have been clearly recognisable as a sign of moral corruption and a cause for shame.[329] This seems in line with the stigmatisation of sinners in hell identified by Bernstein in his article *Named Others and Named Places: Stigmatization in the Early Medieval Afterlife*. Indeed, just like the disgracefulness of enduring punishment in general and being held in a certain place in the afterlife can stigmatise and shame, so too, I would argue, can specific punishments, such as dismemberment and being surrounded by stench, and the results thereof.[330] Consequently, if one counts these instances of shame as an inferred addition to an existing punishment, as belonging to the same category as the instances of shame in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* and the *Vision of Thurkill*, shame can be said to adhere to the same ambiguity as the other punishments considered in this chapter. However, shame as a clearly articulated punishment, not just an inferred one, is the first among the punishments listed in this thesis that belongs squarely in one camp, that of damnation.

According to Bernstein, who does not consider shame in his investigation of punishments in *Hell and Its Rivals*, 'oblivion and its associated symbols are the least ambiguous indicators of eternal punishment.'[331] As oblivion means being absent even from God's mind, it is an obviously damnatory punishment, however, in the visions it also temporarily befalls visionaries.[332] This creates a certain duality to the punishment, as it in this context functions as purgative. This in turn raises the question if oblivion in the vision literature can be considered unambiguously damnatory. Admittedly, there is a significant difference between being permanently abandoned by God with, at most, only the occasional sign of mercy in the form of a brief respite,[333] and being temporarily left by your guiding angel(s) to suffer on your

[328] Moreira 2010a, 55; Classen & Scarborough 2012, 8; Merback 1999, 213.
[329] Classen et al. 1994, 53–54.
[330] Bernstein 2010.
[331] Bernstein 2017, 239.
[332] Bernstein 2017, 238–239. See the Vision of Anskar in Vita Anskarii, 3; the Vision of Ailsi, 13; and the Vision of Tundale, 1137–1267.
[333] Bernstein 2017, 238–239.

own. Nevertheless, the basic premise of the punishment is very similar, being abandoned in a terrifying place and forced to endure tremendous suffering without comfort from God or His representatives. Still, presumably the visionaries undergoing the temporary version of this punishment are not actually cast out from God's mind for the duration of the punishment. And, while the situation is terrifying, like Ailsi they can take some comfort in knowing they will eventually be rescued, a luxury not afforded to the truly damned who are subjected to oblivion.[334] The visionaries could, thus, be said to merely experience a part of what oblivion is like and consequently, what they experience should not be used to invalidate the notion that fully-fledged oblivion in the vision literature is a damnatory punishment.

Apart from these bite-sized tastes of oblivion experienced by visionaries, oblivion is a permanent punishment in the visions in which it features. In the *Vision of Tundale* we are specifically told that oblivion is something sinners are forced to suffer endlessly in a clearly damnatory context.[335] And in the *Liber Vitae Meritorum* oblivion is reserved for those who have died unbaptised as they are held in a darkness connected to, but seemingly not in, Gehenna, or hell. Those enduring oblivion in this vision are probably best described as among the damned, however, they are not forced to suffer the kind of other torments typically associated with damnation. At most they are forced to suffer stench, and even this is only if they have committed sins in addition to them not being baptised.[336] Despite this, it is clear that what they are enduring is not purgative, for there is no mention of escape. Thus, when others than visionaries are subjected to oblivion in the vision literature, the punishment they endure is damnatory.

Among the categories of punishment considered in this thesis, oblivion and shame are consequently the only ones that can be closely linked to just one state in the hereafter, and in both cases that state is damnation. All other punishments listed here are variously employed to illustrate both purgation and damnation. And as we have seen regarding oblivion and shame as well, these categories also require some elaboration to be made before they can be confirmed as damnatory punishments. All in all, then, to ensure their efficacy – as Bernstein has argued – punishments in the vision literature are of a rather ambiguous nature, and in order to determine if a particular punishment represents purgation or damnation, one is often

[334] Vision of Ailsi, 13.
[335] Vision of Tundale, 1125–1436.
[336] Liber Vitae Meritorum, the Sixth Part, 9–10.

forced to defer to statements regarding its duration. Throughout this chapter I have made use of such statements, but it is now time to consider the duration of punishment more directly.

4.2 The duration of punishment

Due to the general ambiguity of punishment in the vision literature, its duration is crucial to an understanding of its function. The duration of a punishment in the visions is the primary distinguisher between if a punishment is purgative or damnatory when it is not explicitly stated what category the punishment belongs to. Admittedly, the location in which it occurs can sometimes also contribute to clarifying a punishment's nature, but overall the duration of a punishment is the most reliable indicator of its nature. Succinctly, one could say that punishment in the visions is either temporary or permanent, with the former indicating purgation and the latter damnation, but even within this categorisation there is room for nuance. Especially the time frame of purgation is varied. In the visions there are examples of everything from very brief periods of undergoing purgation to almost permanent suffering functioning as purgative. The former is clearly exemplified in the *Vision of Anskar*, where Anskar is purged for three days, while the latter is evidenced in the *Visio Wettini*, where a monk is to endure his purgation until Judgement Day.[337]

Generally speaking, it is not overly common to have so clearly specified durations for purgation in the vision literature. The three days mentioned in the *Vision of Anskar*, the different amounts of years of suffering detailed in the *Vision of Adamnán*, and even the reference to Judgement Day in the *Visio Wettini* are exceptions within the sample considered.[338] Mostly, sinners are punished until their sins have been purged and how long that takes depends on the sins in question and whether or not they receive outside help in the form of intercession. This unspecified length of punishment is evident for example in the *Vision of Ailsi* and the *Vision of Alberic of Settefrati*, in which sinners are detained in rivers until their sins have been purged from them.[339]

Key to the duration of purgative punishment in most of the visions is intercession either by the living or by saints. In fact, the notion that the living can intercede on behalf of the dead through alms, prayers, and masses et cetera, and thereby lessen and/or shorten their suffering in the afterlife is one of the features Le Goff identifies as crucial to the concept of

337 Vita Anskarii, 3; Visio Wettini (1), VIIII.
338 Vision of Adamnán, 17–18.
339 Vision of Ailsi, 13–14; Vision of Alberic of Settefrati, XVII.

purgatory.[340] The efficacy of intercession by the living for the dead is linked to the concept of 'the communion of saints', that is the connection between all members of the Christian Church no matter their state in this world or the next, which can be traced in some form at least to the fifth century. Through this connection the living and the dead can influence each other. The idea of the living interceding on behalf of the dead, however, reaches back even further, as far as to the early church and beyond.[341] Already in 2 Maccabees 12:43–45, written in the late second or early first century BCE, intercession is described as being able to affect the state of the dead.[342] Through the influence of the monastery of Cluny in the tenth and eleventh centuries this principle was then systematised, and ceaseless monastic prayer became the ultimate means of intercession. However, even prior to this there is evidence of the importance placed not just on prayers by family members, but prayers offered at monasteries as well.[343] Indeed, in 874, Louis the German wrote letters asking all the monasteries in his kingdom to pray for Louis the Pious' soul, as he had had a vision of the latter, his father, being punished in the afterlife, and in it the former emperor had asked his son to help save him.[344]

In the visions considered here, intercession is present in different ways. Sometimes it is specifically asked for by the sinners suffering in the hereafter. Thus, in the *Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon*, Queen Ermengard asks the poor woman to seek out Louis the Pious and ask him 'if he thinks it worthwhile to help [her] in [her] wretched condition.'[345] And in the *Visio Bernoldi*, Bernold is both instructed to and able to seek intercession on behalf of the sinners he encounters while they are suffering various torments in the otherworld. As a result of his endeavours all of them are allowed to leave their punishments immediately, however, he is merely an intermediary seeking out others who are able to properly intercede on the sinners' behalves. These are people who have known them in life and who through offering prayers and alms can save them from torment.[346] The immediate effect of Bernold's actions, and the intercession offered as a result of them, is not a given. Intercession does not guarantee immediate release from torment, as the *Visio Bernoldi* might seem to indicate. Intercession merely makes release possible faster or, in some cases, possible at all.[347] In the vision

[340] Le Goff 1984, 4.
[341] McGuire 1989, 67–75.
[342] Moreira 2010a, 20–21; Ombres 1976, 130.
[343] McGuire 1989, 67–75.
[344] Annals of Fulda, 874, 73–74.
[345] Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon, 180.
[346] Visio Bernoldi, 2–5.
[347] Watkins 2002, 4; Moreira 2010b, 49–50.

literature, however, it is understandable that the result would need to be quick – unless the vision is repeated – in order to showcase the effects of having someone intercede on your behalf. Either way, this immediate result says nothing of the duration of purgative punishment as a whole in the vision.

Sometimes intercession is not so much asked for as it is merely mentioned. This is the case in the *Vision of Charles the Fat*, in which Louis the German tells Charles the Fat, the supposed visionary, that if 'Masses, offerings, psalms, vigils, and charity' – 'missis, oblationibus, psalmodiis, vigiliis, elemosinis' – are offered on his behalf he will be able to follow his brother, Lothar, and nephew, Louis II, into paradise.[348] In a way this could of course be perceived of as Louis the German asking for intercession, but it is not as explicit as the requests made in the *Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon* and the *Visio Bernoldi*. By contrast, some visions simply forgo having those suffering mention intercession altogether, and instead show just the fruits of suffrages offered on their behalf. Thus, in the *Visio Rotcharii* we are told of how Charlemagne has been able to escape his previous punishment and enter into the ranks of the saints because of the prayers of 'God's faithful'.[349] Both of these methods of relating intercession result in there being no way of telling how much intercession supposedly speeds up the process of purgation in the visions. However, as the case of the abbot having unsuccessfully beseeched a bishop for intercession in the *Visio Wettini* shows, lack of intercession can be detrimental not just to the person already suffering in the hereafter, but also to the person failing to provide it. Indeed, the bishop, who in this case did not intercede on behalf of the aforementioned abbot, ended up suffering damnation.[350] Failure to intercede, then, could result in punishment being permanent, but the failure to secure intercession did not extend one's punishment further, only upheld the status quo. This again leaves no clue as to the more precise duration of the original punishment.

In addition to the visions mentioned so far, intercession also receives attention in the vision of Guibert of Nogent's mother, the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham*, *St Patrick's Purgatory*, the *Vision of Tundale*, and the *Vision of Thurkill*.[351] None of these visions specify to what precise extent intercession actually helps shorten punishments suffered in the hereafter, but it is made

[348] Vision of Charles the Fat, (tr.) 505; (lat.) 36–45.
[349] Visio Rotcharii, 179.
[350] Visio Wettini (1), X; Visio Wettini (2), 391–427.
[351] Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent, Book I, chapter 18; Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 103–104; 106–107; Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 143–144; Vision of Tundale, 1653–1750; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 193–195; (tr.) 222–223.

clear that it is very beneficial and to be desired. In short, it could be said that the picture emerging from the visions, with the exception of the *Visio Bernoldi*, is that the duration of purgation can be shortened through the actions of the living – or the dead as in the *Vision of Tundale* – but the timeframe of the effects are not readily determinable. Consequently, even when intercession plays a part, the duration of punishments of purgation in the visions as a whole remain best described as simply temporary without any further specifics added.

Other than these temporary punishments of purgation, there are the permanent punishments of damnation to consider. The reason it can be established that these are permanent is very simply that they are often described as such in the visions. Thus, in the *Vision of Ailsi*, for instance, those suffering in the house identified by Easting as part of hell do so endlessly: 'Non erat in hiis penis finis penarum aut doloris, quia ibi erat finis sine consumptione, consumptio sine fine, quia ut diximus consumpte crescebant ad penam, et morientes ad penam iterum reuiuiscebant.'[352] Details of sinners being regrown so that their punishment can continue forever also features in the *Vision of Thurkill*, in which several sinners are torn apart only to be put together again and placed to await further torment.[353] Likewise, the restoration of sinners for continued punishment features in the third place of punishment in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* and it is explicitly stated that there is no end to this suffering.[354] Finally, the *Vision of Adamnán*, mentions punishments which are to be endured 'through all time' and 'throughout all ages'.[355]

Permanent damnation and purgation of varying but temporary durations are not necessarily the only two options available, however. In the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham*, the lawyer suffering in the third place of punishment states that his punishment will go on at the very least until Judgement Day, but that he might be forced to continue to suffer even thereafter: 'scio, scio, quod citra diem judicii omnino misericordiam non merebor; an autem vel tunc, incertum habeo.'[356] This indicates that the nature of his punishment, while arguably damnatory at the present, can change through God's mercy on Judgement Day. The lawyer might be uncertain that it will, but the possibility is there. In this vision, even a seemingly permanent damnatory punishment can thus be reversed. Yet, this does not mean that the

[352] Easting and Sharpe 2013, 180; Vision of Ailsi, 15.
[353] Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 199–202; (tr.) 227–229.
[354] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 108–110.
[355] Vision of Adamnán. 26.
[356] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 111.

punishment is in fact purgative.[357] Unlike in the *Visio Wettini*, where a punishment lasting until Judgement Day is explicitly said to be for the sake of purgation, everything else in this account indicates that the punishment is in fact damnatory. Through pointing to a potential reversal on Judgement Day, rather than discredit itself as an example of damnation, this account instead shows the breadth of that concept. The potential flexibility of the final fate of this damned lawyer also illustrates that in this vision the state depicted is that into which the soul enters immediately following death, something which is not necessarily indicated in most visions. Moreover, in indicating the significance of the Final Judgement, the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* comes close to the view of hell and damnation propounded by some Greek Orthodox theologians, who perceive of hell as unfixed until Judgement Day, thereby allowing for the mercy of God to save some who are damned.[358]

This is interesting partly because the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* was supposedly written more than twenty years after Le Goff's 'Birth of Purgatory', at a time when the closing down of hell within Catholic Christianity should have already been underway as a result. The duration of punishment in this vision might therefore be seen to indicate that even following the 1170s, the fixedness of damnation was not always absolute.[359] Furthermore, this is the only vision within the sample considered here, which so explicitly mixes the notion of eternal punishment with the hope that one might still be saved. With regards to the duration of punishment in the vision literature, this calls into question whether eternal does in fact always mean eternal. However, despite the glimmer of hope it offers, as God's mercy on Judgement Day is not something that can be counted on, even in this vision the punishment remains for all intents and purposes eternal.

To conclude these considerations of the duration of punishment in the vision literature, then, it should be once again noted that the length of punishment plays an important role in indicating whether a punishment is purgative or damnatory. The basic divide here is that purgative punishments are temporary and damnatory ones are permanent, but these are simplified categories and the duration of punishment is expressed differently in different visions. For the most part the precise duration of punishment is not stated when a punishment is temporary, and descriptions of permanent punishments are per definition constrained to different ways of expressing permanency and eternity. Time in the vision literature is often an imprecise

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[357] Bernstein 2017, 200.
[358] Trumbower 2010, 30.
[359] Trumbower 2010, 29–30; Moreira 2010b, 40–41; Bernstein 2009, 209–211.

concept. The relationship between time and changes in the vision literature, on the other hand, should be more precise, and it is to such considerations, more specifically developments over time, that this thesis now turns.

5. Changes in punishment: developments and their relation to 'the Birth of Purgatory'

Although the vision literature considered in this thesis builds on a longstanding tradition by which it is clearly influenced, it is not a static genre. Throughout the period under consideration certain changes are noticeable with regards to the punishments depicted in the visions, both concerning what kind of punishments these are and how they relate to purgation and damnation. In this chapter these changes and their relation to Le Goff's theory of 'the Birth of Purgatory' are explored and analysed. The question is if the spatial differentiation of purgatory and use of the noun 'purgatorium', which Le Goff situates around the 1170s and views as key to the doctrine of purgatory and its establishment, affects the punishments of the hereafter in the vision literature. Essentially, if the punishments reflect a noticeable shift with regards to purgatory and purgation in the late twelfth century or if they lend themselves more to a theory based on an evolution of ideas.

5.1 Individual punishments and descriptions of punishment in general

Generally speaking, most of the punishments discussed in this thesis have a long history within the tradition of vision literature and fundamental change to a specific punishment is thus perhaps not something one would expect to come across during the period considered here. Between the ninth and early thirteenth centuries there are, however, some interesting, although not always fundamental, changes to the punishments listed in chapter three. One such change is to be found in the use of metals as a means of punishment. In the visions of the ninth to eleventh centuries such punishment can take different forms, such as exposure to molten metals and enclosure in structures of metal, but during the ninth century especially it is commonly linked to the sin of greed, as is evidenced in the *Visio Wettini*, the *Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon*, and the *Vision of Charles the Fat*.[360] Unlike these early visions, the visions of the twelfth century do not discriminate based on sin when it comes to using metal punishments, and additionally they are also full of punishments by means of metal nails and hooks, something which does not feature in the earlier visions of the period with the exception of a brief mention in the *Vision of Adamnán*.[361] These nails and hooks are frequently

[360] Visio Wettini (1), VIIII; Visio Wettini (2), 369–373; Vision of the Poor Woman of Laon, 180; Vision of Charles the Fat, 18–23. Enclosure in a structure of metal also features in the Vision of a Beggar, 365, but this punishment is not connected to greed.
[361] Vision of Adamnán, 27.

described as being extremely hot and they are painfully driven into the bodies of sinners.[362] As was noted in chapter 3.2.7, the use of metal nails and hooks features already in versions of the *Vision of Paul* and are thus not new to the genre.[363] Still, the fact that they go from not featuring at all in the ninth-century visions to becoming fairly common in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries is worth noting, particularly as it is indicative of a more general shift in the vision literature at hand.

The nails and hooks of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century visions point to a clear development toward more gruesome and detailed descriptions of punishments, which is in line with an overall move within the vision literature towards more intricate vision accounts.[364] Occasionally one even gets the sense that the visions from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries are truly relishing in the torments, something which is not so clearly evident in the earlier visions. In these later visions there is an abundance of sinners being flayed, having their flesh torn of their bones, being cut to pieces, being pierced, pricked, and beaten. The descriptions of these punishments leave little to the imagination and this category of punishment, which I termed 'dismemberment' in chapter three, is far more common and varied in the later visions, although it does feature in 'milder' forms in some ninth-century visions as well. Thus, in the *Visio Bernoldi*, worms have eaten away the flesh of Charles the Bald, and in the *Visio Wettini* Charlemagne's private parts are attacked by an animal.[365] However, this is nothing compared to the description of sinners being torn 'limb from limb with prongs and fiery iron hooks' and subsequently fried in boiling grease which is to be found in the *Vision of Thurkill*.[366] This development towards more detailed descriptions of punishments is likely linked to both a general preoccupation with law, and by extension punishment, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and an increasing interest in pain as a phenomenon in the period leading up to the late Middle Ages.[367] In all likelihood an increased fascination with pain was the more important of the two as these later punishments clearly invoke extreme amounts of pain in a very deliberate way. Any connection to changes in notions of purgation and purgatory are, however, elusive, unless one argues that there is a potential link between an increased spatialization and increasingly detailed descriptions of

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362 Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 104; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 198–199; (tr.) 226; Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 433–435, 449–451.
363 Bernstein 2017, 219, 237.
364 Morgan 1990, 3, 11–12.
365 Visio Bernoldi, 3, Visio Wettini (1), XI.
366 Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 199–201; (tr.) 227.
367 Peters 2008, 1–14; Cohen 2009, 3–4.

punishments. Such a connection is highly tenuous though and much further study would be required in order to convincingly establish a link of this kind.

On a general level, the plethora of punishments present in the vision literature can be said to be expanded on during the period. This is noteworthy because the authority of the visions is generally derived from their conformity to what is commonplace in the genre.[368] In addition to the developments mentioned above, a third element is added to the alternating punishments in the visions, stench and cold become far more common means of punishment, being cooked is added as a potential punishment, and shame becomes a feature within the post-mortem penal system. Indeed, while alternating punishments is an old feature within the genre of vision literature, in the current sample the alternation between three different punishments instead of two only begins featuring in visions from the twelfth century onwards.[369] Thus, in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* and the *Vision of Thurkill* stench is added to the previous alternation of just heat and cold.[370] This does not, however, mean that alternation between just heat and cold does not feature in visions from the twelfth century. In the *Vision of Tundale* this is still present.[371] Nevertheless, the category is expanded towards the end of the period considered here and it is possible that this is linked to a shift away from a dual view of society which according to McGuire occurs after the year 1000 and which in turn is related to Le Goff's interpretation of a birth, rather than an evolution, of purgatory.[372] For Le Goff the shift away from a dual world view is part and parcel of the emergence of purgatory as a distinct place and in his view purgatory needs to be a separate locale in order to exist.[373] In a way, then, the addition of a third element to the alternation of punishments could be said to follow the same pattern as what Le Goff perceives of as underlying 'the Birth of Purgatory'. Still, this change is arguably not a result of the emergence of purgatory as a distinct place, but rather, at most, something occurring in parallel to it, feeding off a broader development.

With regards to individual punishments, another shift during the period concerns the use of stench as something punitive. Although stench features as part of punishments already in both versions of the *Visio Wettini*, it becomes an almost universal means or indicator of

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368 Easting and Sharpe 2013, 175–176.
369 Easting and Sharpe 2013, 179–180; Moreira 2010a, 154.
370 Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 105–107; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 204–205; (tr.) 231–232.
371 Vision of Tundale, 375–380.
372 McGuire 1989, 62.
373 Le Goff 1984, 154–176.

punishment in the twelfth century.[374] In fact, in all the visions considered from the twelfth to early thirteenth century stench is mentioned either as a punishment in and of itself or as a sign of sin and punishment. Thus, in *St Patrick's Purgatory* the entrance to hell is a stinking river, and in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* some sinners are punished through having to endure a horrid stench.[375] One interpretation of this state of affairs, is that the connection between smell and inner truth as well as sin, which Classen, Howes, and Synnott have discussed, becomes more entrenched in, and important to, punishment in the vision literature towards the end of the period under consideration here.[376] However, it is also possible that this development is merely the result of an increased exposure of medieval society to smell, as urbanisation brought the intense smells of city life to the fore. The truth probably lies in a combination of the two, where the stench of the city made the connection between smell and sin evermore topical and thereby resulted in its increased presence in the vision literature.[377] At any rate, the increased popularity of stench in the vision literature towards the end of the period considered can hardly be linked to a development in notions of purgatory, but is instead a consequence of other changes in society.

Similarly to the use of stench as a punishment, punitive cold, as a punishment in and of itself rather than just one side of alternating punishments, also becomes more common later in the period. Of the ninth century visions, only the *Visio Bernoldi* mentions being forced to suffer cold without reference to an alternation of punishments, but even then, it can be interpreted as part of such punishments because the sinners are led from a flaming pit to freezing cold water.[378] Among the twelfth-century visions, on the other hand, there are those like the *Vision of Ailsi* which clearly separate the punishment of having to endure cold from other punishments.[379] As this form of separation exists already in the *Vision of Paul*, it is not something new that is being introduced to the genre in the visions later in the period considered, however, within the sample there is a development in this regard.[380] Why this shift occurs is difficult to say, but there is no reason to suspect that it is connected to an increased spatialization of the otherworld.

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374 Visio Wettini (1), X; Visio Wettini (2), 417–422.
375 Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 537–547; Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 104.
376 Classen et al. 1994, 4–5; 52–54.
377 For a brief overview of stench as it relates to cities, see Classen et al. 1994, 54–58.
378 Visio Bernoldi, 4.
379 Vision of Ailsi, 14.
380 Apocalypse of Paul, 42.

Of the individual punishments there are thus those which make appearances in the visions throughout the period, but there are also those which begin appearing only later. Among the punishments in the latter category is that of being cooked. As was noted already in chapter 3.2.2, imagery related to sinners being treated as foodstuff only begin appearing in the visions from the late twelfth century. Admittedly, the *Vision of Adamnán* and the *Vision of Alberic of Settefrati* do contain passages on sinners being 'baked and scorched' in fiery furnaces, but these do not hold the same connotations of sinners being treated as food.[381] And while the act of cooking food is invoked in the *Vision of Tundale*, it is only used as a metaphor.[382] The visions actually containing this motif all date from the late 1170s at the earliest and many of them are quite elaborate in their descriptions of these punishments.[383] Other than the tenuous link of this elaborateness and the gruesomeness of these punishments, however, I would argue that there is no real link between this type of punishment entering visionary accounts and the supposed 'Birth of Purgatory', even though they do coincide timewise. Instead, it is my belief that the emergence of the punishment of being cooked in vision literature around this time is linked to the Crusades and to the exposure of Western European culture to cannibalism that Avramescu has identified occurred through the Crusades.[384] This in turn, I would argue, is also connected to the popularisation of the devil as armed with a fork, but rather than, as Morgan has argued, this image of the devil giving rise to the use of frying pans, ovens, etc. in the vision literature, I would suggest that the exposure of Western European culture to cannibalism gave rise to them both.[385] At a time when cannibalism was otherwise beginning to be depicted in Western European literature and art,[386] it was only natural that this sort of imagery should become a feature in the genre of vision literature as well. As the depictions of punishment in vision literature in general were becoming more gruesome it certainly fit right in.

During the period considered, punishments of shame also become more established parts of the otherworldly penal system in the vision literature. While it is true that all visions essentially contain an element of shaming and are able to stigmatise the sinners depicted, or

[381] Vision of Adamnán, 17; Vision of Alberic of Settefrati, VI.
[382] Vision of Tundale, 337–344.
[383] This type of imagery is to be found in St Patrick's Purgatory, 141; the Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 104, 109; the Vision of Ailsi, 15; the Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 199–202; (tr.) 227–229.
[384] Avramescu 2009, 10.
[385] Morgan 1990, 16–17.
[386] Mills 2005, 86–87.

by extension people who have committed the same sins,[387] the use of shame and shaming as explicit punishments in the hereafter only feature in later visions. Indeed, as was established in chapter 4.1, only the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham*, dated to 1196, and the *Vision of Thurkill*, dated to 1206, contain punishments explicitly dealing with shame. Interestingly, this correlates with the evidence of medieval sources in general. For, as is noted by Sère and Wettlaufer, although the use of shame and humiliation as part of medieval criminal law is evident already in the early middle ages, with the exception of being forced to ride backwards on an animal shaming punishments per se only begin featuring in sources from the second half of the twelfth century. The primary purpose of these punishments at this early stage was to inflict shame and through it to bring about change and forgiveness of sin.[388] In the visions considered, however, explicit use of shaming as a punishment is the hallmark of damnation, the opposite of having your sins forgiven. It is here only possible to speculate as to the reason for this, but perhaps the use of shame in this way could be taken to indicate that shaming punishments, no matter their function in this life, were considered intense enough to be linked to damnation in the hereafter. Moreover, perhaps the lack of a clear community that could grant remission based on these shaming punishments in the afterlife and the probable difficulty of establishing when a sinner had endured enough shame to be set free, lead to the motif being more easily employed in a damnatory context. In the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* this ultimately meant that it was Christ who decided if a sinner should gain forgiveness.[389]

Despite the difference in the purpose of shaming punishments in this world and the next, there appears to be a link between an increased use of shaming punishments in society overall and their appearance in vision literature. It is here also worth noting that as both punishments of dismemberment and stench – which I in previous chapters have identified as also functioning as shaming punishments in the visions – become more common later, the role of shame in a more indirect sense also gains ground from the twelfth century onwards, thereby reinforcing the notion that there is a link between developments in society at large and developments in punishments in the hereafter. There is, however, no noticeable connection between the introduction of explicit shaming punishments, as well as the greater number of punishments with an implicit element of shaming to it, and developments concerning purgatory in the twelfth century. Nevertheless, one aspect that is worth exploring is the significance of all

[387] Bernstein 2010, 69–71.
[388] Sère & Wettlaufer 2013, xxxv–xxxvi.
[389] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 111–112.

outright shaming punishments being damnatory and this is something I will consider in the next subchapter.

In short then, the period between the ninth and early thirteenth century saw changes in the vision literature both on the level of individual punishments – with alterations to the form of some punishments, the emergence of completely new punishments, and the increased frequency in features of some punishments – and on the level of punishments in general. On the general level there is increasing detail and gruesomeness in the descriptions of punishments, and also an increased variety in the types of punishments depicted. There is of course some natural variation within all categories of punishment listed in chapter three, but other than the changes detailed above there are no consistent developments to be noted on the level of specific punishments or the general descriptions of them. That being the case, there is very little grounds for linking developments of this kind to the spatialization of purgatory, or 'the Birth of Purgatory'. Any such links are, as I have tried to indicate above, tenuous at best. Still, it is clear that there are a number of changes to the punishments depicted in the visions that coincide with the spatialization of purgatory during the twelfth century. This state of affairs, I would argue, is more to do with other, broader, developments in society around this time than with a supposed 'Birth of Purgatory'.

5.2 The ambiguity and duration of punishment

With regards to the much broader topics of the ambiguity and duration of punishment, there are some points that still need to be made. The overall picture that emerges when one considers the ambiguity of punishment from the ninth to the early thirteenth century is that on the level of specific punishments having a dual nature, not much changes. Punishments which have been used as both purgatorial and damnatory at the beginning of the period continue to be used as such throughout. There is no sudden clarity making it easier for the medieval reader – or the modern one for that matter – to classify for example punishment by metals as automatically damnatory or purgative. The metal nails and hooks of *St Patrick's Purgatory* and the *Vision of Thurkill* are purgative and damnatory respectively.[390] Consequently, Bernstein's assessment that the efficacy of purgative punishment as a deterrent from sin rests on its similarity to damnatory punishment remains visible in the visions for the entirety of the

[390] Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 433–435, 449–451; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 198–199; (tr.) 226.

period considered.[391] The spatialization of purgatory appears to have had no effect in this regard.

Even when a new punishment, being cooked, is added to the repertoire of visionary punishments, it does not conform to just one category. Thus, in the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* being cooked or fried in a frying pan is a punishment of purgation, while in the *Vision of Ailsi* and the *Vision of Thurkill* it is a punishment of damnation.[392] That said, the explicit use of shaming punishments, which, as was noted above, only enters the genre in the late twelfth century, is exclusively damnatory in the visions considered. Of two new punishments that become part of the genre later on, one, thus, upholds the previous ambiguity while the other falls clearly in one camp. As this is the case, it is not possible to definitively state that there is a development in this regard, although it is interesting that explicit shaming punishments – which are the latest to enter the genre in the sample – are the ones that fit one category only. Further study of a more extensive sample would, however, be required in order to establish that shaming punishments are in fact only damnatory in the vision literature, or in order to establish a connection between the separation of otherworldly locales and the increased clarity in the nature of punishments. As this sample contains only two cases of outright shaming punishments it is impossible to draw any tenable conclusions to this end based on it.

Should future research prove that there are in fact no instances of shaming punishments in visions prior to the late twelfth century, and all instances of such punishments are damnatory, this would not automatically mean that the development of purgatory as a distinct place brought about the differentiation of punishment into just one category either. Other factors, such as other coinciding developments, would also need to be considered. Moreover, the reason for visionary shaming punishments being damnatory, while contemporary punishments of the same nature were focused on remission, would need to be extensively researched.[393] Nevertheless, one would be much closer to substantiating a potential link to the spatialization of purgatory. As this is not the situation we find ourselves in, it remains – with the exception of oblivion which is continuously damnatory – impossible throughout the period to establish the nature of a particular punishment without contextual information.

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[391] Bernstein 2017, 230.
[392] Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 104; Vision of Ailsi, 15; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 199–202; (tr.) 227–229.
[393] Sère & Wettlaufer 2013, xxxv–xxxvi.

Significantly in relation to this contextual information there is one important change that does occur during the period. While visions from the ninth century often refrain from mentioning the nature of punishment more specifically – the exceptions to this being the *Visio Wettini* in which it is clearly stated that some punishments are punishments of purgation and the *Vision of Anskar* in which 'ignem purgatorium' is mentioned – later visions commonly place the punishments in this type of context by explicitly mentioning what the nature of a certain punishment is.[394] Several of the early visions, such as the *Visio Bernoldi* and the *Vision of Charles the Fat* instead have us infer from references to intercession and escape from punishment that what they are describing is purgation.[395] Also, with the exception of the *Visio Wettini*, in this case only Heito of Reichenau's version, there are no mentions of damnation in the ninth-century visions, nor is there generally any way of telling if a punishment is damnatory or not as the punishments are mentioned without any additional context if they are not explicitly purgative.[396] Based on this, one might of course assume that all punishment that is not said to be purgatorial is damnatory, but we have no way of knowing this for certain. In a sense, then, these earlier visions operate in accordance with the principle expressed by Claude Carozzi that 'Eternal punishment can remain hidden, but a hell from which we can be redeemed must be made known, to ensure that we pray for our dead.'[397]

By contrast, already in the tenth and eleventh centuries in the *Vision of Adamnán* and the *Vision of the Monk of Isaac* there are clear references to punishments being part of purgation.[398] These type of references then continue to be present in the visions throughout the period and in some of the later visions, like *St Patrick's Purgatory*, the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham*, and the *Vision of Thurkill*, there are explicit references to purgatory.[399] Specific references to hell and damnation also feature in the later visions, particularly the visions from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and thereby enable the reader to more easily differentiate the state of those who are not explicitly said to be undergoing purgation.[400] In the *Vision of Ailsi*, for instance, there is a valley that is referred to as hell and it is apart from the places in which souls undergo purgation.[401] Similarly, there is distinct mention of hell in the

[394] Visio Wettini (1), VIII, X; Visio Wettini (2), 363–368; Vita Anskarii, 3.
[395] Visio Bernoldi, 2–5; Vision of Charles the Fat, 36–53.
[396] Visio Wettini (1), VI, X.
[397] Carozzi as quoted in Ganz 2000, 190.
[398] Vision of Adamnán, 16; Vision of the Monk of Isaac, 368–369.
[399] Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii; Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 107; Vision of Thurkill, (lat.) 194; (tr.) 222.
[400] Mention of hell is also to be found in the Vision of Adamnán, 19, 21, 28.
[401] Vision of Ailsi, 16.

Vision of Tundale and it is said that the souls therein are damned.[402] Here then it would appear that the spatialization of purgatory, and through it the differentiation of hell,[403] does play a part in how punishments are depicted. Indeed, due to this shift, there is increased clarity as to the nature of punishment in the later visions. While early visionaries often are confused as to whether punishments are purgative or damnatory in nature, later visionaries are not and nor do the readers of later visionary accounts need to be.[404]

In line with this is also the only consistent development regarding the duration of punishment overall in the vision literature, namely that it is more common in the later visions to have specific references to punishments being eternal. This also relates to the connection between development of contextual information and the spatialization of purgatory discussed above, as these mentions of eternity too, add contextual clarity to the nature of punishment. Thus, while of the ninth-century visions, the *Visio Wettini* mentions eternity in connection to punishments to specify that a particular punishment is not eternally damnatory, none of the other visions from that century refer to eternal punishments.[405] Of the visions from the tenth and eleventh centuries, the *Vision of Adamnán* makes references to punishments being eternal, everlasting, never-ending, etc.[406] Among the visions from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, on the other hand, the majority – five out of eight – mention eternal punishments.[407] Of these, all except the *Vision of Tundale*, were written no earlier than the 1170s and of the visions not mentioning everlasting punishments all were written prior to the 1170s. Consequently, even if one accounts for factors such as coincidence and a limited sample of visions, it would appear that references to eternity and eternal punishments simply become more common following Le Goff's 'Birth of Purgatory'. As the otherworld becomes increasingly spatialized, the nature of punishment becomes more differentiated, although specific punishments still lend themselves to use as both purgative and damnatory.

Furthermore, in addition to increased use of references to eternity, there is also a noticeable change with regards to intercession in the vision literature during the period considered. Whereas those suffering in the hereafter in the visions from the ninth century on several occasions actively seek intercession, in the visions from the twelfth century and later they do

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[402] Vision of Tundale, 1120–1135, 1137–1268.
[403] Trumbower 2010, 29–30; Moreira 2010b, 40–41; Bernstein 2009, 209–211.
[404] Bernstein 2009, 204.
[405] Visio Wettini (1), VIIII.
[406] Vision of Adamnán, 26.
[407] These are the Vision of Tundale, St Patrick's Purgatory, the Vision of Ailsi, the Vision of the Monk of Evesham, and the Vision of Thurkill.

not. This comes after a period of silence regarding intercession, for of the three visions considered from the tenth and eleventh centuries, none mention interceding on behalf of the dead. This paucity could, of course, be purely coincidental as three visions is hardly an exhaustive sample, however, it is interesting that at a time when the concept of intercession was further developed at places like Cluny, these visions were silent on the topic.[408] If the visions of the twelfth century had also completely neglected to mention intercession, it would have been relatively easy to argue that its absence simply reflects that it had become so established as to not require mentioning. As that is not the case, however, the tenth and eleventh century constitute an odd intermediary period in this regard.

Rather than not mention intercession, many of the visions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries instead mention it but shift the focus from the sinner seeking it out. This is, for instance, exemplified in the *Vision of Guibert of Nogent's mother*, in which it is the visionary, Guibert's mother, who asks the person suffering in the hereafter, Guibert's father, if he can be helped through intercession.[409] In general the later visions are less preoccupied with urging intercession, choosing rather to mention it in passing – as in the *Vision of Thurkill*, the *Vision of Tundale*, and the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham* – or in a more explanatory setting, not in the context of the punishments themselves – as in *St Patrick's Purgatory*.[410] Sometimes, as in the *Vision of Ailsi*, intercession is not mentioned at all, just like in the visions of the two preceding centuries. All of this as a whole, might be taken to indicate that by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries intercession had become such an established part of the relationship between the living and the dead that it was no longer necessary for sinners to ask for it. Still, the fact that it continued to be mentioned at all, despite its absence in the visions of the tenth and eleventh centuries and by extension its expendability within the genre, suggests that the majority of authors of vision literature, and visionaries themselves, considered its inclusion to be important. This in turn could be seen to be connected to developing notions of purgatory, for as Le Goff has also stressed, belief in the efficacy of intercession was a crucial part of the doctrine of purgatory.[411] Because the visions of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries for the most part continued to mention intercession and often treated it as a given, it could be argued that developing notions of purgatory ensured that intercession remained relevant – or regained its relevance, if the sample of visions from the tenth and eleventh centuries

[408] McGuire 1989, 67–75.
[409] Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent, Book I, chapter 18.
[410] Vision of Thurkill, 194–195; (tr.) 223; Vision of Tundale, 1715–1720; Vision of the Monk of Evesham, 103–104, 106–107; Tractatus De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii, 143–144.
[411] Le Goff 1984, 4.

considered here turn out to be representative – to the genre of vision literature in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

While it consequently is apparent that there are changes in how punishments are depicted in the vision literature around the time when Le Goff situates the 'Birth of Purgatory', I would argue that, although these are linked to the developments of increased spatialization and more clearly defined notions of purgation and purgatory that Le Goff perceives of as bringing about a 'birth' of a new concept,[412] they do not indicate that such a birth took place. Instead, they lend further credence to the idea that the developments to notions of purgation and purgatory in the twelfth century are part of a longer process, as the changes in punishments that can be said to relate to these developments do not appear out of thin air. The elements that are subject to change are present in the visions for a long time prior to the twelfth century, and although the twelfth-century changes to them are important and indicate an increasing spatialization of the otherworld, this is in my opinion not enough to justify dismissing their long history as a mere prologue to the actual main event. Thus, I agree with scholars like Brian Patrick McGuire and Graham Robert Edwards and what is now the commonly accepted view within the scholarly community, that purgatory was not born at the specific point around the 1170s when the noun 'purgatorium' began being used, but instead developed during a far longer period; in short, the appearance of the noun did not constitute as significant a shift as to warrant being termed 'the Birth of Purgatory'.[413]

[412] Le Goff 1984, 154–176.
[413] McGuire 1989; Edwards 1985; Moreira 2010a, 9.

6. Conclusions

The vision literature of the ninth to early thirteenth centuries is a rich and very interesting source material, the study of which can offer valuable insights into notions of the afterlife as contemporaries perceived it. It is a material that lends itself to an analysis of how society, tradition, and other literary sources could impact the way the otherworld was depicted in writing. The exploration of punishments in vision literature from this period that I have conducted in this thesis has enabled me to draw several conclusions, some of which I believe to be new within this field of study.

First of all, punishment and pain are necessary parts of the Christian reality in general and the Christian afterlife in particular, because through sin the world order has been upset. In the vision literature punishment is meant to function both as a way of restoring this balance and as a way of deterring from further sin. In the visions, it is the soul that suffers punishment, but the punishment it suffers is for the most part brutally physical. This brutality can to some extent be linked to the treatment of slaves and lower-class criminals in late antiquity, for as Moreira has pointed out, the way sinners were treated in the hereafter was a result of free persons being reduced to slaves within the Christian context.

Secondly, the visions from the ninth to the early thirteenth centuries depict punishments that are often terrifying in their attempts to deter from sin. These punishments commonly draw on a tradition of punishments within the genre of vision literature, contemporary punishments in the real world, unpleasant features of contemporary society in general, and/or literary as well as biblical sources. The punishments in the visions from this period can fruitfully be separated into eleven main categories, and within these categories there is some overlap. For instance, cold and exposure to the weather are sometimes linked because the weather is what causes the cold. This is the case in *St Patrick's Purgatory*. Similarly, with regards to dismemberment it is often the case that it is caused by external agents, as in the *Vision of Thurkill*. Despite this type of overlap, the punishments within these categories are distinct enough or have foundations that are different enough that they warrant being considered on their own.

In categorising the punishments present in the visions from this period, this thesis adds some categories that do not feature in Bernstein's categorisation of punishments in earlier vision literature and are not mentioned in Moreira's consideration of the same. These categories are

those of being cooked, being exposed to stench, and enduring shame, the first of which needs to be considered in greater detail here.

While it is not mentioned in Bernstein or Moreira, being cooked and treated as foodstuff as a punishment is mentioned by Morgan in her discussion of visions prior to Dante. In it she notes, just as I have, that this imagery only begins emerging in visions in the twelfth century. While she links this emergence to a development in the view of the devil, I have here instead argued that it should be seen as the result of an increasing awareness of cannibalism in Western Europe following the Crusades. Indeed, I would contend that what Morgan sees as the catalyst for the motif of sinners treated as food entering the genre of vision literature, namely depictions of the devil as winged and armed with a fork, is in fact also a result of a newfound preoccupation with cannibalism. This notion would seem to be supported by the fact that references to cannibalism also begin emerging in literature and art more generally around this time. However, this is a topic that would benefit from extensive further research and it is my sincere hope that such research will be conducted in the future.

Moving away from individual punishments, I have in this thesis also established that the punishments described in the visions from the ninth to early thirteenth centuries lend themselves to ambiguity. Of the punishments considered, the vast majority are interchangeably used both as purgatorial and damnatory in the visions. Consequently, it is generally impossible to tell the nature of a punishment without contextual information; the punishments in and of themselves cannot be deemed to be of a certain disposition. However, there are two categories of punishments that seem to fall squarely in one camp, namely the punishment of oblivion and shame, which are both damnatory in the visions here considered. That said, even in these cases there are some caveats to defining them as exclusively damnatory and particularly in the case of shaming punishments further research is needed.

With regards to the duration of punishment in the visions, I have noted that in the visions, duration is key to understanding the nature of punishment and the general takeaway is that, although there is variation within the concepts, punishments of purgation are as a rule temporary and punishments of damnation are eternal. The duration of temporary punishment can be specified, sometimes with references to the number of years one is to suffer, but more commonly it is not. In the context of purgation, intercession is also crucial to the length of punishment, however, it does not add specificity to how long a sinner is to suffer as it is generally just said to shorten the duration of torment. Punishments of damnation, for their

part, are by definition usually considered to be eternal and, in the visions, they are often described as such using terms like ‘never-ending’, ‘endless’, lasting ‘through all time’, and ‘everlasting’. Sinners are also regrown so that their punishments can continue. In one example, though, the *Vision of the Monk of Evesham*, even a punishment of damnation can end, if, that is, God’s mercy is gained on Judgement Day. Although unique within the sample, this vision interestingly expresses the notion that salvation is not entirely beyond the reach even of the damned.

As concerns changes and developments to the descriptions of punishment in the visions during the period and their relationship to Le Goff’s notion that purgatory was born in the late twelfth century, a number of points should here be made. Firstly, between the ninth and early thirteenth centuries depictions of punishments in the visions develop both on a general level and on the level of individual punishments. On the general level there is an increased amount of detail in the renderings of punishments later in the period. Moreover, punishment is often more gruesome later on and the visions seem to relish in the pain of sinners in a way that is not present in the earlier visions. The plethora of punishments depicted is also expanded.

On the level of individual punishments, some of them, such as stench, become more common later in the period or have features that are new within the period, although not always within the entire genre, added, one example being the use of metal nails and hooks. Entirely new punishments, such as the previously discussed punishment of being cooked, are also added. Additionally, the explicit use of shame as a punishment begins featuring in the visions from the 1190s and is then used in a damnatory context. Because of the limited number of clear references to shame in the sample, two in total, further research is, as was also noted above, necessary with regards to this topic. However, it is interesting to note that the picture that emerges from the current sample is that following the increasing spatialization of the otherworld during the twelfth century, a punishment which is not ambiguous in nature appears to enter the genre. Whether this proves to be true for a larger sample of visions remains to be seen.

With the potential exception of shaming punishments, these developments appear to not be particularly affected by the spatialization of purgatory during the twelfth century and any link to this or Le Goff’s ‘Birth of Purgatory’ is at most tenuous. That said, it is perhaps possible to link the addition of a third element to the alternation of punishments in the later visions to the same pattern of a shift from a dual to a tripartite worldview that Le Goff perceives of as

underlying 'the Birth of Purgatory'. In my opinion, this addition of a third element to the alternating punishments does, however, not follow as a result of the emergence of purgatory as a distinct place. Instead, it is, if anything, the result of the same broader development in society. Indeed, generally speaking the developments pertaining to individual punishments and depictions of punishments more broadly are not so much influenced by a shift in notions of purgatory as they are influenced by other changes in society.

While punishments overall continue to lend themselves to ambiguity throughout the period considered, there is a shift towards more contextualisation of the punishments later in the period. Though the same punishments continue to be used as both purgatorial and damnatory, there is a development regarding whether or not the nature of these punishments is referred to. Whereas visions of the ninth century often contextualise punishments of purgation, they for the most part leave their readers guessing as to whether a punishment is damnatory or not. The visions of the twelfth century, on the other hand, generally spell it out if a punishment is damnatory. This might take the form of specific mentions of hell or damnation, but it could also be established through references to punishments being eternal. In fact, references to punishments lasting for an eternity become more common later in the period. As a result of these developments it is far easier to determine the nature of punishments in the vision literature of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

In addition to increasing references to eternity, there is also another change that is connected to the duration of punishment in the visions, namely a shift from sinners asking for intercession to it being treated more as a given in the twelfth- and early thirteenth-century visions. As this followed a period during which intercession was not mentioned in the visions considered, it is possible to argue that the inclusion and treatment of intercession in these later visions evidence an entrenchment of intercession as a feature of the relationship between the living and the dead. Moreover, as the visions of the tenth and eleventh centuries indicate that intercession was not technically necessary within the genre of vision literature – even at a time when notions of intercession were further developed – the fact that the authors and visionaries of twelfth- and early thirteenth-century visions continued to include it, indicates that to them it was an important feature of descriptions of the otherworld.

Several of these developments regarding the ambiguity and duration of punishment can arguably be linked to an increased spatialization of the otherworld, a phenomenon which underlies Le Goff's 'Birth of Purgatory'. However, the changes in punishments identified in

this thesis, rather than indicate that purgatory is born in the late twelfth century, support the notion that the concepts of purgation and purgatory develop over a far longer period.

With regards to how this thesis contributes to the scholarly discussion surrounding vision literature and punishment therein, I have here not only added new categories for consideration and brought considerations of aspects of medieval society to bear on the punishments, I have also traced developments to individual punishments which to the best of my knowledge, with the exception of Morgan's discussion of the imagery of being cooked, have not previously been studied in relation to the period here considered.

Moreover, while previous research has already established that later visions contain more detail and variation, this thesis has provided concrete examples of this and expanded on what types of punishments are added to the repertoire. It has also offered insight into how the nature and duration of punishment is treated in the visions during the period, and made a worthwhile contribution by pointing out that while the ability of punishments to be used both in a purgative and damnatory context remains largely unaffected throughout the period, the contextualisation of punishments is far greater later in the period. Finally, it has considered how, if at all, developments in descriptions of punishment in the vision literature can be linked to Le Goff's 'Birth of Purgatory', and the spatialization of the otherworld more generally, in a way that I am at least not aware has been done previously.

That said, this thesis makes no claim to being the be-all and end-all of research on the topic of punishments in vision literature between the ninth and early thirteenth century. I have here considered a vast, although not exhaustive, array of visions and punishments and it is possible that the picture that has emerged would change with a shift of perspective for example to a more extensive study of all visions from the period or to a focus on one particular category of punishment. In any case, further research is needed and greatly welcomed both with regards to specific punishments and punishments in the genre as a whole.

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