

Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism

Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae

TEXTS AND STUDIES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE AND LANGUAGE

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Alexander Yurievich Golitzin

Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism

Studies in Honor of Alexander Golitzin

Edited by

Andrei A. Orlov



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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AGAJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJSR	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ArBib	Aramaic Bible
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BETT	Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations
BEHE	Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CDA	Corpus Dionysiacum
CH	<i>Celestial Hierarchy</i> of Pseudo-Dionysius
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CS	Cistercian Studies
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DN	<i>Divine Names</i> of Pseudo-Dionysius
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
EB	Eichstätter Beiträge
EC	Early Christianity
EH	<i>Ecclesiastical Hierarchy</i> of Pseudo-Dionysius
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
EL	<i>Ephemerides Liturgicae</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
GCFI	Giornale critico della filosofia italiana
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte

GRMS	Greek and Roman Musical Studies
HIS	Harvard Iranian Series
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
Imm	<i>Immanuel</i>
ITQ	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
J ECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSJS	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period: Supplement Series
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
MBTh	Münsterische Beiträge Zur Theologie
MHMJS	<i>Metrical Homilies</i> of Mar Jacob of Sarug
MT	Masoretic Text
MT	<i>Mystical Theology</i> of Pseudo-Dionysius
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NIVAC	The NIV Application Commentary
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NPNF 1	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series
NPNF 2	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OC	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies

OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts
PG	Patrologia Graeca, ed. J.P. Migne
<i>PhilosRev</i>	<i>The Philosophical Review</i>
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J.P. Migne
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PPRT	Perspectives on Philosophy and Religious Thought
<i>PT</i>	<i>Platonic Theology</i> of Proclus
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
<i>RB</i>	<i>Révue Biblique</i>
<i>REArm</i>	<i>Revue des études arméniennes</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
<i>RTAM</i>	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale</i>
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCH	Studies in Church History
Scr. Syr.	Scriptores Syri
ScrB	Scripture Bulletin
SJJTP	Supplements to the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy
<i>SM</i>	<i>Studia Monastica</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
ST	Studi e testi
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SVC	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
Sub.	Subsidia
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TCS	Text-Critical Studies
TED	Translations of Early Documents
ThH	Théologie Historique
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TSMEMJ	Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen. Leipzig
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
VetTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WS	Woodbrooke Studies
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

<i>WZKM</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
<i>ŹM</i>	<i>Źródła i monografie</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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Introduction

Andrei A. Orlov

This collection of essays is intended to honor Alexander Golitzin, a scholar known for his original vision of Jewish and Christian mystical texts and traditions.

Alexander Yurievich Golitzin was born in Burbank, California, on May 27, 1948, a son of Yuri Alexandrovich Golitzin and Carol (née Higgins) Golitzin. Through his father, Prince Yuri (George) Golitzin (1916–1963), he is a descendant of the Golitzin princely line. Alexander Golitzin attended the University of California at Berkeley, where he received a B.A. in English in 1970. In 1973, he earned a Master of Divinity degree from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. With the help of his mentor at St. Vladimir's Seminary, John Meyendorff, Golitzin spent his next seven years at Oxford in doctoral studies and was granted a D.Phil. degree in 1980. His doctoral work on Pseudo-Dionysius was supervised by Kallistos Ware with Sebastian Brock and Henry Chadwick as his dissertation examiners.

During his doctoral studies, Golitzin also spent two years in Greece, including one year at the monastery of Simonos Petras on Mount Athos. His time at Simonos Petras, under the guidance of its archimandrite, Elder Aimilianos (Vafeidis), was decisive in shaping his understanding of mystical experience. In his own words, on Mount Athos he found that “the holy man was not a distant ideal or a literary *topos*—something out of an eight-century manuscript or a Paleologian icon—but a reality.”¹

After receiving his D.Phil. from Oxford, he returned to the USA, where he was ordained to the diaconate on January 23, 1982 and to the priesthood two years later, on February 26, 1984. In 1986, he was tonsured to monastic orders by the Elder Aimilianos at the monastery of Simonos Petras and received the monastic name of Alexander. He served the Orthodox Church by participating in missions in northern California and headed the Diocese of the West's mission committee.

In 1989, Golitzin took up a permanent faculty position in the Theology Department at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where, over the next two decades, he established himself as a leading expert on Jewish and

¹ Alexander Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, Analekta Vlatadon 59 (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, 1994), 9.

Christian mysticism. Although widely known for his groundbreaking scholarship, he also became an exceptional teacher who was able to mentor a large cohort of doctoral students during his time at Marquette. He was particularly helpful to those students who came to Marquette University from the Eastern Orthodox tradition by giving them a clearer understanding of their own theological and spiritual legacy. During his tenure at Marquette University he formed with his doctoral students what later came to be known as the “Theophaneia School”—a theological forum on the Jewish roots of Eastern Christian mysticism.²

In April 2012, Golitzin retired from Marquette University as Professor Emeritus. On Saturday, May 5, 2012, he was consecrated Bishop of Toledo and the Bulgarian Diocese during a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at Saint George Orthodox Cathedral in Rossford, Ohio. On March 30, 2016, he was elected Bishop of Dallas, the South and the Bulgarian Diocese. During the 2017 Spring Session of the Holy Synod, he was elevated to the rank of Archbishop.

1 Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism and Mysticism

One of the distinctive features of Golitzin’s scholarly approach, manifested already in his earliest writings, was his keen attention to the Jewish matrix of Eastern Orthodox theology and spirituality. Golitzin’s appreciation of early Jewish traditions, represented not only in the Hebrew Bible, but also in the large body of extra-biblical apocalyptic and mystical testimonies, was initially developed under the influence of his spiritual mentor, Elder Aimilianos, and the monks of the monastery of Simonos Petras on Mount Athos. Archimandrite Aimilianos himself was a learned man who had some knowledge of Jewish mystical accounts and did not discourage his monks from reading these texts. Once, during a later visit to Simonos Petras, Golitzin spotted Schäfer’s *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* in the hands of one of Aimilianos’ monks. This early interest in Jewish apocalyptic and mystical traditions, along with their relevance for understanding Eastern Christian spirituality, was stimulated when Golitzin joined the theological faculty of Marquette University in 1989. There some of his colleagues, including Michel Barnes, introduced him to the scholarship of Alan Segal and other experts in Jewish apocalypticism and mysticism.

² Basil Lourié and Andrei Orlov, eds., *The Theophaneia School: Jewish Roots of Christian Mysticism*, Scrinium 3 (St. Petersburg: Byzantinorossica, 2007 [reprint: Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009]).

By the middle of the 90s, Golitzin had established himself as one of the most significant voices among Orthodox scholars advocating for the importance of Jewish apocalypticism and mysticism in understanding the conceptual roots of Orthodox theology and liturgy. In one of his writings, he insisted that “the recent developments in the study of apocalyptic literature, of the Qumran Scrolls, of Gnosticism, and of later Jewish mysticism ... throw new and welcome light on the sources and continuities of Orthodox theology, liturgy, and spirituality.”³ Golitzin firmly upheld the conviction that “Eastern Christian asceticism and monasticism—i.e., Eastern spirituality, in short—arose out of an original matrix in the pre-Christian era of Second Temple Judaism.”⁴

Still, Golitzin’s work on the Jewish roots of Eastern Christian spirituality has never been widely accepted, and even today he remains a lonely voice in the larger Orthodox scholarly community. In his books and articles, Golitzin often laments the failure of Orthodox scholarship to attend to “the patrimony of biblical and post-biblical Israel.”⁵ Moreover, he persistently reminds his Orthodox colleagues that the Church arose out of the great pool of Israel’s traditions, and that from this pool she “has continued to draw in order to frame her dogmas, to voice her praises, to understand her vocation, and to describe the Christian calling as embodied in her saints.”⁶

Golitzin insists that “no one who has seriously studied patristic exegesis, or ancient theological controversy, or the liturgy, or the writings of the Church Fathers can have missed the overwhelming presence of exactly those images and texts that are present in early Jewish testimonies.”⁷ Even so, an appreciation of Christianity’s Jewish roots is strikingly lacking in modern Orthodox theological reflection: “neither in the older school theology that has haunted Orthodox seminaries, nor even (with some exceptions) among the advocates of the neo-patristic synthesis do the great theophanies either of Israel, or of the New Testament (save the Transfiguration), enjoy the prominent, indeed central role that they should have, and that they do have in the Fathers, in the liturgical texts, and in the spiritual writers.”⁸ For Golitzin, Jewish apocalypses, preserved and copied by Orthodox monks for centuries, are living proof that

3 Alexander Golitzin, “Theophaneia: Forum of the Jewish Roots of Orthodox Spirituality,” in Lourié and Orlov, *The Theophaneia School*, xix.

4 Alexander Golitzin, “Christian Mysticism over Two Millenia,” in Lourié and Orlov, *The Theophaneia School*, xxi.

5 Golitzin, “Theophaneia: Forum of the Jewish Roots of Orthodox Spirituality,” xix.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

their ancient custodians had a great appreciation of their Jewish heritage. He often notes the difference between these monks and those modern Orthodox academics who ignore this rich legacy of pseudepigraphical and apocryphal materials from post-biblical Israel and Christian antiquity. Whereas the monks thought these documents were worthy of the considerable attention necessary just to copy them, one would be hard-pressed to find a single, contemporary Orthodox theologian who devotes any significant amount of time and space even to study them.⁹

One of Golitzin's original contributions to the understanding of the evolution from Jewish to Christian apocalypticism, and then further to apocalyptic traditions preserved by Eastern Orthodox authors, is his concept of the so-called "interiorized apocalypticism." He defined this phenomenon as "the transposition of the cosmic setting of apocalyptic literature and in particular of the 'out of body' experience of heavenly ascent and transformation to the inner theater of the soul."¹⁰ In many of his articles, he traces the development of the interiorization of the ascent to heaven, as well as other apocalyptic motifs from the Second Temple and early Christian apocalypses, to later Orthodox monastic literature.

2 Theophany and Transformation

In early Jewish biblical and pseudepigraphical accounts, divine theophanies are often portrayed as revelations of the divine Glory, or *Kavod*. Moreover, these early Jewish testimonies attempt to envision *Kavod* not simply as an anthropomorphic manifestation of the deity, but rather as a crucial nexus of cultic devotion and worship. Such veneration of the divine Glory takes place not only in heaven, where the divine *Kavod* is surrounded by angelic worship, but also on earth, where the symbolic presence of the divine Form between the two cherubim of the Holy of Holies becomes the very center of the Jewish sacrificial cult. Early roots of this *Kavod* symbolism in Jewish lore are traceable to the mythological imagery found in the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel, which became an enduring inspiration for generations of apocalypticists and mystics, including later Eastern Orthodox authors.

9 Ibid.

10 Alexander Golitzin, "Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men: The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Nicetas Stethatos, and the Tradition of Interiorized Apocalyptic in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 125–153 at 141.

In the manifesto of the “Theophaneia School,” a theological forum, which Golitzin established with his graduate students during his tenure as a professor at Marquette university, he argues that theophany stands “at the heart of the Orthodox tradition.”¹¹ In the “Theophaneia School” theological program, he also reminds us that the Christian East has always understood theophany as the very content of the gospel of Jesus Christ, since this word means, literally, the manifestation or appearance of God.¹² And, indeed, one can agree with Golitzin that “theophany permeates the Orthodox tradition throughout, informing its dogmatic theology and its liturgy.”¹³

Yet, at the same time, in this document and in other publications Golitzin identifies how this essential theophanic character of Orthodox theology has become marginalized and forgotten in modern times, especially in academic settings. He reflects on this unfortunate theological forgetfulness in contemporary Orthodoxy by noting that “while the witness continues uninterrupted in the liturgical texts, in hagiography, in the practice of the monasteries and especially of the hermitages, the formal, academic theology taught in Orthodox schools ... has long lost sight of this essential, theophanic thread.”¹⁴

3 Jewish Temple and Christian Liturgy

Another distinctive feature of Golitzin’s scholarly approach is his keen attention to Jewish sacerdotal and liturgical traditions which profoundly shaped both early Christian liturgical settings and later Eastern Orthodox mystical testimonies.

Golitzin argues that even though “the Gospel of the Risen Jesus compelled a certain parting of the ways with Christianity’s Jewish matrix, it would be wrong to exaggerate the extent of that rupture.”¹⁵ For him, the lines of continuity and discontinuity appear perhaps most clearly in the scriptural idea of the “Temple.” While in biblical Israel the Temple was the locus of the Glory of God, in nascent Christianity these sacerdotal settings became applied to Jesus, who replaced the Temple and the Torah as the primary “place” of the divine presence.¹⁶ In this novel Christian reformulation, Jesus Christ himself

11 Golitzin, “Theophaneia: Forum of the Jewish Roots of Orthodox Spirituality,” xvii.

12 Ibid.

13 Golitzin, “Theophaneia: Forum of the Jewish Roots of Orthodox Spirituality,” xviii.

14 Ibid.

15 Golitzin, “Christian Mysticism over Two Millenia,” xxiii.

16 Ibid.

was identified as the Glory or Shekinah¹⁷ who “tabernacled among us,” according to John 1:14.¹⁸ Golitzin demonstrated how the idea of the Temple was not completely lost in the Christian tradition, but rather adapted through Christological reformulations. Long before Greek philosophical vocabulary became the standard conceptual vehicle of Christian doctrine, Christians natively and universally drew on the symbolic liturgical language of the Jewish Temple.¹⁹ As in the earliest Jewish traditions about the heavenly Temple, the Church’s liturgy was understood to be the mirror of heaven which reveals “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22).²⁰ Such sacerdotal imagery was already influential among New Testament authors and remained dominant in the Eastern Orthodox tradition until the advent of modernity. Yet, in contemporary patristic scholarship, all references to early Jewish symbolism found in dogmatic and ascetical works of the Church Fathers, whether the imagery of the Divine Chariot (the Merkavah), the Holy of Holies, the Temple, or the details of the temple worship are usually interpreted as mere rhetorical devices and stylistic embellishments.²¹ Golitzin criticizes such a simplified approach, contending that without a proper understanding of Jewish sacerdotal and liturgical traditions, we are unable to fully grasp the dogmatic core of patristic theology.

4 Pseudo-Dionysius

Golitzin’s first effort to apply his new methodology to the study of patristic texts was his doctoral dissertation on Pseudo-Dionysius, defended in Oxford University and later published in *Analekta Vlatadon*.²² As Basil Lourié rightly observes, the *Corpus Dionysiacum* was simultaneously the most convenient and the most inconvenient source for testing Golitzin’s fresh methodology of reading patristic texts. It was most convenient because few other authors drew on liturgical symbolism so saliently in their formulation of Christian dogma. And it was most inconvenient because the cultural heritage of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* had stronger connections to Platonic rather than to Jewish tra-

17 Andrei A. Orlov, *The Glory of the Invisible God: Two Powers in Heaven Traditions and Early Christology*, *Jewish and Christian Texts in Context and Related Studies* 31 (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

18 Golitzin, “Christian Mysticism over Two Millennia,” xxiii.

19 Lourié, “The Theophaneia School: An Ekphrasis of the Heavenly Temple,” xiv.

20 Golitzin, “Theophaneia: Forum of the Jewish Roots of Orthodox Spirituality,” xviii.

21 Lourié, “The Theophaneia School: An Ekphrasis of the Heavenly Temple,” xiv.

22 Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei*.

ditions.²³ Indeed, while the Platonic connections of the *Corpus Dionysiaca* were evident on the surface, its Jewish core was deeply concealed in such a manner that it required a novel methodology for its full recovery—one, which only Golitzin’s vision of Jewish roots was able to provide. Golitzin’s discernment of the Jewish roots of Pseudo-Dionysius’ liturgical symbolism did shed new light on his unique Christology. This, in turn, led to a reconsideration of the concept of the “Christological corrective,” which, according to Golitzin’s teacher, John Meyendorff, was developed by Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas in order to understand Pseudo-Dionysius.²⁴ Golitzin showed that if one reads Pseudo-Dionysius’ text in the language of the Jewish and Christian liturgical traditions in which it was originally written, the internal Christology of the *Corpus Dionysiaca* is impossible to miss, and a “Christological corrective” becomes unnecessary.²⁵

Golitzin’s pioneering study thus placed Pseudo-Dionysius within a tradition which extends to the origins of Christianity and then even further to its Second Temple Jewish roots.²⁶ The study also exhibited his use of more proximate Christian sources, notably fourth-century Syrian ascetical literature, whose own roots go back to the earliest forms and sites of Christianity: the Jewish-Christian villages and communities of Aramaic speaking Palestine.²⁷

In the present volume, many of Alexander Golitzin’s former colleagues and students have joined together to celebrate his distinguished contribution to the field of Jewish and Christian mysticism. This Festschrift contains eighteen essays which are arranged in four sections, corresponding to the four aforementioned areas of Golitzin’s research interests: 1. Jewish and Christian apocalypticism and mysticism; 2. Theophany and transformation; 3. Jewish Temple and Christian liturgy; and 4. Pseudo-Dionysius. The structure of the Festschrift thus closely follows Golitzin’s own scholarly journey.

The editor wishes to express his appreciation to David Runia and Gerard Rouwhorst for accepting this volume to the *Vigiliae Christianae* Supplements, and also to Brill’s editorial team for bringing it to completion.

23 Lourié, “The Theophaneia School: An Ekphrasis of the Heavenly Temple,” xv.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, CS 250 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Cistercian Publications, 2013), 55.

27 Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, 55.

PART 1

*Jewish and Christian
Apocalypticism and Mysticism*



Traumatic Mysteries: Pathways of Mysticism among the Early Christians

April D. DeConick

1 In the Beginning

Twenty years ago, I met with three special colleagues. Alan Segal, Jim Davila, and Chris Morray-Jones. Our purpose was to organize a group that would meet annually at the convention of the Society of Biblical Literature. We wanted to start mapping mystical traditions within early Judaism and Christianity. Each of us had been working on various aspects of these revelatory traditions, examining soul journeys and their transformational effects, looking at everything from heavenly geography to ritual behaviors to visions of God.

As we sat in the restaurant talking about this, we had to come up with a name for our proposal. We were not sure exactly what the phenomenon was that we were studying, but since the word *mysticism* had already been attached to it as a heuristic device in publications beginning in the early twentieth century, we decided on the name “Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism.” It was not until several years into the project that we were able to compose a definition of *mysticism* for our own heuristic purposes, a definition which would help us map the mystical phenomena we detected in early Jewish and Christian literature. At the end of our first cycle as a formal group, we published our findings in the volume *Paradise Now*.¹

In the programmatic essay that introduces *Paradise Now*, I attempted to crystalize what the group had accomplished, including the pioneering comparative work of Alexander Golitzin on Merkavah mysticism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Golitzin was a dedicated and formative member of the group from the beginning, along with his student at the time, Andrei Orlov, who established and forged the study of early Jewish and Christian mysticism in the pseudepigraphical literature. I began the chapter with a passage from the *Hekhalot Zutarti* that I felt (and still feel) encapsulates the phenomenon *mysticism*

1 April D. DeConick, ed., *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006).

that we were (and are) studying: the movement of the person beyond the mundane world to the world of the sacred, where, in the presence of the divine, special knowledge is imparted and a (trans)personal transformation takes place.

And what mortal person is it who is able
 To ascend on high,
 To ride on wheels,
 To descend below,
 To search out the inhabited world,
 To walk on the dry land,
 To gaze at his splendor,
 To dwell with his crown,
 To be transformed by his glory,
 To recite praise,
 To combine letters,
 To recite their names,
 To have a vision of what is above,
 To have a vision of what is below,
 To know the explanation of the living,
 And to see the vision of the dead,
 To walk in rivers of fire,
 And to know the lightening?
 And who is able to explain it?
 And who is able to see it?²

In that chapter, I struggled with emic and etic definitions, recognizing that the ancient people we study did not use the word *mysticism* to describe their direct experiences of the divine, but rather call these experiences *apocalypses* or revelations. They broke these experiences down further into categories like waking visions, dreams, trances, and auditions that can involve spirit possession and ascent journeys of the soul. To keep true to their emic *apocalyptic* reference, I framed the central aspect of early Jewish and Christian mysticism as the belief

2 *Hekhalot Zutarti* §§ 349–350: Peter Schäfer et al., eds., *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, TSAJ 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981). English translation: Peter Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism*. Translation by A. Pomerance (Albany: SUNY, 1992). For a newer edition and translation, see James R. Davila, *Hekhalot Literature in Translation: Major Texts of Merkavah Mysticism*, SJJTP 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 205–206.

that a person directly, immediately, and before death can experience the divine, either as a rapture experience or as one solicited by a particular praxis.³

I presented mysticism as an *internalized atemporal apocalypse*, in contrast to the *temporal eschatological dimensions* of apocalyptic thought, which seem to me to be overrated in the classic definitions of apocalyptic.⁴ Mysticism had to do with religious experience as the act of revelation itself, the encounter with God that often results in the person's immediate (trans)personal transformation and the uncovering of God's mysteries.⁵ It was developed and fostered particularly among Jews and Christians who were disillusioned with the redemptive eschatological promises made to their ancestors, promises that they felt were debatable, unfulfilled or foolish, especially given their local political and economic situations of colonization and imperialism.⁶

I went on to suggest that the mysticism we discover in early Jewish and Christian texts share unique features that most likely derive from a wide variety of Jewish and Christian groups that were familiar with Second Temple Jewish religiosity. These features include a heavy reliance on a cluster of foundational Jewish texts such as Genesis 1–3, Exodus 24 and 33, Ezekiel 1, 8, and 40–48, Daniel 7, and Isaiah 6. This scriptural foundation led to the emergence of a variety of common themes, including the centrality of the figure known as the *kavod* or Glory of YHWH as the object of vision and worship, the projection of the earthly temple into the celestial spheres, the prominence of the *merkavah*

3 April D. DeConick, "What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?" in April D. DeConick, ed., *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 1–26 at 1–2.

4 Cf. David S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964); Walter Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975); John J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, Semeia 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 1–32; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 1–32. Stone [Michael E. Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature," in Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr., eds., *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 414–451] made one of the first attempts to work out the themes of apocalypticism beyond its eschatological dimensions. Rowland [Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven* (London: SPCK, 1982)] pointed out the problems with limiting view of apocalypticism to eschatology. Rowland [Christopher Rowland and Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, CRINT 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 3–218], went on to develop his understanding of the mystical dimension of apocalypticism in the New Testament.

5 Cf. Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition," *JJS* 43 (1992): 1–31.

6 DeConick, "What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?," 18–19.

or throne-chariot as the seat of the Glory, and the understanding of the *pargod* or temple veil as the celestial firmament that keeps the upper realm separate and hidden from the lower heavenly sanctuaries.⁷

Another common feature, almost a given, is the story of Adam, who was believed by these Jews and Christians to be created in God's radiant image. As a consequence of his disobedience and fall, the radiance of his body was lost, altered or taken away, so that now only a garment of skins (his physical body) clothes him. According to these Jews and Christians, redemption of the lost image should not wait until the eschaton when the dead would be raised. The restoration of Adam's prelapsarian glory was to be achieved personally before death, even if provisionally. Jewish and Christian groups that fostered mysticism, like the Therapeutae of Egypt or the Thomasine Christians of Syria, fostered life as angels in the here and now.⁸

This transformative goal meant that various practices were performed (or endured) in order to purge and alter the body, so that it became an extreme body worthy of garments of glory. The literature abounds with references to ascetic practices like fasting and celibacy, washing, standing vigils, consuming divine food and drink, anointing the body with holy oils, and repetitive intoning of mantras constructed from God's secret name. While no single praxis is suggested by the literature, the goal of the praxis was steady. To create extreme bodies that could endure the dangers of the supramundane world and receive the promises of paradise now.⁹

2 Defining the Difference

While our group had been focusing on mapping early Jewish and Christian mysticism as a bilateral phenomenon emergent from Second Temple Judaism, as we entered the second phase of our work, I began focusing exclusively in Christian and Christian gnostic texts. It quickly became clear to me that this bilateral Jewish-Christian phenomenon had developed very differently in Jewish and Christian contexts. In other words, early Christian mysticism had unique characteristics right from the start of the Christian movement, and these were extremely significant when it came to the mystical praxis and its goals. Golitzin's other students—Silviu Bunta, Bogdan Bucur, and Dragos

7 DeConick, "What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?," 12–18.

8 DeConick, "What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?," 20–21.

9 DeConick, "What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?," 23–24.

Giulea—became active in the group during this period, and worked to understand the unique characteristics of different permutations of early Christian mysticism as they related to Christology and other issues.

Central to Christian mysticism is the insistence that the revelation is “the revelation of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰ Or to put it another way, Jesus was revealed in God’s stead. He stood in literally for $\Upsilon\text{H}\text{W}\text{H}$ ’s *kavod*. The object of the vision was not just God, but Jesus as God or God’s Glory. Jesus bore $\Upsilon\text{H}\text{W}\text{H}$ ’s Name and Image. He represented the hidden God in a visible way. What we see with the development of mysticism in early Christian contexts is a Christocentric mysticism.¹¹

Consequently, the (*apo*)*theosis* is Christocentric too. The mystical praxis and experience conformed the mystic to the Lord Jesus or Christ Jesus. This is well put in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians where he states that Christians’ own reflections are reflections of the Glory of the Lord, a glory that the faithful are being transformed into degree by degree.¹² This progressive transformation is made possible through the power of the Spirit of the Lord, who indwells Christians.¹³ Due to the possession of Christ’s Spirit, Christians have taken on “the same form ($\tau\eta\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\nu\ \epsilon\iota\chi\acute{o}\nu\alpha$)” as the Image of Christ Jesus.¹⁴ Paul is so adamant about this that he states about his own transformed state, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me ($\zeta\acute{\omega}\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\ \omicron\upsilon\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\tau\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega},\ \zeta\eta\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\mu\omicron\iota\ \text{Χρ}\iota\text{-}\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$).”¹⁵ He commands Christians to be transformed by the remaking of their

10 Rev 1:1; Gal 1:11–12.

11 April D. DeConick, “Jesus Revealed: The Dynamics of Early Christian Mysticism,” in Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov, eds., *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism. In Honor of Rachel Elior*, Ekstasis 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 299–324 at 308–311.

12 For detailed presentations of Paul as a mystic, see Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, translated by William Montgomery (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1931/1998); Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); John Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Rowland and Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, 137–165; Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones, “Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12:1–12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul’s Apostolate, Part 1: The Jewish Sources,” *HTR* 86 (1993): 177–217; idem, “Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12:1–12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul’s Apostolate, Part 2: Paul’s Heavenly Ascent and Its Significance,” *HTR* 86 (1993): 265–292; Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle’s Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

13 2 Corinthians 3:16–18.

14 1 Corinthians 13:12.

15 Galatians 2:20.

minds because they have the mind of Christ indwelling them: ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν.¹⁶ “If anyone is in Christ,” he says, “he is a new creature. The old has passed away, behold, the new has been made (ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαία παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινὰ).”¹⁷ While Paul only amounts to one example from the Christian literature of this Christocentric (*apo*)*theosis*, his testimony is foundational to the later Christians who continue to develop Christ-centered devotion informed by mystical practices.¹⁸

Paul’s insistence on a Christocentric transformation reflected another difference, perhaps the most profound, when it comes to early Christian mysticism. The mystical praxis is not the purview of a few specially trained adept men. Mysticism is democratized, including its extension to women, children and slaves, through the establishment of sacraments that make the presence of Christ regularly and immediately available to all believers regardless of race, gender or social status.¹⁹ It is associated with conversion, with the traumatic shift from the old and normative to the new and aberrant, and the conservation of this new aberrant self within the new and aberrant community. There is a rejection of past social affiliations and a leaving behind or reinterpretation of past cognitive holdings in dramatic ways. This move from one orientation to another is a form of apostasy. It often elicits anxiety, angst and grief over the loss of former relationships, beliefs, and practices.²⁰

Baptism and the eucharist, both early and classic Christian rituals, are understood to affect the transformation of the soul and the integration of Christ’s Spirit into the person. It is the indwelling Spirit who is the revelator of God to every convert.²¹ As early as Paul, these rituals were believed to integrate the person into the divine immediately and ontologically through spirit possession. They were mysteries that revealed the mystery of the ages, Jesus Christ as God’s Glory.

It was my study of Paul and his understanding of baptism and the eucharist as technologies for mystical participation and transformation, that led me to realize that it makes good heuristic sense to distinguish *mysticism* from *mystical experience*, something I did not do in *Paradise Now*. Mysticism encompasses

16 1 Corinthians 2:16; cf. Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:1–5.

17 2 Corinthians 5:17; cf. Galatians 6:15; Colossians 3:9–10.

18 For more details, see DeConick, “Jesus Revealed: The Dynamics of Early Christian Mysticism,” 311–316.

19 DeConick, “Jesus Revealed: The Dynamics of Early Christian Mysticism,” 316–320.

20 Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 53–54.

21 1 Corinthians 2:10.

the technologies that prompt and achieve mystical experiences. That said, not all mystical experiences are bound to technologies. Some occur unsolicited via rapture.

This has led me to modify my original understanding, so that *mysticism is the solicitation and participation in a direct ecstatic experience of Ultimate Reality prompted by cultic rites, established practices, or other technologies.*²² On the other hand, *mystical experience can be the result of an unsolicited revelation that comes directly from God through an ecstatic vision or a meeting with a divine emissary.*²³ As I moved on to study the interface of mysticism and cognitive science, I came to understand how *mysticism and mystical experiences coincide with ecstatic neurobiological processes, what we sometimes today call altered states of consciousness.*²⁴

The rapturous experience of Jesus Christ as God likely led to Paul's construction of the baptism and eucharist as technologies to stimulate the transformation of the faithful and their incorporation into God via the assimilation of the Christ Spirit. In other words, pathways of mysticism in early Christianity, with their technologies of purgation, possession, invasion, incorporation and transformation, develop in order to elicit again the primary rapture.

Provided this understanding, what heuristic model or typology might be constructed to describe pathways of mysticism that emerge among the early Christians? While we might construct a typology based on the different types of technologies (water rites, unction, sexual abstinence, fasting, chanting, praying, etc.) or distinctions in the mystical experience (angelic transformation, investiture, enthronement, gaze, sacred marriage, divine integration, etc.), I have preferred instead an organization that highlights *the entire path as evidenced in a case study*. I do this to retain, as much as possible, holistic descriptions of case studies, wishing to avoid cannibalizing the case studies for hearts

22 April D. DeConick, "Mysticism Before Mysticism: Teaching Christian Mysticism as a Historian of Religion," in William B. Parsons, ed., *Teaching Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 26–45 at 28.

23 Rowland and Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God*, 18.

24 Eugene D'Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); Patrick McNamara, *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle's Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); István Czachesz, *Cognitive Science and the New Testament: A New Approach to Early Christian Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 141–165. Cf. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Altered States of Knowledge: The Attainment of Gnosis in the Hermetica," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 2 (2008), 128–163.

and kidneys. What I want to know is what various Christians and groups of Christians were doing (or proposing to do) to get to God in the here and now. Because this model is based on selective case studies, it is not intended to be definitive or exhaustive. Nor are the pathways imagined to be mutually exclusive or competitive. They are constructed to take into consideration the emic imaginations of early Christians who wished to walk (or fly) through the narrow gate, to experience God, immediately and directly.

3 Mysticism as Sacrament

Paul saw the Christian cultic rites of baptism and eucharist as stimuli for the indwelling of the Christ Spirit and the progressive transformation of the believer into Christ's image and spiritual body. According to Paul, baptism washed clean the person, making the person righteous and providing sanctification through the indwelling of the spirit and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁵ Because the baptized have put on Christ, all gender, religious, and social distinctions are gone.²⁶

Paul develops his baptismal theology by ruminating on the implications of being possessed by Christ's Spirit. If we have his spirit in us and have come part of his body, then we experience everything that he experienced, including his death and resurrection. This is why Paul says that when the faithful are baptized into Jesus Christ, they are baptized into his death, are buried with him, so that they are also resurrected like him to walk a new life glorified.²⁷

Paul understood the eucharist similarly. He thinks that drinking the blood of Christ and eating his body effects union with him. He claims that this operated on the principle that the person who eats the meat of the sacrificed animal is united with the God to whom that sacrifice was offered, whether Jews who make the offering on YHWH's altar, or the pagans who do so at the table of demons.²⁸

Paul is not alone among the first Christians to voice this sacramental understanding of baptism and eucharist. Mysticism as a sacrament of conversion and conservation, when the self undergoes a traumatic shift becoming a new creature in a new community, is highly developed in the Johannine literature.²⁹

25 1 Cor 6:1–11.

26 Gal 3:27–28.

27 Rom 6:3–5; 2 Cor 4:7–12.

28 1 Cor 10:14–22.

29 On sacramentalism in the Gospel of John, see Oscar Cullman, *Early Christian Worship*

The author of the Gospel of John thinks that the performance of baptism and eucharist elicit powerful mystical experiences that bring Christ's Spirit to the faithful in lieu of the historical absence of Jesus after his death and resurrection.³⁰ According to the author of the epistle of John, through these cultic rites when believers are anointed with the Spirit, Jesus comes to abide in the believers.³¹ "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit (Ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ μένομεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν)."³²

In order to join God's kingdom (and the Johannine church), converts must be reborn of water and spirit: ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῆ ἔξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος, οὐ δύναται εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.³³ Given that this statement is driven home within the context of the baptismal activities of Jesus and John the Baptist, we have here a reference to the baptismal experience as the cultic event that anoints the initiate with the Spirit.³⁴ The baptismal technology is cast as a rebirth of the human spirit as Spirit so that "what is born of the Spirit is Spirit (τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος πνεύμα ἐστίν)."³⁵ It is this rebirth technology that makes it possible for the initiate to be transformed sufficiently to see God's kingdom and to enter it.³⁶

In the fourth chapter of the gospel, the community's understanding of baptism is worked out within the framework of a story where Jesus offers a Samaritan woman "living water (τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν)" to quench her thirst eternally. She discovers that Jesus' water is thoroughly transformative and immortalizing.³⁷

The powerful effects of the initiatory ritual are strengthened by the eucharist meal. It is only in the gospel of John that Jesus is called (repeatedly) the "bread of life (ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς)" that has "come down from heaven (ὁ καταβάς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ)."³⁸ This bread is Jesus' *sarks* or flesh, and if the converts eat the bread,

(Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953); April D. DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospels of John and Thomas and Other Ancient Christian Literature*, JSNTSup 157 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 128–131.

30 DeConick, "Jesus Revealed: The Dynamics of Early Christian Mysticism," 317; eadem, *Voices of the Mystics*, 109–132.

31 1John 2:20.

32 1John 4:13.

33 John 3:5.

34 John 3.22–36.

35 John 3:3–8.

36 John 3:3, 5.

37 John 4:7–15.

38 John 6:35, 41, 51.

they will live forever.³⁹ The same is true of Jesus' blood, which must be drunk for the converts to have life everlasting.⁴⁰ Eating and drinking sacred food, here the body and blood of Christ, results in nothing less than the incorporation of Christ within the convert. This is reflected in Jesus' words, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἷμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ)."⁴¹

Christ's Spirit, indwelt in baptism and regularly incorporated with each eucharist meal eaten, gives life.⁴² These sacramental technologies of mysticism integrate the convert's spirit with Christ's Spirit, which is God's Image or Glory. The amalgamation of God's Image unites the convert directly with Christ, and consequently with the Father. According to Jesus, this makes them all perfectly one: καὶ ἐγὼ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν καθῶς ἡμεῖς ἐν· ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ὧσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν.⁴³ It births the convert's spirit anew as the Glory, making it possible for the convert to see God's kingdom and enter it. In the end, the goal of the sacramental mysticism in the Gospel of John is salvation, the movement of the initiate from a life of darkness in a dark cosmos as a sinner to a life of light within the kingdom of God as a child of the light.

In subsequent early Christian contexts, this understanding of baptism and eucharist as sacramental technologies of mysticism persist. Ignatius of Antioch calls the eucharist "the medicine of immortality (φάρμακον ἀθανασίας)" because it is the antidote for death. The consumption of the divine body and blood is what makes it possible for the convert "to live in Jesus Christ forever (ζῆν ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ διὰ παντός)."⁴⁴ It is this cultic rite that unites the worshiper with Christ.⁴⁵

Justin Martyr considers the eucharist a technology of transmutation (μεταβολή), when the convert's own flesh and blood are changed by eating the flesh and blood of Jesus.⁴⁶ Justin interprets the eucharist against the backdrop of Isaiah LXX 33:16–17, as the occasion that provides the convert with a vision of Jesus, "Bread shall be given to him, and his water sure. A king with glory, you shall see."

39 John 6:51.

40 John 6:53–55.

41 John 6:56.

42 John 6:63.

43 John 17:22–23a.

44 Ignatius, *Ephesians* 20. Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, LCL 24 (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1.240. English translation mine.

45 Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 4 (Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1.286).

46 Justin, 1 *Apology* 66. Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Iustini Martyris: Apologiae Pro Christianis*, PTS 38 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 127.

The eucharist fulfills this prophecy as a vision of Jesus set before the faithful in the rite, or as preparation for a future vision of Jesus as a consequence of the rite.⁴⁷

The most remarkable development of baptism and eucharist as mystery rites is within Valentinian gnostic circles. They practiced a second baptism called “redemption” which they believed bestowed the Spirit.⁴⁸ This ceremony involved anointing or chrism. According to them, since Messiah or Christ means “anointed one,” the second baptism changed their status from normal Christians to Christs: ΠΑΕΙ ΓΑΡ ΟΥΚΕΤΙ ΟΥ[ΧΡΗ]CΤ[1]ΑΝΟΣ ΠΕ ΑΛΛΑ ΟΥΧΡ̄C ΠΕ.⁴⁹ It united them with the perfect light of the Spirit.⁵⁰ Distinct from the baptism of psychic Christians which purified the soul (*psyche*) of people who converted to non-Valentinian Christianity, the second baptism was an advanced rite that fully and immediately redeemed the spirits of those joining the Valentinian ranks of the church, making them pneumatic or spiritual Christians. The first baptism is associated with John the Baptist’s water immersions in the Jordan, while second baptism is linked to Jesus’ baptism by fire.⁵¹ This special rite was believed to bring about the ascension of the initiate’s spirit into the transcendent realm, an ecstatic experience which culminated in a sacred union with God or an angelic mate.⁵²

For Valentinian Christians the eucharist also was extra special because Christ as the “Perfect Man (ΠΤΕΛΙΟC ΠΡΩΜΕ)” was the bread brought down from

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- 47 Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 70.4. Philipp Bobichon, ed., *Justin Martyr. Dialogue avec Tryphon*, Volume 1. Paradosis 47/1 (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2003), 378.
- 48 April D. DeConick, *The Gnostic New Age: How A Countercultural Spirituality Revolutionized Religion From Antiquity to Today* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 233–236. Cf. Elaine Pagels, “Ritual in the Gospel of Philip,” in John D. Turner and Anne McGuire, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, NHMS 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 280–292. Other treatments of baptism in Valentinian texts include Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians,”* NHMS 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 333–414, and Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul*, NHMS 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
- 49 *Gospel of Philip* NHC II,3 67.20–27. Bentley Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XIII,2**, BRIT. LIB. OR. 4926(1), and P.OXY. 1, 654, 655, Volume 1. NHC 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 174, 176.
- 50 *Gospel of Philip* NHC II,3 69.5–15. (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, 178, 180), 70.5–10 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, 182).
- 51 Luke 12:50 and Mark 10:38, quoted in Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 1.21.2; see also *Valentinian Fragments* NHC XI.2 41.10–11, 21–23.
- 52 *Valentinian Fragments* NHC XI.2 42.28–30; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.21.2, 3.15.2; *Gospel of Philip* NHC II.3 69.7–8, 70.2–10.

heaven.⁵³ The Valentinians believed that they were nourished with the food of the Perfect Man, which is Jesus' flesh. The cup from which they drank was filled with the Spirit of the Perfect Man. When they drank it, they received the "Living Man (πτελειος ῥῥωμε)" as a garment.⁵⁴

Garbed in this fantastic body, believers were made invisible to the archons who populated the heavens and tried to hinder the passage of the soul. Cloaked in Jesus' body of invisibility, they were able to move unchallenged through the spheres and unite with their angelic twins at death.⁵⁵ There is a report that Marcus the Valentinian used the invisibility Helmet of Hades in his redemption ceremony, putting it on his converts so that they would escape judgment when they died. With this cloaking device, they immediately would be caught by Sophia and conducted into the Pleromic bridal chamber where they embraced their angelic twins in holy matrimony.

While the eucharist in these cases is death preparation, it has immediate effects as a sacramental pathway of mysticism too. It is recorded that the eucharistic words used by the Valentinians included this prayer: "O One who united with the perfect light as the holy spirit unite too the angels with us as (our) images (πενταρχωτῆρ ἡπτελειος πογοειν επιπῆα ετογααβ ροτῆ ἡαγγελος ερον ρωων α ηρικων)."⁵⁶ Marcus' cup ceremony included a similar petition for immediate unification with the angelic bridegrooms.

My wish is for you to share in the grace that I have (Μεταδοῦναί σοι θέλω τῆς ἐμῆς Χάριςτος). Indeed the Father of all is constantly looking upon your angel who is in his presence (ἐπειδὴ ὁ Πατήρ τῶν ὄλων τὸν Ἄγγελόν σου διὰ παντὸς βλέπει πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ). But the place of the Mighty (Angel) is in us (Ὁ δὲ τόπος τοῦ Μεγέθους ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστι). We must be restored to one (δεῖ ἡμᾶς εἰς τὸ ἐν καταστήναι). First, from me and through me, receive grace (Λάμβανε πρῶτον ἀπ' ἐμοῦ καὶ δι' ἐμοῦ τὴν Χάριν). Prepare yourself as a bride awaiting her bridegroom, so that you may be what I am and I may be what you are (Εὐτρέπισον σεαυτὴν ὡς νύμφη ἐκδεχομένη τὸν νυμφίον ἑαυτῆς, ἵνα ἔσῃ ὃ ἐγὼ καὶ ἐγὼ ὃ σύ). Consecrate the seed of light in your bridal

53 *Gospel of Philip* NHC II,3 55:11–14 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, 150).

54 *Gospel of Philip* NHC II,3 75:20–21 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, 192). Cf. 56:33–57:9 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, 152, 154); 70:5–10 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, 178, 180).

55 Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 1.21.5. Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, eds. *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les Hérésies, Livre 1*, Volume 2. SC 264 (Paris: Cerf, 1979), 304–309; *Gospel of Philip* NHC II,3 76:23–30; 86:6–11.

56 *Gospel of Philip* NHC II,3 58:11–16 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, 156). English translation mine.

chamber (Καθίδρυσον ἐν τῷ νυμφῶνί σου τὸ σπέρμα τοῦ φωτός). From me, receive (your) bridegroom (Λάβε παρ' ἐμοῦ τὸν νυμφίον). And hold him and be held by him (καὶ χώρησον αὐτὸν καὶ χωρήθητι ἐν αὐτῷ). Behold grace has descended upon you (Ἴδου ἡ Χάρις κατηήλθεν ἐπὶ σέ).⁵⁷

Mysticism as a sacrament in early Christianity is not confined to these examples. In fact, it underlies Christian cultic practice generally, especially in the east (and prior to Protestantism).

4 Mysticism as Schooling

Mysticism as sacrament is not the only pathway of mysticism developed in early Christianity. Clement of Alexandria, for instance, is the primary witness among the early Christians of mysticism as a pathway of schooling or *paideia*, after the fashion of Platonic *paideia*, which taught the moral progress of the soul.⁵⁸ Clement builds this mode on top of the sacramental, which is what gives the person the capability to participate in the training in the first place. According to Clement, a person *becomes a Christian* by undergoing baptism and partaking regularly in eucharist meals. Clement understands that these cultic rites represent a sacramental pathway of mysticism available to everyone universally. After conversion, however, the new Christian *is made* into the ideal Christian, through a progressive process of training and alignment of the soul with the Lord Jesus, God's Image and Glory. The result of this training is a life lived in constant contemplation and mystic vision.⁵⁹

According to Clement, it is at baptism that the Holy Spirit descends into the convert. This newly resident Spirit illuminates as much as it causes past transgressions to be cleansed, because it wipes away the grime of sin, which has obscured the human's ability to see God. With the eyes of the soul wiped clean and illuminated by the Spirit, the convert gains the ability to focus on the con-

57 Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 1.13.3 (Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les Hérésies*, 194–195). English translation mine.

58 Cf. Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994); Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1999).

59 Salvatore R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 142–189; Buell, *Making Christians*; April D. DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and Its Growth* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 225–231.

templation of God. The baptized convert now has the capacity to behold the holy light, and by the scrubbed eye alone, to contemplate the divine as an ἐπόπτῃς, an initiate admitted to the highest mysteries.⁶⁰ This illumination makes the convert God's child and yields immortality as a gift of grace. The instant the light is received in baptism is the instant of perfection, when the convert is separated from death and delivered from darkness to a new birth.⁶¹

After baptism, new converts regularly join the eucharist meal, consuming the body and blood of the Lord. According to Clement, to drink of the blood of Jesus is to partake in immortality, when his Spirit mixes with the human spirit in the eucharist, the act of grace. This is performed by mixing water (which represents the human spirit) with wine (which represents the Spirit). When this is drunk, the convert becomes “mystically compounded (συγκιρνάντος μυστικῶς)” with the Spirit on a regular basis, so that his or her soul is welded to the Spirit and inspired by it continually.⁶²

This sacramental shoring up of the human soul is what makes it possible for the convert to embark on the journey to perfection, to learn to live the life of an ideal Christian in imitation of Jesus. In Clement's system, the Lord Jesus is both the physician who cures the soul via the sacraments (which he calls *φάρμακοι* or medicines) and the pedagogue who trains the soul via instruction and example.⁶³

With this, we see Clement's understanding of the *making of a Christian*. While Clement knows that Christian sacraments serve as sacramental technologies of mysticism that translate the initiate from sinner to saved, from darkness to divine illumination, he does not leave the Christian stranded as a new convert. Mysticism shifts into another pathway entirely, when Clement relates how ideal Christians are *made* after baptism.

The baptized Christian is, in Clement's mind, a newly birthed child ready for *paideia* or training and *paidagōgia* or discipline.⁶⁴ Christ is both model and disciplinarian, the Image of God that must be assimilated and the teacher who must be obeyed.⁶⁵ The schooling is progressive, beginning with the realignment of the soul to moral excellence and the crucifixion of the impulses and

60 Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 1.6. Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Clementis Alexandrini Paedagogus*, SVC 61 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 19.

61 Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 1.6.

62 Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 2.2 (Marcovich, *Clementis Alexandrini Paedagogus*, 79).

63 Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 1.1, 1.6, 1.8 etc. (Marcovich, *Clementis Alexandrini Paedagogus*, 3, 20, 40 etc.).

64 Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 1.5.

65 Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 1.2; 3.1.

passions, all in imitation of Christ.⁶⁶ Clements understands the adoption of an extreme form of virtuous living in imitation of Christ to be the beginning of *pistis* or faith.⁶⁷

The achievement of virtue and a rigorous *apatheia* by crucifying lust or *epithumia* reorients the soul toward God, opening up the soul to contemplation of the Divine.⁶⁸ This is the beginning of *gnosis* or knowledge of God directly.⁶⁹ Clement describes the gnostics as ideal catholic Christians who live the “gnostic life (τὸν γνωστικὸν),” trained to “draw God towards themselves (ἐπισπώμενοι τὸν θεὸν ἑαυτοὺς)” and to “imperceptibly bring themselves to God (ἔλαθον προσ-αγόμενοι πρὸς τὸν θεόν).” The gnostics are those who live the contemplative life fully. As they worship God, they attend to the divine within, the Image of God embossed on their souls.⁷⁰ They have come to understand the Socratic injunction to “know yourself” as a directive to come face to face with their true nature as images of the Divine.⁷¹

Because of their own purification and restraint, they are able to behold the holy God with holiness. They are self-controlled, contemplating the Divine uninterruptedly. They have been “as far as possible assimilated to God (ἐξομοιοῦται κατὰ δύναμιν θεῶ).”⁷² They are “‘face to face’ initiated into the beatific vision («πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον» τὴν μακαρίαν θέαν μνηθῆ).”⁷³ They ascend into heaven, surpassing “each of the holy ranks ... reaching places better than the better places, embracing the divine vision not in mirrors or by means of mirrors, but in the transcendently clear and absolutely pure insatiable vision which is the privilege of intensely loving souls.” The result is “converse with God ... being made like the Lord.”⁷⁴

This assimilation, Clement believed, is a transformation achieved *as far as is humanly possible* in the here and now. Utter assimilation had to be reserved to

66 Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 1.12; Cf. *Miscellanies* 1.18, 24; 2.20; 4.3–4.6 (Otto Stählin, ed., *Clemens Alexandrinus, Zweiter Band: Stromata Buch I–VI*, rev. by Ludwig Fruchtel. GCS 52 [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960], 56–58; 99–103; 169–181; 251–256, 259–267); 5.11 (370–377); 7.3, 16.

67 Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 1.1 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 3–13).

68 Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 1.12 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 35–36).

69 Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 2.17 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 52–58).

70 Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 4.23 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 313–316); 7.3.

71 Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 1.14, 19 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 37–41, 58–62); 2.15 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 146–151); 5.4 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 338–342).

72 Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 1.19 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 58–62); 4.23 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 313–316); 6.12 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 480–484).

73 Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 6.12 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 480–484).

74 Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7.3; cf. 7.10, 11; *Exhortation* 11.

the end when the resurrection occurred.⁷⁵ While the gnostic is already singing in the choirs of angels, this condition is not eternal yet. The gnostic is still detained on earth.⁷⁶

The goal of Christian *paideia* is to “improve the soul” and train it after Christ’s example to be virtuous so that it might gain its wings and ascend back to its lofty origins.⁷⁷ In this, Clement echoes Platonic sentiment about the moral regeneration of the soul. Yet the mysticism of Clement’s *paideia* is not a mysticism directed at salvation, as a curative for the soul. Clement is very clear that conversion already achieved this when the initiate was baptized into the church and eats the eucharist meal. The soul is healed by Christian initiation and nothing more is needed for its salvation.

So Clement’s mysticism as schooling is developed for the spiritual advancement of the saved and their progressive assimilation into God’s Image before their deaths and before the eschaton, at least as far as is humanly possible. It reinforced Clement’s Christocentric theology as well as what he valued in terms of Christian morals and lifestyle standards. What Clement’s school expected of its mystic Christians was counter to normal philosophical conventions of *paideia*. To be made into a Christian was to be remade, to break down the former self and rebuild the ideal self. It was a traumatic turnaround of normative Roman preferences particularly in the area of renunciation of the flesh and the destruction of *epithumia*. While marriage was permitted for the sake of procreation (a necessity!), all lust had to be extinguished even from the sexual act itself. For Clement, this intense schooling jumpstarts what will be the final destiny of all Christians, their transformation into God’s Image, which is Christ.⁷⁸

5 Mysticism as Daily Regimen

Closely related to mysticism as schooling is mysticism as daily regimen. In this mode, the eschatological promises of Paradise have been collapsed completely into the here and now, so that Christians must live the extreme unconventional lives of angels while on earth. The main experience that originally fostered the development of this pathway of mysticism in early Christianity was the Non-Event, that Jesus did not return imminently as early communities expected,

75 Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 6.17 (Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 508–515); *Instructor* 1.6.

76 Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7.12.

77 Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor* 1.1.

78 Harry O. Maier, “Clement of Alexandria and the Care of the Self,” *JAR* 62:3 (1994): 719–745.

especially in the wake of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. When the kingdom did not come, to manage the excessive anxiety and cognitive dissonance some Christians rewrote their eschatological expectations, internalizing the promises of the eschaton into a pathway of mysticism.⁷⁹

These Christians rationalized that the eschaton had already begun with Jesus' resurrection. In response to Jesus' teaching that in the age of the resurrection we will live like angels, they felt they needed to live like they were living in Paradise now, as resurrected beings, primordial Adams, or angels.⁸⁰ As beings worthy of Paradise, they would live daily in God's presence, coming to know God in the most immediate and direct sense everyday.

This pathway of mysticism as daily regimen was particularly prevalent early on in eastern Syria. It is characterized by the additions of accretions in the *Gospel of Thomas* that reformat an earlier gospel of eschatological sayings of Jesus into a newer gospel with a mystical orientation.⁸¹ The resurrected or "living" Jesus speaks in this gospel, asking Christians to interpret his words carefully in order to put aside death: $\text{N}\alpha\epsilon\iota \text{N}\epsilon \bar{\text{N}}\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon \epsilon\theta\eta\eta \epsilon\pi\tau\alpha \bar{\iota}\bar{\text{C}} \epsilon\tau\omega\eta\zeta \chi\omicron\omicron\upsilon\gamma \Delta\gamma\omega \Delta\varphi\zeta\delta\alpha\iota\omicron\upsilon\gamma \bar{\text{N}}\beta\iota \Delta\iota\Delta\upsilon\mu\omicron\varsigma \text{I}\omega\Upsilon\Delta\alpha\varsigma \Theta\omega\mu\alpha\varsigma. \Delta\gamma\omega \text{P}\epsilon\chi\alpha\varphi \chi\epsilon \text{P}\epsilon\tau\alpha\zeta\epsilon \Theta\epsilon\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\text{N}\epsilon\iota\alpha \bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{N}}\epsilon\epsilon\iota\omega\alpha\chi\epsilon \varphi\eta\alpha\chi\iota \dagger\text{P}\epsilon \Delta\text{N} \bar{\text{M}}\text{P}\text{M}\omicron\Upsilon.$ ⁸² His words point to the recreation of Eden within the experience of the Christian community. Christians are encouraged by his words to take up an ascetic lifestyle in imitation of Adam before he sinned.⁸³

It is clear from the accretions that these Christians understood sexual renunciation and celibacy to represent Adam's original state before Eve was taken from his side and all hell broke loose. So they honored the single unmarried life of the *monachoi*, the solitary men and women that made up their community. They taught that Christians are required to renounce the world, to fast from the world, and to guard against all temptations and worldliness: $\epsilon\tau\epsilon\langle\tau\bar{\text{N}}\rangle\tau\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{P}}\text{N}\eta\sigma\tau\epsilon\Upsilon\epsilon \epsilon\pi\kappa\omicron\varsigma\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma \text{T}\epsilon\tau\eta\alpha\zeta\epsilon \Delta\text{N} \epsilon\tau\bar{\text{M}}\bar{\text{N}}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron.$ ⁸⁴ They were encouraged to con-

79 On the cognitive dissonance of the Non-Event, see John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 20–65.

80 Matthew 22.29–31; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34–36.

81 April D. DeConick, *Seek to See Him: Ascend and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas*, SVC 33 (Leiden: Brill, 1996); eadem, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and Its Growth* (London: T&T Clark, 2005). For a summary, see April D. DeConick, "The Gospel of Thomas," *ExpTim* 118 (2007): 469–479.

82 *Gospel of Thomas* prologue and saying 1 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex 11,2–7*, 52–53).

83 *Gospel of Thomas* 4.1, 3; 11.2–4; 16.4; 21.1–4, 6–9; 22; 23.2; 27.1; 37; 49; 64.12; 75; 85; 101; 105; 106; 110; 111.2; 114 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex 11,2–7*, 54–55, 56–57, etc.). For this interpretation, see individual sayings in the commentary, DeConick, "What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?"

84 *Gospel of Thomas* 27 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex 11,2–7*, 64–65).

quer their passions as Jesus had and even transcend the human condition of male and female: $\text{ϞΙΝΑ ΕΤΕΤΝΑΕΙΡΕ ἸΦΟΟΥΤ ΜἸ ΤΣΖΙΜΕ ἸΠΠΟΥΑ}$.⁸⁵ They had to turn back the clock to the sexual innocence of childhood (to pristine Eden) and renounce their bodies (the garments of skins given to Adam and Eve after the fall) in order to be able to see the Son of God: “When you strip naked without shame, take up your garment, put them under your feet like little children, and trample on them. Then you will see the Son of the Living One and you will not be afraid” ($\text{ΖΟΤΑΝ ΕΤΕΤἸΩΑΚΕΚ ΤΗΥΤἸ ἘΖΗΥ ἸΠΠΕΤἸ-ϞΙΠΕ ΑΥΩ ἸΤΕΤἸϞΙ ἸΝΕΤἸΩΥΤΗΝ ἸΤΕΤἸΚΑΔΥ ΖΑ ΠΕΣΗΤ ἸΝΕΤἸΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ ἸΘΕ ἸΝΙΚΟΥΕΙ ἸΩΗΡΕ ΩΗΝ ἸΤΕΤἸΧΟΠἸΠ ἸΜΟΟΥ ΤΟΤΕ [ΤΕΤ]ΝΑΝΑΥ ΕΠΩΗΡΕ ἸΠΠΕΤΟΝΖ ΑΥΩ ΤΕΤΝΑἸ ΖΟΤΕ ΑΝ}$).⁸⁶ They were encouraged to study and meditate on the words of Jesus to vanquish death, and to partake of the eucharist which rendered them Jesus’ equals.⁸⁷ Their lives were not normal lives, but lives that had crossed the boundaries of conventional Roman society into no-man’s land where divinities resided. Within their communities, they were creating heaven on earth.

Though technologies of extreme body control, disciplined study, and regular participation in the sacraments, they sought revelation and vision. These technologies prompted heavenly journeys to see Jesus and worship before God’s throne.⁸⁸ Knowledge of the passage through the heavenly realms appears to have been taught and memorized.⁸⁹ The goal was for the mystic to gaze upon God before death, in order not to die: “Gaze upon the Living One while you are alive, in case you die and then seek to see him, and will not be able to see (him) ($\text{ἸΩΩΥΤ ἸΝΑ ΠΕΤΟΝΖ ΖΩΣ ΕΤΕΤἸΟΝΖ ΖΙΝΑ ΧΕ ΝΕΤἸΜΟΥ ΑΥΩ ἸΤΕΤἸ-ϞΙΠΕ ἘΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΥ ΑΥΩ ΤΕΤΝΑΩἸΜἸ ἸΟΜ ΑΝ ἘΝΑΥ}$).”⁹⁰ Once ascended, the mystic would meet his or her divine twin or self, the Image that had been lost when Adam sinned.⁹¹

85 *Gospel of Thomas* 22 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex* 11,2-7, 62-63).

86 *Gospel of Thomas* 37 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex* 11,2-7, 68-69); cf. 21.6-8; 27; 110 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex* 11,2-7, 62-63; 64-65; 92-93). Cf. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 112-113; 129-132; 290-291.

87 *Gospel of Thomas* 13, 61, 108 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex* 11,2-7, 58-59; 74-77; 90-91). Cf. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 83-87; 200-204; 287-288.

88 *Gospel of Thomas* 15, 37 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex* 11,2-7, 60-61; 68-69). Cf. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 92-93.

89 *Gospel of Thomas* 50 (Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex* 11,2-7, 72-73). Cf. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 180-182.

90 *Gospel of Thomas* 59 (Layton 1989, 74-75). Cf. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 197-198.

91 *Gospel of Thomas* 84 (Layton 1989, 84-85). Cf. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 248-249.

The story here is of a Christian community in Syria whose members no longer thought it prudent to wait for death or for the eschaton to enter the kingdom and be immortalized. Now that the age of the resurrection was upon them, instead of waiting for heaven to come to them, they decided to invade Eden, believing that God's eschatological promises were available to them in the present. With the collapse of the eschaton into a pathway of mysticism based on the daily regimen of extreme body control and celibacy, they thought they had become Adam and Eve in Paradise, that they were living in God's presence already.

With the possible exception of Bardaisan and the Quqites, the Christians of the *Gospel of Thomas* were not unlike Christians throughout the rest of eastern Syria, who for the first couple of hundred years demanded celibacy and asceticism *as a prerequisite* to join the church.⁹² The early Syrian literature from Nag Hammadi to the apocryphal acts to the patristic records show us a form of Christianity in Syria that was severely ascetic, honoring the solitary single life over the married. For these Christians, baptism occurred only after the proselytes had proven they could live as celibate single people. For some like the Elchasaites, once baptized, they endured daily washings and other renunciations of the body to regularly extinguish their passions, which they felt made it possible for them to restore their souls to the glorious Image of God and live as angels.⁹³

The restriction of this solitary lifestyle to a special group of Christians did not occur until Aphrahat (270–345 CE). In his writings we begin to hear about a privileged monastic class (the “sons and daughters of the covenant”) alongside the otherwise married members of the Syrian church. It is not surprising that this is the same time period that the eremitic life and the cenobitic life were emerging in Egypt as alternatives to the married life. It is within the clois-

92 Arthur Vööbus, *Celibacy, A Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church* (Stockholm: Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951); S.P. Brock, “Early Syrian Asceticism,” *Numen* 20 (1973), 1–19; Robert Murray, *Symbols of the Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 4–24; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 83–102; Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). See also Hendrik Jan Willem Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 6 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1966), 190 and 226; idem, “Quq and the Quqites,” *Numen* 14 (1967), 104–129; idem, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* (Leiden: Brill, 1980).

93 Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, “Elchasaites and Their Book,” in Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, eds., *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics,”* svC 76 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 335–364.

ter that mysticism as a daily regimen eventually becomes the prerogative of monks and nuns throughout medieval Christendom.

6 Mysticism as Personal Therapy

The use of mysticism as ritual therapy to heal the soul is most developed within Christian gnostic circles. I exercise here my thesis that *the gnostic* is a new cognitive structure and category, manifesting in the first-century Mediterranean region as an emergent form of spirituality, a metaphysical worldview that engages multiple religious affiliations, reformatting existing religions and generating new religious movements.⁹⁴ As a spirituality, it is transtheistic in its theological orientation. God is transcendent (beyond the cosmos and beyond all other gods) and only knowable through direct experience prompted by particular rites of initiation. The human spirit is understood to be an innate extension of this transcendent God, and thus capable of knowing him. While these groups have left behind a variety of stories about the fall of the soul/spirit and sets of rituals they believed transported the soul/spirit back to its source, behind the accounts and ceremonies is the conviction that the true self has been separated from its primal root and lives in a state of anxiety and terror. The only thing that could bring healing is initiation into God's mysteries, when the divided self can be reunited with its transcendent source.

In their accounts, the primal God is a transcendent being who overflows like a fountain or generates divinities in his own image. This process of differentiation, when the One becomes the Many, generates different realms of existence, including our own. This process of differentiation did not result in clones of the transcendent God, but copies that eventually deteriorate or become severed as they individuate. The process produces trauma. Left in the wake of God's individuation is anxiety, fear, terror, suffering, isolation and remorse. And a human self, considered by gnostics, to be God-within. This true self is unconscious, trapped in psychic and bodily layers of delusions, emotions and damaging appetites. It is alienated, damaged by a primordial split it could not control. Its alienation is the cause of our deepest human anxieties and fears.

94 April D. DeConick, *The Ancient New Age: How Gnostic Spirituality Revolutionized Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). For a more detailed presentation of this thesis, see April D. DeConick, "Crafting Gnosis: Gnostic Spirituality in the Ancient New Age," in Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus, eds., *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honor of John D. Turner*, NHMS 82 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 285–305 in addition to DeConick, *The Ancient New Age*.

The bottom line is that the anxieties and fears that plague all of us live deep within our unconscious, where the deep self, the God-within is buried and asleep.

Many gnostic groups used several types of ceremonies to cure this trauma, to return the divided self to the transcendent God. Therapeutic rituals of the first type are quickening ceremonies. These types of ceremonies were designed to awaken the person's God-part (most often referred to as the *spirit*) from its slumber or unconsciousness. These rituals were often conceived as underworld journeys, when the incubating initiate was awakened in Hades, usually by a divine being who had come from the transcendent world as an emissary.

In the Naassene performance, for instance, the initiates are awakened with the smack of Hermes' or Christ's staff and then baptized or birthed from the primal waters.⁹⁵ Among Sethians, the call of the goddess Forethought startles them awake to their first baptism, which they call the Five Seals. In this ceremony, the goddess Forethought calls out to the initiate who sleeps in the darkness of Hades, "Get up from the deep sleep ([ΤΩΟ]ΥΝ ΕΒΟΛ Ζῆ ΦΙΝΗΒ ΕΤΖΟΡ[Ω])!" The initiate awakens and demands to know who calls him. Forethought responds, "I am Forethought of pure light ... Arise and remember you are the one who has heard (ΑΝΟΚ ΤΕ ΤΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ ΜΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΕΤῆΒΗΓ ... ΤΩΟΥΝΚ ΑΥΩ ΝΚΡ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΧΕ ΝΤΟΚ ΠΕΝΤΑΖΩΤῆ)" Forethought seals him in luminous water so that death may no longer have power over him (ΑΥΩ ΔΕΙΤΟΥΝΟΥΣ ἦΜΟΥ ΑΥΩ ΔΕΙΦΡΑΓΙΖΕ ἦΜΟΥ Ζῆ ΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΜΠΜΟΥ Ζῆ ἴε ΝΣΦΡΑΓΙΣ ΧΕΚΑΔΣ ἦΝΕΠΜΟΥ ΣῆΣΑΜ ΕΡΟΥ Χῆ ΜΠΙΝΑΥ).⁹⁶ The Peratic initiate is awakened in the bowels of hell, only to find himself struggling against Kronos who controls the waters of primal chaos. The prayer opens with these words:

Ἐγὼ φωνῆ ἔξυπνισμοῦ ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῆς νυκτός.
 λοιπὸν ἄρχομαι γυμνοῦν τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ Χάους δύναμιν.
 ἢ δύναμις τοῦ ἀβυσσικοῦ θολοῦ,
 ἢ τὸν πηλὸν ἀναβαστάζουσα τοῦ ἀφθάρτου ἀχανοῦς διύγρου,
 ἢ τοῦ σπάσματος ὅλη δύναμις ...

95 Hippolytus, *Refutation* 5.7,19; 5.7,30–34; 5.8,42–43; 5.9,21–22, Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Hippolytus, Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, PTS 25 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 147; 150–152; 163–164; 170.

96 *Apocryphon of John* NHC II,1 30.33–31.25 (Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, eds., *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2*, NHMS 33 [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 170–175); Cf. *Trimorphic Protennoia* NHC XIII,1 36.4–26; 40.30–37 (Charles Hedrick, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, NHC 28 [Leiden: Brill, 1990], 404–405; 412–413).

I am the voice of one who has awakened from sleep in the realm of night.

Now I begin to struggle with the Power that has sprung from Chaos, the Power of the abyss of mud, what supports the clay of the boundless expanse swollen with water, the utter Power of the earthquake ...⁹⁷

The goal of these ceremonies is to quicken the human spirit, to make the initiate aware of their authentic God-selves.

Rituals of the second type are cathartic in nature, purging the spirit of its emotional and psychic accretions. These rituals usually are dramatized as ascents through the celestial spheres, where each of the archons who created and control various aspects of the human being are thwarted and overcome. This was perceived to be a gradual ascent of the soul through the heavenly territories of the archons where the initiate came face to face with each demon, avenged the demon through a powerful prayer, direct naming, and the display of a potent object or sign. These rituals were meant to strip away everything that had encumbered and enslaved their true selves in the realm of temporality. These cathartic ceremonies were conducted gradually, so that initiates moved through the various heavens and star houses, usually in some ritual sequence.

We have many examples of these cathartic ceremonies, but we have the most extensive knowledge of one these ceremonies, *The Seal*, as performed by Ophian gnostics.⁹⁸ From the testimony of the Roman philosopher Celsus and the Christian teacher Origen of Alexandria, we are able to reconstruct the actual star route that the Ophians journeyed through the demonic territories of the skies, their prayers of demonic defeat, the secret names of the demons, and references to the objects they used in this cathartic process.⁹⁹

97 Hippolytus, *Refutation* 5.14.1–10 (Marcovich, *Hippolytus, Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, 177–180). For English translation of entire hymn, see April D. DeConick, “From the Bowels of Hell to Draco: The Mysteries of the Peratics,” in Liv Ingeborg Lied and John D. Turner, eds., *Mystery and Secrecy in the Nag Hammadi Collection and Other Ancient Literature: Ideas and Practices. Studies for Einar Thomassen at Sixty*, NHMS 76 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 3–38 at 7–11.

98 For an extensive recent treatment of the Ophians, see Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence*, NHMS 68 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

99 April D. DeConick, “The Road for the Soul is Through the Planets: The Mysteries of the Ophians Mapped,” in April D. DeConick, Gregory Shaw and John D. Turner, eds., *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Ancient Literature. Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson*, NHMS 85 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 37–74.

The exact route for their soul journey through the Zodiac houses aligns with the astrological teaching of the second-century Pythagorean philosopher, Numenius. Numenius taught that the soul ascended through the stargate Capricorn and makes its way around the nocturnal houses from Capricorn through Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, and exits via Cancer. The prayers of the Ophian gnostics follow this same pattern (thus there is no prayer to the archon of the sun and no mistake in Origen's report!), beginning their flight at the Capricorn gate with an encounter with its ruler, Ialdabaoth. The god is lion-shaped and ferocious. The initiate stands before him and defeats him with this prayer:

Βασιλέα μονότροπον, δεσμὸν ἀβλεψίας, λήθην ἀπερίσκεπτον ἀσπάζομαι, πρῶτην δύναμιν, πνεύματι προνοίας καὶ σοφίᾳ τηρουμένην· ἔνθεν εἰλικρινῆς πέμπομαι, φωτὸς ἤδη μέρος υἱοῦ καὶ πατρὸς· ἢ χάρις συνέστω μοι, ναὶ πάτερ, συνέστω.¹⁰⁰

Greetings! Solitary King, Bond of Blindness, Reckless Forgetting, First Power. I am guarded by the Spirit of Pronoia and by Sophia. Now I am sent forth pure. I am already part of the light of the Son and the Father. May Grace be with me. Yes, Father, may it be with me.¹⁰¹

Likewise the initiate overpowers Ialdabaoth again as ruler of the stargate Aquarius, then Iao Lord of the planet Jupiter and ruler of Pisces. Following this are prayers to defeat Sabaoth Lord of Mars and the stargate Aries, and then Astaphaeus King of Venus and the stargate Taurus. At the gate of Gemini, the initiate takes on the dog-faced Eloaeus, Lord of Mercury. Finally Horaeus the ass-faced ruler of the moon is vanquished at the stargate Cancer. This systematic defeat liberates the soul from the planets and allows for its release into the transcendent realms.¹⁰²

The final types of ceremonies that many gnostic groups performed are rituals of maturation and integration. These rituals are set in the transcendent realms. Once the bodily and psychic accretions have been peeled away, the spirit ventures into the transcendent realms, where it meets up with other divinities. The gnostic Justin explains that he personally escorts his initiates

100 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.31. Marcel Borret, ed., *Origène contre Celse. Books 5 and 6. Introduction, Texte Critique, Traduction et Notes*, volume 3. SC 150 (Paris: Cerf. 1969), 254.

101 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.31. English translation in DeConick, "The Road for the Soul is Through the Planets," 49.

102 DeConick, "The Road for the Soul is Through the Planets," 37–74.

through a star gate at the top of the celestial dome. On the other side sits God, and next to him is a bath of luminous water quite distinct from the water below the firmament where both “material and psychic men (οἱ χοϊκοὶ καὶ ψυχικοὶ ἄνθρωποι)” bathe. In the transcendent realm, the initiates must bathe in the “living water (ζῶν ὕδωρ)” in order to become “living men (ζῶντες ἄνθρωποι).”¹⁰³ The ritual bath in the transcendent spheres transforms the initiate into a *living man*, a self-sustaining divinity who is always welcome in God’s presence.

The Sethian gnostics have the most elaborate ceremonies to this end, believing that the transcendent world of the Father is layered and populated by divinities who are increasingly like the Father the closer the realm is to him.¹⁰⁴ In their maturation ceremonies, the initiates see the divine beings in each realm. Through special water and robing rituals, enthronements and glorifications, they are transfigured into each type of spiritual being progressively from the lowest to the highest rank.¹⁰⁵ This progressive transfiguration results in a divine status so elevated that the human spirit becomes the object of angelic praise.¹⁰⁶ Finally, this transfiguration of the human spirit ends with its integration into the highest level, the Invisible Spirit, as evinced in *Zostrianos*:

Apophantes with Aphropais the Virgin Light came before me and brought me into Protophanes, the great male perfect Mind (ΑΥΩ ΔΑΦΕΙ ΝΝΑΡΡΑΙ ΝΟΙ ΔΠΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ ΜΗ ΔΦΡΟΠΑΙΣ ΠΑΡΩΕΝΩΦΩΤΟΣ ΔΥΩ ΔΑΦΝΤ ΕΞΟΥΝ Ε ΠΙΠΡΩΤΟΦΑΝΗΣ Ν ΝΟΣ Ν ΖΟΥΥΤ Ν ΤΕΛΙΟΣ Ν ΝΟΥΣ). I saw all the divinities as they exist in one (ΑΥΩ ΔΙΝΑΥ Ε ΝΑΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΤΗΜΑΥ Μ ΠΡΗΤΕ ΕΤΟΥΥΟΟΠ ΜΜΟΣ ΝΡΡΑΙ ΖΝ ΟΥΑ). I united with them all (ΑΥΩ ΔΕΙΖΩΤΠ ΝΜΜΑΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ). I blessed the hidden Aeon, the virgin Barbelo and the Invisible Spirit (ΔΕΙΣΜΟΥΕ ΠΙΕΩΝ Ν ΚΛΣ ΜΗ ΨΒΑΡΒΗΛΩ Μ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ ΜΗ ΠΑΖΟΡΑΤΟΝ Μ ΠΝΑ).

103 Hippolytus, *Refutation* 5.27.1–3 (Marcovich, *Hippolytus, Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, 208–209).

104 For recent treatments, see John D. Turner, “From Baptismal Vision to Mystical Union with the One: The Case of the Sethian Gnostics,” in April D. DeConick, Gregory Shaw, and John D. Turner, eds., *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Ancient Literature. Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson*, NHMS 85 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 411–431; Dylan Burns, *Apocalypse of an Alien God: Platonism and the Exile of Sethian Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 95–139.

105 Cf. Birger A. Pearson, “Baptism in Sethian Gnostic Texts,” in David Hellholm et al., eds., *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, BZNW 176/1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 119–143.

106 *Trimorphic Protennoia* ΝΗC XIII.1 48.21–35 (Hedrick, *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, 428–429).

I became all-perfect and received power (ΑΥΘ ΔΕΙΦΩΠΕ Η ΠΑΝΤΕΛΙΟΣ ΔΕΙΧΙ ΣΟΜ). I was written in glory and sealed (ΑΥΣΑΖΤ ΖΗ ΠΕΘΟΥ ΔΥΡ ΟΦΡΑΓΙΖΕ ΗΜΟΕΙ). I received there a perfect crown (ΔΕΙΧΙ Η ΟΥΚΚΛΟΜ Η ΤΕΛΙΟΣ Η ΠΗΝΑ ΕΤΗΜΑΥ).¹⁰⁷

This integration was envisioned as a noetic ecstasy, something along the lines of a mind meld between the gnostic's spirit and God.

For the Naassenes, this final integration into God occurs when the spirit attains to the "Unoriginate (ἀγέννητος)," as God's bridegroom. The spirit becomes "god" when it passes through the third stargate (which is probably Taurus, since Venus, the third planet, rules this stargate) and enters "the house of God (οἶκος θεοῦ)."¹⁰⁸ This house is the transcendent world, the pleroma, where the soul and body cannot go during the initiation rites, but only the naked spirit. In this house, the initiates are fed milk and honey and become perfect males, a descriptor for the hermaphrodite god, also known as Man or Adamas.

For other gnostics, this integration is only provisional and temporary, until some eschatological moment made it permanent. This is the case with the Valentinian gnostics who seem to have regarded their second baptisms as heavenly wedding engagements, when the human spirits become the fiancées to their twin angels awaiting them in a sphere just outside the transcendent world. After death, the spirits ascend to this realm and live with their betrothed angels. At the eschaton, the brides and grooms follow Jesus and his bride Sophia into the transcendent world, which is transformed into a bridal chamber, and consummate their marriages in the noetic ecstasy of divine procreative eroticism. The Valentinian teacher Theodotus imagines it this way:

Then the spirits, having put off their souls, together with the Mother who escorts her Bridegroom, escort their bridegrooms who are their angels (τὸ δὲ ἐντεῦθεν ἀποθέμενα τὰ πνευματικὰ τὰς ψυχὰς ἅμα τῇ μητρὶ κομιζομένη τὸν νυμφίον, κομιζόμενα καὶ αὐτὰ τοὺς νυμφίους τοὺς ἀγγέλους ἑαυτῶν). They pass into the bridal chamber within the (pleroma's) limit and they have a spiritual vision (εἰς τὸν νυμφῶνα ἐντὸς τοῦ Ὄρου εἰσίσαι καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ὄψιν ἔρχονται). They have become noetic Aeons, in the noetic

107 Cf. *Zostrianos* NHC VIII,1 129.3–15. John Sieber, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, NHC 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 218–221.

108 Hippolytus, *Refutation* 5.8.30; 5.8.44–45 (Marcovich, *Hippolytus, Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, 161:164–165).

and eternal marriages of the syzyge (αἰῶνες νοεροὶ γενόμενα, εἰς τοὺς νοεροὺς καὶ αἰωνίους γάμους τῆς συζυγίας).¹⁰⁹

It is within gnostic groups in the second and third centuries that we find mysticism emerging as ritual therapy, to cure the damaged self. Their rituals worked to progressively advance the spirit from an initial awakening, through a gradual purification and maturation, to its final integration with God. When Jesus is mentioned, he is envisioned as a descendent power who brought down the rituals from the transcendent sphere and instructed us about their proper use. He is also viewed as a transcendent power who defeats the archons and establishes a pathway to return the spirit to the transcendent God. Because his name has powerful agency, many Gnostic communities chanted permutations of the personal name Jesus or some secret appellation of his (like IAO) in liturgical contexts as they engaged mysticism as ritual therapy.

7 Mysticism as Extreme Death

Mysticism engages martyrdom in early Christianity by deploying the ordeal of voluntary suffering and imminent extreme death as a traumatic technology associated with divine visions, ecstasy, and transformation. This is a pathway of mysticism already highly developed within Jewish circles, with roots as early as the book of Daniel and the reports of the Maccabees that martyrs would be immediately resurrected as a reward for their suffering.¹¹⁰ Jesus' own death was captured by the Christians within this framework, so that his resurrection was first understood as the immediate reward for his unjust suffering.¹¹¹ This bent the martyrdom frame along Christocentric lines and opened it up as a way for Christians to cope with the anti-Christian sentiments of Roman rulers. While the bodies of Christian martyrs are mauled, gored, eaten, sliced, pierced, flayed,

109 Clement of Alexandria, *Extracts of Theodotus* 64. François Sagnard, ed., *Clément d'Alexandre. Extraits de Théodote*, SC 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1948), 186.

110 Alan F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment," in Wolfgang Haase, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt: Principat II. Volume 23* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1333–1394 at 1368–1370.

111 April D. DeConick, "How We Talk About Christology Matters," in David Capes, April D. DeConick, Helen K. Bond, and Troy A. Miller, eds., *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honor of Larry Hurtado and Alan F. Segal* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 1–23 at 5–7. Cf. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent," 1370–1371.

and burnt in Christ's stead, their souls are freed to journey to heaven and rendezvous with angels, resurrected martyrs, Jesus and God.

Flavian, terrified that he might have to endure such an extreme death one day, asked Bishop Cyprian about how much suffering he could expect to experience before he finally died. Cyprian replied that the martyr feels nothing because he is in ecstasy: "It is another flesh that suffers when the soul is in heaven. The body does not feel this at all when the mind is entirely absorbed in God."¹¹² While the martyrs were marched to their deaths and God's kingdom, some Christians believed that the martyrs' minds and hearts were already there.¹¹³

In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the martyrs are recognized as the "noblest of Christ's witnesses" who are "not present in the flesh." Instead, they are in constant conversation with the Lord. The eyes of their souls are only focused on the promises of God, "which neither the ear has heard nor the eye seen, nor has it entered into the human heart." It is to the martyrs that the Lord has revealed his long-kept secrets, since these Christians were no longer humans, but angels.¹¹⁴ In fact, Agapius is said to have "perfected the mysteries of his faith by martyrdom."¹¹⁵

Like Stephen, the first martyr according to tradition, they were blessed with visions of Christ.¹¹⁶ Because their souls are "uplifted (*sublimis*)" by their extreme ordeals, it was believed that martyrs were permitted hear and see Christ before they died.¹¹⁷ As they hastened toward their crowns with eagerness and courage, they were rewarded with visions of the Lord.¹¹⁸ Their visions were not normal night dreams, but "revelations" granted to them by the grace of the Lord.¹¹⁹

Perpetua has visions of climbing up a ladder to heaven, where she, as one of Christ's new children, is given milk to drink by the Lord. But this is not

112 *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 21.4. Henry Mursurillo, ed., *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs: Introduction, Texts and Translations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 234–235.

113 *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 22.1–2. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 236–237.

114 *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 2. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 2–5.

115 *Martyrdom of Marian and James* 11. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 208–211.

116 Acts 7:54–60. Cf. Phillip B. Munoa, "Jesus, the Merkavah, and Martyrdom in Early Christian Tradition," *JBL* 121 (2002): 303–325.

117 *Martyrdom of Marian and James* 7.6. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 204–205.

118 *Martyrdom of Maximilian* 3.2. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 248–249.

119 *Martyrdom of Marian and James* 7. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 202–205.

Jacob's innocuous ladder. This ladder is laden with metal implements to rip through the skin of anyone who climbs it.¹²⁰ Similarly Quattilosa sees Christ in heaven as a young man with "remarkable stature." He is feeding the new martyrs (herself included) cups of milk.¹²¹ In another of Perpetua's visions, she sees herself morph into a man in an arena. She strips naked and is anointed with oil. She fights her opponent, an Egyptian soldier, defeats him and walks through the Gate of Life.¹²² James sees the Lord as an exceedingly gigantic and brilliant figure, so bright that he could not but glance at him. The Lord gives James and his fellow martyr Marian purple belts worn to gladiator games, and says to them, "Follow me." Just before Victor's execution, he reports to have seen Christ as a child with a brilliant countenance (beyond description!). He is told that he must suffer a while longer, but not to despair because Christ is with him. While his soul suffers, his spirit hastens to God.¹²³ In all these cases, the martyr's revelation confirms that the route to heaven is extreme death.

Martyrdom was recognized by the early Christians as an extreme death that imitated Jesus' death on a most fundamental and traumatic level. The acts of the martyrs are filled with confessions of panic, terror and horror. One observer in Lyons recognized two groups of arrested Christians. One group had been trained for martyrdom, so they gave full confessions of their faith "with great enthusiasm." The other group, however, was identified as "untrained, unprepared, and weak, unable to bear the strain of a great conflict."¹²⁴ The early Christians recognized that the ability to endure extreme suffering without breaking was not for everyone. It was a "calling (κλήσις)" for extreme devotees that required the training of an athlete to be able to withstand the strain of torture.¹²⁵ This may explain the constant references to martyrdom as a contest for the ultimate crown or as a battle for Christ to win his glory.

What did this training look like? While the Christians do not appear to have offered classes in Martyrdom 101, the literature characterizes martyrs as people who have spent their Christian life in intense devotion to God, so that the

120 *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 4.1–10. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 110–113.

121 *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 8. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 220–221.

122 *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 10. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 116–119.

123 *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 7.1–4. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 218–219.

124 *Martyrs of Lyons* 1.11. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 64–65.

125 *Letter of Phileas* 2. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 320–321.

Spirit has been continually nurtured within them.¹²⁶ There are constant comments in the literature to fervent and perpetual prayer, so that while the martyrs were still living on earth, “their souls lived in heaven.”¹²⁷ Old men who were exhausted with age and illness triumphed before the tribunals because they were strengthened and given power by the Lord in their souls and bodies.¹²⁸ The martyrs are said to have “won” their Glory with their eagerness and their courage to emulate Christ. Because they volunteered to die like Christ (and went through with it), like him they were believed to be already in the form of God, equal to God.¹²⁹

This meant that their bodies were extreme bodies. They could be tortured and broken beyond normal human limits and still endure. Blandina’s torturers were surprised that, after all they had done to her body, she still breathed.¹³⁰ Some, like Sanctus were so disfigured that they were beyond human recognition. It is said that Sanctus had achieved Christ’s Glory in suffering like Christ, so that on the second day of his trials, his body was reshaped, straightened and unbent. He was not being tortured, but “cured” through the destruction of his body and its subsequent transfiguration.¹³¹

This transfigured or glorified body is commented on frequently in the literature. It is the body beyond the human, now the body of a “man of heaven and of God.”¹³² When Perpetua finally goes to the arena to meet her death, she has a “shining countenance and calm step.”¹³³ It is revealed to Montanus that centurions will come and conduct him to a huge field where he will be joined by heroes like Cyprian and Leucius who have already died as martyrs. Montanus sees his own garments begin to glow and his body becoming even more brilliant than his clothing. He remarks, “Indeed [my] flesh became so luminous that the secrets of [my] heart could be seen.”¹³⁴ Likewise, Flavian has a vision

126 Regarding the devotion of Vettius Epagathus: *Martyrs of Lyons* 1.9–10. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 62–65.

127 *Martyrdom of Agape, Irene, and Chione at Saloniki* 1.3. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 280–281.

128 *Martyrs of Lyons* 1.28. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 70–71.

129 *Martyrs of Lyons* 2.2. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 82–83.

130 *Martyrs of Lyons* 1.18. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 66–67.

131 *Martyrs of Lyons* 1.24. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 68–69.

132 *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 17.2. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 230–231.

133 *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 18.2. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 126–127.

134 *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 11. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 222–225.

of a fellow martyr Successus whose face and garments glow. His form is difficult to recognize at first because he dazzled Flavian's eyes with "angelic brilliance (*angelico splendore*)."¹³⁵

How does it all end for the martyr? Saturnus is given a vision of his death and his sister's death as martyrs. In his vision, he and Perpetua are carried to the east by four angels where they see an intense light and enter a garden. They are taken to meet and greet the Lord, and to participate in the heavenly choir's rendition of "Holy, holy, holy!" They kiss the enthroned Lord and he touches their faces with his hand. Perpetua sighs with ecstasy, happy to be one of God's darlings.¹³⁶

8 Mysticism as Oracle

There is abundant evidence in the early Jewish and Christian literature that mysticism was undertaken to discern God's secrets. This has been particularly discussed by scholars as a thematic of apocalyptic literature, where we find confirmations of future punishments to equalize justice, assurances of resurrected bodies to reward faithfulness, and guarantees of God's management to deter chaos.¹³⁷ The same oracular function of mysticism emerges in the Hekhalot literature too.¹³⁸

Since this is the pathway most discussed in academic literature, I will only comment briefly on a single early Christian example, the Book of Revelation, where John of Patmos on Sunday, "the Lord's Day" was "in the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι)" when he began to receive revelations and visions from Christ.¹³⁹ This

135 *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 21.8. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 234–235.

136 *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 12. This kind of erotic language is not uncommon, especially for women martyrs who are often characterized as Christ's beloved, bride and wife. Cf. *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 18.2. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 126–127; *Martyrdom of Marian and James* 11.7. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 208–209; *Martyrs of Lyons* 1.48; 1.56. Mursurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 76–77; 78–81.

137 Classic studies include: David S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964); idem, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven* (London: SPCK, 1982); Paul D. Hanson, *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

138 James R. Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot: The People Behind the Hekhalot Literature*, JSJSS 70 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 293–294.

139 Revelation 1:10.

language suggests some kind of technology of ecstasy employed by John during Christian worship, but its exact nature is not related. Since there are frequent prayers recorded by John in his book, it may be that John used a prayer technology to prompt his visions. Indeed he records a series of three short prayers to Jesus Christ (replete with “amen”) prior to his first vision.¹⁴⁰

What were John’s revelations and visions about? They addressed a variety of practical concerns that the Christians had about their relationship to other Christians, Jews and pagans. Endurance in the face of martyrdom, however, is the highest priority. Jesus is identified as the faithful martyr, the first to be resurrected from the dead, whose blood sacrifice freed Christians from their sins and made them part of his kingdom.¹⁴¹ John’s visions reveal how essential it is for Christians, like Jesus, to endure imprisonment and torture, remaining faithful to Christ even to death.¹⁴² The Christian who stays true to the confession of Christ and conquers, will be crowned, enthroned and saved for a new life in the new Jerusalem that will descend from heaven in the not too distant future.¹⁴³ In a moment of ecstatic ascent, when John again was “in the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι),” he sees a door in heaven open and, on the other side, the Lord enthroned with four angelic creatures and twenty-four Christian elders praising him.¹⁴⁴ One hundred and forty-four thousand blameless martyrs who have followed the Lamb to slaughter are standing near his throne. They bear Jesus’ name, their confession, on their foreheads.¹⁴⁵

John further learns about the coming wrath of God. He is reassured in his visions that God has a remedy for what appears to be an unjust and chaotic world. It is confirmed for John that the judgment and eschaton are still in the works and that the Lord has everything under control. This is for John a fundamental truth that must be communicated. The biggest eschatological confirmation, however, is Christocentric. Christ assures him, “Surely I am coming soon (Ναί, ἔρχομαι ταχύ)!” To which John replies, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus (Ἀμήν, ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ)!”¹⁴⁶

140 Revelation 1:4–7.

141 Rev 1:5–6.

142 Rev 2:2–3, 10–11; 3:11; etc.

143 Rev 3:11–12, 21.

144 Rev 4:1.

145 Rev 14:3–5.

146 Rev 22:20.

9 Mysticism as Worship

One of the most typical pathways of mysticism is worship. While examples abound in Christian literature, the *Ascension of Isaiah* provides a helpful description that links the experience of ascent and heavenly worship with communities of trained early Christian prophets. The communities consist of devotees who have withdrawn from Bethlehem into a mountainous region in order to be as isolated as possible from the governing authorities and their sins.¹⁴⁷ Their lifestyle is austere (even severe), clothed in sackcloth in imitation of the ancestral prophets and subsisting on a diet of cooked wild herbs gathered from the mountainside.¹⁴⁸ Their retreat to the mountainous regions as ascetics appears to have been an act of resistance against the local rulers whose reign was felt to be the cause of great apostasy and iniquity. In fact, they believed that the governing authorities were agents of Beliar and servants of Satan.¹⁴⁹ Whenever these prophets made forays down the mountain into local Palestinian communities, they anticipated possible abuse, imprisonment, and death at the hands of the local authorities.¹⁵⁰ Additional conflict arose among the Christians themselves who contested leadership between the elders who governed their local communities and the prophets who occasionally descended from the mountains with tales of their ocular visions.¹⁵¹

It appears that prophets from different districts would descend from their mountaintop neighborhoods to hold an occasional summit with the local Christian communities for the purposes of guided contemplation and worship.¹⁵² As the congregation kneeled, a prophetic leader invoked the opening of the door of heaven. Once the door was opened, the community heard the voice of the Holy Spirit. Through the open door, they worshiped and praised God on their knees.¹⁵³ The leader then spoke directly with the Holy Spirit, a conversation that was overheard by the community. At some point, however, the leader fell silent, ascending out of his body through the open door into the seven heavenly realms. After experiencing worship in the heavenly temple and its transformative effects, he returns to recount his visions to his fellow prophets.¹⁵⁴

147 *Ascen. Isa.* 2.7–10.

148 *Ascen. Isa.* 2.10–11.

149 *Ascen. Isa.* 2.2–5.

150 *Ascen. Isa.* 2.12–16.

151 *Ascen. Isa.* 3.21–31.

152 *Ascen. Isa.* 6.3–10.

153 *Ascen. Isa.* 6.5–6.

154 *Ascen. Isa.* 6.10–10.6.

His vision confirms the perpetual worship of God within the heavenly realms by all the angels, so that their worship through the open door joins human and angel in the act of utter devotion.

10 Mysticism as Empowerment

This pathway of mysticism involves technologies that prompt immediate contact with God in order to transfigure and empower the person to control sickness, human affairs and even cosmic events. Mysticism as empowerment is about using established rituals to collapse the chasm between the human and God, to ascend into the celestial spheres or bring angels down, to learn the divine mysteries, to be transfigured and vested with power. In their oldest form, they must reflect the dispersal of shamanic practices in urban centers across the Mediterranean.¹⁵⁵ Merkavah mystics, according to *Hekhalot Rabbati*, acquire a list of supernatural powers in order to act as authorities and arbitrators for the people, even representing the people before God in the celestial temple and serving as heavenly priests.¹⁵⁶ According to this list, the mystic gained the power to bind angels to himself, compel angels to take him to the throne of Glory to stand next to God, to learn about future, to discern human activities (even those done in secret), to bring plague and disease upon his opponents (and sores dripping with pus), to be feared by angels and humans, and to judge the moral fitness of others. Peter Schäfer goes so far as to suggest that the merkavah mystic is God's chosen, ascribed with qualities of a messiah.¹⁵⁷

While this mode of mysticism is very well attested by the Hekhalot literature, by comparison in the early Christian context it is less typical.¹⁵⁸ The one prominent case is Paul who in 2 Corinthians 12 claims to have gained the power of Christ by ascending into the heavens. He wields this power now as a true apostle capable of performing "signs and wonders and mighty works." We might be able to conclude from Paul's rhetoric that his opponents, the super-apostles

155 Cf. Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*.

156 *Hekhalot Rabbati* 1.2–2.3; 9.2–3 and 16.5. Cf. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition," 20–21.

157 Peter Schäfer, *Hekhalot-Studien*, TSAJ 19 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 292–293.

158 Cf. Rebecca Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Harrisburg: Trinity International Press, 1998); Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*; Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

from Jerusalem, also linked their ability to perform miracles to the power of Christ they acquired when they made their own ascents into heaven.¹⁵⁹

While there are plenty of examples of Christians wielding power as magicians invoking Jesus' name, they usually do not do so as mystics who have ventured into the otherworld to meet the angels and God, to be transformed and empowered, to bend the divinities to their will or to bring back remedies.¹⁶⁰ Yet a few extant magical papyri contain spells that adjure the seven archangels, the twenty-four elders, or the four cherubim to come down out of heaven and do the magician's bidding.¹⁶¹ In one such spell, the Christian magician asks for Michael to come and add his power to the magician's. Michael descends and tells him, "What are you asking for? I shall do it for you. If you ask for the stone, I shall break it. If for iron, I shall turn it into water."¹⁶² Michael is praised in another spell where the magician is supposed to draw his power down with these words: "You powers on high, come. Dance to the Holy Spirit with me today. Let the sun and the moon and all the stars stand with me today ... Let the gates of heaven open and the angels of light come to me, so that I may complete the holy praise." What is this praise good for? If it is chanted every month for sixty months, healing will be granted.¹⁶³

In another, the angels are called down directly to stand with the magician and wield their powers.¹⁶⁴ Given the names of the divinities invoked, this is likely a Christian gnostic spell. The most interesting of these gnostic spells is one found in the recently published Macquarie Papyri, Christian grimoire reflecting Sethian vocabulary. The magician calls upon Jesus, "Come, be at rest in my heart and do everything for which I invoke you in this mystery (ΑΜΟΥ ΚΕΜΤΟΝ (Μ)ΟΚ ΖΡΑΙ ΖΗΠΛΑΖΗΤ ΝΚΙΡΕ ΝΖΩΒ ΝΙΜ ΕΙΕΠΙΚΑΔΙ ΜΟΚ ΕΤΒΗΤΟΥ ΖΝ ΠΙΜΕΣΤΕΡΕΜΑ)."¹⁶⁵ The adjurations include healing spells, love charms and binding invocations.

159 Morray-Jones, "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12:1–12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate, Part 2: Paul's Heavenly Ascent and Its Significance," 269–274; James D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise in its Greco-Roman, Judaic and Early Christian Contexts* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), 23.

160 For examples of Christian magic, see Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994). Not one spell in the collection attests that Christians were using mysticism as a means of empowerment.

161 Cf. Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, spells 36, 63, 66, 71, 116, 117, 135.

162 Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, spell 116.

163 Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, spell 135.

164 Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, spell 71.

165 Macquarie Papyri 2.3–5. Malcolm Choat and Iain Gardner, eds., *The Macquarie Papyri: A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*, volume 1 (Turnout: Brepols, 2013), 46–47.

These spells confirm what Plotinus tells us about the gnostics who attended his lectures. He knows them as prominent healers who worked from sacred formulas they had written, uttering spells, appeasements, and evocations to the transcendent or supernal powers in order to free themselves of diseases. To wield the power of the transcendent divinities, they relied on performing particular melodies and sounds, including popping noises, directed breathings and hissing.¹⁶⁶ Why did these gnostics think they were able to brandish the powers of the transcendent, something that Plotinus himself regarded as impossible? The answer lies in the fact that the gnostics were perfected during initiation, themselves transformed into transcendent divinities. Because of this divinization, they believed themselves to be nobler than everything else, including even the traditional gods and the heavens too. As Plotinus relates, they were kin to the supernal powers, children of the true God.¹⁶⁷ It was on this basis that they wielded their power to heal.

Similar therapeutic practices were fostered in the Valentinian church of Marcus. Marcus' church was different from other Valentinian churches in that his was a church for pneumatics only.¹⁶⁸ To join his church meant to be initiated directly into the transcendent realms and united with one's angelic twin during a theatrical (and likely psychedelic) revamped eucharist ceremony. His congregants, transformed into supernal beings, recited therapeutic chants to the great Mother, and thought that the pronouncement of A-M-E-N harnessed the entire power of the divine world to bring about psychological and physical healing. They also vocalized sets of mute letters, semi-vowels, and vowels, which they believed corresponded to different deities in the supernal realm. These pronouncements, along with the name J-E-S-O-U-S, were the powerful sounds of creation, and could be harnessed by the perfected gnostic to heal. Marcus guided his congregation in the ritual intonation of the long vowel ôôô in order to relieve personal distress. He believed ô is a universal letter of healing since babies cry out this vowel whenever they are suffering or in need. According to Marcus, when the distressed soul calls out this vowel in prayer, the soul's angelic twin hears it and sends down relief from the transcendent world above.¹⁶⁹

Likely the most well-known example from antiquity of mysticism as empowerment is the *Mithras Liturgy*.¹⁷⁰ This Greek magical papyrus is not Christian

166 Plotinus, *Ennead* 2.9.14.

167 Plotinus, *Ennead* 2.9.9.

168 DeConick, *The Ancient New Age*.

169 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.13–20, especially 1.14.7–8.

170 Betz (Hans Dieter Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy,"* STAC 18 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003]) argues persuasively for a Hermetic connection.

but may be representative of the early Hermetic tradition. It attests to the recitation of peculiar prayers and letter strings, the issuing of popping sounds, the use of breathing techniques, and the handling and kissing of amulets to enable the soul to ascend safely through the celestial realms. The magician is transfigured into a star deity and comes directly into contact with Helios and the Bear (the Pole God), although he never seems to reach the transcendent deity beyond the sun and the stars. These techniques of mysticism are used to bring about the magician's immortalization, a condition that yields extreme power and vast knowledge. The magician notes that there is "no greater procedure" in all the world than immortalization. Once immortalized, simply "ask the God what you want, and he will give it to you (τοῦτου μείζον' οὐχ εἶρον ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ πραγματεῖαν. Αἰτοῦ δέ, ἃ βούλει, τὸν θεόνμ καὶ δώσει σοι)."¹⁷¹

This interest in the immortalizing or deifying aspect of magic surfaces in second-century Platonism when the word *theurgia*, or divine (*theion*) activity (*ergon*), comes into play to describe the deifying effect of Chaldean rituals. In these rituals, the magician, while in ecstasy, is possessed by the God and is transformed into a living image of that God.¹⁷² The *Chaldean Oracles* is a collection that preserves remnants of these rituals which, by "joining action to sacred speech," prompt the ascent of the soul through the seven planetary spheres, enabling it to "embrace" or "squeeze" (*agchô*) God into itself in an experience of divine inebriation.¹⁷³ The book is associated with the Julians who lived during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. They were a father-son team, ecstasies who used ancient rituals to channel Plato's soul, heal and make rain.¹⁷⁴

The most well-known theurgist in antiquity was Iamblichus, the fourth-century Neo-Platonist. Iamblichus believed that the soul's transformation, the recovery of its divinity, was not some intellectual exercise. Rather it involved a practice, a technology of rites that Pythagoras and Plato received from people even more ancient than themselves. It was the heirs of Plato who misunderstood and turned the technology, the art of divine experience and embrace, into an intellectual discourse and discursive habit that could not penetrate or transform the soul.¹⁷⁵ The wielding of theurgical rites of sacrifice, incantations,

171 *Mithras Liturgy* 777–778. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy,"* 58.

172 Gregory Shaw, "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," *Traditio* 41 (1985): 1–28.

173 *Chaldean Oracles* 110. Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Studies in Greek and Roman Religion 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 90–91 = *Chaldean Oracles* 97. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 86–87.

174 Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, 6–9.

175 Gregory Shaw, "The Talisman: Magic and True Philosophers," in Angela Voss and Jean Hinson Lall, eds., *The Imaginal Cosmos: Astrology, Divination, and the Sacred* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007), 26–37.

chants, hymns and prayers, Iamblicus claims, is practice of true philosophy, resulting in the human being taking the shape of the Gods. Theurgy, then, is demiurgy.¹⁷⁶ Yet it does not compel the gods, but moves us toward them.¹⁷⁷

The Christian response to Neo-Platonic theurgy was twofold. Augustine of Hippo characterized it as the invention of lying demons and the very soul of paganism, of no value whatsoever to Christians.¹⁷⁸ The fifth-century Christian, Dionysus the Areopagite, however, recognized in theurgy the operation of the Christian sacraments. He called the sacraments “theurgic mysteries” (*ta theourgia mystêria*) with Christ as their “cause” (*archê*) and “essence” (*ousia*).¹⁷⁹ For him, the eucharist is theurgy *par excellence*, because it relied on the power of Christ to transform fallen humans into God. And so with Dionysus we return to where we started, with mysticism as sacrament, the mystery of Jesus Christ.

11 Trauma as Ecstatic Technology

While the pathways of mysticism emergent among the early Christians are quite divergent (from sacrament to schooling to daily regimen to personal therapy to extreme death to oracle to worship to empowerment), there are deep reoccurring elements within the modes that require comment, particularly the association of trauma, ecstasy and the (re)formation of the self.

In fact, my observations of the early Christian materials has led me to think that the mystical experience and its transformative capacity to alter the self may hinge on the traumatic. On the one hand, each mode is trodden by people who are facing traumatic life events like conversion, illness, colonization, and martyrdom. The trauma here is unsolicited or spontaneous. It is involuntary. On the other hand, the kinds of rituals and extreme body technologies used to catalyze transcendence in each of these modes can be viewed as ways to intentionally traumatize the individual, to dissociate the person from normal society and from a normal sense of self. The trauma here is self-induced and voluntary. It is imposed and regulated by the person undergoing the ritual or the people administering the ritual.

176 Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 45–57.

177 Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries* 5.11 (215.3–7).

178 Augustine, *City of God* 10.10.

179 Pseudo-Dionysus, *Epistle* 9.1 (PG 3.1108A); *Eccl. Hier.* 1.1 (PG 3.372A). Cf. Shaw, “Theurgy,” 3.

In its sacramental mode, we have conversion to the Christian faith and all the trauma that this apostasy entails personally and socially as the initiate is reborn into a new family and forfeits the old life. Both as a schooled discipline and as a daily regimen, the initiate is trained to be an ideal Christian, taking on the peculiar moral and ethical standards of the new religion. To live as a perpetual contemplative (in the case of Clement's *paideia*) or as a celibate angel (in the case of early forms of encratism, asceticism, and monasticism) is to break with normal pathways of living, and take on extreme bodies and extreme lives. Mysticism that empowers, divines, and heals hinges on traumatic experiences of illness, dissonance, and hopelessness. Its strength is its attempt to cure disease and anxiety, alleviate disaffection and disillusionment, and ease isolation and ignorance. The trauma of arrest, imprisonment, trial, torture and imminent death of the martyrs goes without saying.

I am not the first to notice a connection between trauma and mysticism. In fact, this has been a reoccurring theme in the scholarship of Jeffrey J. Kripal who says that he first noticed it when he read Georges Bataille's *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality* in 1987. Building on the insights he gained from Bataille's work, Kripal went on to develop the concept of *the traumatic secret*.¹⁸⁰ He defines this as the observation that, very often, "the mystical event or altered state of consciousness appears to have been 'let in' through the temporary suppression or dissolution of the socialized ego, which was opened up or fractured ... through extreme physical, emotional, and/or sexual suffering, that is, through what we would today call in our new psychological code 'trauma.'"¹⁸¹ Kripal understands the trauma to be a psychological correlate, even a catalyst, for mystical states of consciousness, although he does not think that the traumatic fracture produces them. Rather the trauma "allows" the mystical state to break through an otherwise stable ego.¹⁸² He notes that this dynamic is largely unexplored by scholars because it is "counterintuitive and morally difficult" to imagine that positive religious experiences can be catalyzed by events that are morally reprehensible or physically horrific. And yet, just as Bataille argued before him, Kripal is convinced that transcendence and trauma are "very much coordinated."¹⁸³

What is it about the traumatic that might catalyze or prompt altered states of consciousness and alterations of the self, usually expressed in early Chris-

180 Jeffrey J. Kripal, "The Traumatic Secret: Bataille and the Comparative Erotics of Mystical Literature," in Jeremy Biles and Kent L. Brintnall, eds., *Negative Ecstasies: Georges Bataille and the Study of Religion* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 153–168 at 155–157.

181 Kripal, "The Traumatic Secret," 155.

182 Kripal, "The Traumatic Secret," 155.

183 Kripal, "The Traumatic Secret," 156.

tian texts in transcendent terms as reformations of the self into a body of glory simulating the glorious body of Jesus Christ, and a mind that has come to know God's secrets? To answer this question, I think it is necessary to bring into the discussion recent studies in cognitive science and neurophysiology. It has been documented by the modern medical and scientific community that people who undergo trauma, especially repetitively, can experience dissociative states of consciousness that result from the aggressive triggering of the autonomic nervous system, the body's fight-or-flight response to survive.¹⁸⁴

The autonomic nervous system has two main modes of operation, the sympathetic and parasympathetic modes. The sympathetic mode is responsible for our body's ability to become instantly alert. It produces our body's fight-or-flight reaction and the corresponding emotions, anxiety, fear and panic. When this mode is triggered, it immediately increases heart rate and breathing, pumps adrenaline into the bloodstream, and dilates our pupils, as it gets the body ready for instant action. The parasympathetic mode is our body's natural response to relax by decreasing heart rate and breathing, lulling us into rest and sleep, and quieting us so that we can digest food and mate. When this system is operationally dominant, we tend to be emotionally peaceful.¹⁸⁵

Dissociative states of consciousness, triggered by the hyperstimulation of the sympathetic nervous system, can be characterized by feelings of depersonalization or detachment from the immediate surroundings, even separation from one's own body and memories. There can be feelings of derealization, when the person experiences the slipping away from normal reality. Feelings of possession are also quite common, as well as sensations of self-fragmentation and the emergence of a new self. These dissociative characteristics are not all that different from the commonly occurring features of ecstatic states of consciousness that characterize mysticism. They too often include an awareness of disembodiment, a disconnection from the world, an altered sense of the self and its boundaries, and the emergence of a new self.¹⁸⁶ The difference appears to be one of quality not type, that is, whether the experience of the altered state

184 Cf. Jonathan E. Sherin and Charles B. Nemeroff, "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: The Neurological Impact of Psychological Trauma," *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience* 13:3 (2011): 263–278; Stanley Krippner and Susan Marie Powers, eds., *Broken Images, Broken Selves: Dissociative Narratives in Clinical Practice* (Washington, D.C.: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1997).

185 For a more detailed description, see Eugene D'Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 23–27.

186 Cf. Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 71.

of consciousness is a negative or positive one, whether “life-depotentiating” or “life-potentiating,” whether maladaptive or adaptive.¹⁸⁷

This leads me to think that the basic biological platform that supports ecstasy also supports dissociation disorders that can be maladaptive. There have been some eye-opening studies on the biology of ecstasy that identify the actual brain structures, which undergo increased activity during ecstasy. These structures involve a neurophysiological circuit that engages the limbic system, portions of the basal ganglia, the right temporal lobe, and the dorsomedial, orbitofrontal, and right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. The parietal lobes usually undergo deactivation. This brain circuit is regulated mainly by dopamine and serotonin neurotransmitter systems.¹⁸⁸ Additional research shows that the basic biology supporting ecstatic states, like dissociative states following trauma, relies on overstimulation of the autonomic nervous system.¹⁸⁹

Ecstasy, in fact, can be prompted by overstimulating either system. The parasympathetic system can be made to go into overdrive, even to the point of producing a total loss of bodily sensations, through intentional stillness and silence or low-key repetitive behaviors like chanting or drumming. This effects a hyperquiescent state and an extraordinary state of relaxation, bliss,

187 Stanley Krippner, “Dissociation in Many Times and Places,” in Stanley Krippner and Susan Marie Powers, eds., *Broken Images, Broken Selves: Dissociative Narratives in Clinical Practice* (Washington, D.C.: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1997), 3–40 at 33; Rhea A. White, “Dissociation, Narrative, and Exceptional Human Experiences,” in Stanley Krippner and Susan Marie Powers, eds., *Broken Images, Broken Selves: Dissociative Narratives in Clinical Practice* (Washington, D.C.: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1997), 88–121 at 103–104.

188 Cf. Patrick McNamara, *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 80–130; Andrew B. Newberg, “Religious and Spiritual Practices: A Neurochemical Perspective,” in Patrick McNamara, ed., *Where God and Science Meet. Vol. 2. The Neurology of Religious Experience* (Westport: Praeger, 2006), 15–31.

189 E. Gellhorn and F. Kiely, “Mystical States of Consciousness: Neurophysiological and Clinical Aspects,” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 154 (1972): 399–405; Barbara Lex, “The Neurobiology of Ritual Trance,” in Eugene G. D’Aquili, Charles D. Laughlin, and John McManus, eds., *The Spectrum of Ritual: A Biogenetic Structural Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 117–151; Arnold Mandell, “Toward a Psychobiology of Transcendence: God in the Brain,” in Julian M. Davidson and Richard J. Davidson, eds., *The Psychobiology of Consciousness* (New York: Plenum, 1980), 379–464; Charles D. Laughlin, John McManus, and Eugene G. D’Aquili, *Brain, Symbol and Experience: Towards a Neurophenomenology of Human Consciousness* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1992); Andrew B. Newberg and Eugene G. D’Aquili, “The Neuropsychology of Religious and Spiritual Experience,” *Journal of Conscious Studies* 7 (2000): 251–266; Andrew B. Newberg, Eugene G. D’Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won’t Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001). For a fascinating application of to shamanism, see Michael Winkelman, *Shamanism: A Biopsychosocial Paradigm of Consciousness and Healing* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010).

and oceanic tranquility. The sympathetic mode can be intentionally overstimulated by engaging in deliberate trauma, rapid repeated behaviors, and extreme activities. This results in a state of hyperarousal. While this hyperstimulation has its own correlation to ecstatic states of boundless energy and flow, when pushed to the extreme, the sympathetic mode can run on high until the body becomes exhausted and collapses. At this point, the state of hyperarousal is erupted by the quiescent system. The parasympathetic system kicks in and we are back to feelings of oceanic tranquility, but now with an orgasmic, rapturous rush.¹⁹⁰

The consequences of the hyperstimulation of the autonomic nervous system and the brain circuitry (including the amygdala, prefrontal, and right anterior temporal networks) through trauma and/or religious ritual appear to involve a decentering or destabilizing of the normal ego self and sensations of transformations into a new self. How a new better self (or a negative one in the case of dissociation that is maladaptive) emerges from these experiences remains an unresolved question, although the neuroscientist Patrick McNamara has offered one possible model that might provide us with as a starting point.¹⁹¹

While this brief consideration of neurophysiological observations does not even begin to provide us with all the answers we seek, it does allow us to snap together a couple of pieces of the bigger puzzle. It demonstrates that mystical states of consciousness are supported by a particular biology and that this biology can be triggered by hyperstimulating the autonomic nervous system through ritual and trauma. The early Christians developed several pathways of mysticism replete with ritual technologies that were linked to trauma in order to experience the mystery of Jesus Christ, which was, for them, the reformatting of their souls into images of God. For them, this was not just a metaphor or a feat of the imagination. It was a biological reality.

190 Eugene D'Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 25–26.

191 McNamara, *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience*.

The Importance of the Parables of *1 Enoch* for Understanding the Son of Man in the Four Gospels

Charles Gieschen

The interpretation of the phrase “the Son of Man” (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) found frequently on the lips of Jesus in the New Testament Gospels has produced a vast amount of secondary literature, much of it concluding that the throne room scene in Dan 7:9–14 was not the primary influence on New Testament usage.¹ For example, Larry Hurtado’s conclusion about the evidence is representative of many scholars.

... there is also no evidence for the idea that “the son of man” was a confessional title in first-century Christian circles or that it represented some specific Christological claim *in itself*. The expression occasionally may be used to allude to Dan 7:13–14 (as may be the case in Mark 14:62). But in these instances the expression functions as a *literary device*, not as an established title, and the claim registered is that Jesus is the figure of that passage.²

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- 1 The phrase appears 81 times in the four New Testament Gospels (30 in Matthew, 14 in Mark, 25 in Luke, and 12 in John) and once in Acts (7:56); the referent of all of these is Jesus. The book of Revelation uses the phrase “one like a son of man” twice for the risen Jesus (Rev 1:13; 14:14), directly reflecting the language of Dan 7:13. Douglas R.A. Hare is representative of a significant portion of 20th century NT scholarship when he considers the position that there was a pre-Christian Jewish expectation of the coming of “the Son of Man” based upon Daniel 7 to be without foundation; see his *The Son of Man Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990). For a history of scholarship, see Delbert Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation*, SNTSMS 107 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
 - 2 Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 297 (emphasis original). Although Hurtado’s volume as a whole is highly commendable, I strongly disagree with his conclusion that Daniel 7 had very little influence on the usage of “the Son of Man” in the NT. For a more balanced overview of the evidence, see George W.E. Nickelsburg, “Son of Man,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6.137–150. See also Lester L. Grabbe, “‘Son of Man’: Its Origin and Meaning in Second Temple Judaism,” in Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Gabriele Boccaccini, eds., *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality*, EJL 44 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2016), 169–198.

It is one thing to acknowledge the undisputed fact that “the Son of Man” was not a confessional title used by Christians at the time of Jesus or afterwards but quite another thing to claim that there is no evidence “that it represented some specific Christological claim.”

Two serious problems have long plagued New Testament scholarship concerning the Son of Man. The first problem is the tendency to divide the Son of Man sayings into three distinct categories—earthly, suffering, and eschatological judgment—and then conclude that only the eschatological sayings were influenced by Daniel 7.³ It is better to understand that Daniel 7 had an influence on the use of the Son of Man in all of the occurrences found in the New Testament, even if that influence was simply using the term Son of Man in order to redefine understandings or expectations about the Son of Man. The second problem among New Testament scholars is the widespread non-use of the evidence in *1 En.* 37–71 concerning how Daniel 7 was being interpreted by some Jews prior the time of Jesus and the writing of the Gospels.⁴ This important evidence, readily available to New Testament scholars for the past 100 years, has either not been examined or has been ignored, in part because of questions concerning the precise date of these chapters and their preservation only in Ethiopic. Recent scholarship has affirmed a late first-century BCE (during the reign of Herod the Great) or early first-century CE date for these chapters, which means these chapters are Jewish and pre-Christian, even though Christians were largely responsible for the continued use and preservation of *1 Enoch* until it began to be studied by scholars of ancient literature.⁵ Paolo Sacchi offers this succinct conclusion concerning recent scholarship on the dating of the Parables: “The burden of proof has shifted to those who disagree with the Herodian date.”⁶ Crispin Fletcher-Louis emphatically asserts that the consen-

3 For example, the Son of Man sayings in Matthew are grouped as follows: the earthly Son of Man (8:20, 9:6, 11:7, 11:19, 12:8, 12:32, 13:37, 16:13); the suffering Son of Man (12:40, 17:9–12 [based on 16:21], 17:22–23, 20:18–19, 26:2, 26:24, 26:45), and the end-time judgment Son of Man (10:23, 13:41–43, 16:27–28, 19:28, 24:27, 24:30–31, 24:37–39, 24:44, 25:31–32, 26:64). See Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew*, Proclamation Commentaries (2 ed., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 33–65.

4 The Parables of *1 Enoch*, sometimes called the Similitudes, are chapters 37–71.

5 For this current scholarly consensus on the dating of these chapters, see the essays in Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 415–496. See also George W.E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37–82*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2012), 62–63.

6 Paolo Saachi, “The 2005 Camaldoli Seminar on the Parables of Enoch: Summary and Prospects for Future Research,” in Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 511.

sus on the pre-Christian date of the Parables “... means no historical discussion of Christological origins can now afford to ignore it.”⁷

Some scholars, however, have not followed the strong tendency to disavow or downplay Danielic influence on the phrase found in the Gospels and to ignore the Enochic Son of Man in efforts to understand Jesus as the Son of Man. Three examples will suffice here. First, Daniel Boyarin, a scholar of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism, contends “... that every time ‘The Son of Man’ appears in post-Danielic Jewish literature (including the Gospels), it is always a direct or indirect allusion to the usage of Daniel 7.”⁸ Boyarin postulates that there was a transformation between the simile “one like a son of man” used for a divine figure in Daniel 7 and the use of the phrase “the Son of Man” as a title for a divine-human figure: “This figure of ‘One Like a Son of Man’ must have been transformed nominally in the intervening centuries into (the same) figure referred to as ‘The Son of Man.’”⁹ For Boyarin, the usage in the New Testament only makes sense if “the Son of Man” is a known figure in the Jewish world at the time. For him, the key piece of pre-Christian evidence for such a transformation is the Parables of *1 Enoch* but also notes other texts (e.g., 4 Ezra 13). He thinks that while it is “... highly doubtful that the text of The Parables of Enoch had any effect on the four Gospels, we can observe in it the hermeneutical and theological historical processes that must have taken place ... in order for The Son of Man to become the Christological title that it is in the Gospels.”¹⁰ He does not, therefore, postulate any direct influence of *1 Enoch* on the Gospels, but “rather it shows us how *other* Jews—not the followers of Jesus—had read and reread Daniel 7, suggesting the plausibility of the group that formed around Jesus having also read Daniel 7 in a similar way, albeit identifying it with Jesus and not Enoch.”¹¹

Crispin Fletcher-Louis is among the scholars who has understood a direct relationship between Daniel 7 and the Son of Man traditions in the Gospels and sees them as very central to understanding Christian origins.¹² He also strongly advocates that the Parables of *1 Enoch* is crucial evidence for understanding how some Jews were interpreting Daniel 7, even stating that the New

7 Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism, Volume 1. Christological Origins: The Emerging Consensus and Beyond* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 177.

8 Daniel Boyarin, “How Enoch Can Teach Us About Jesus,” *EC 2* (2011): 52–53.

9 Boyarin, “How Enoch Can Teach Us About Jesus,” 52.

10 Boyarin, “How Enoch Can Teach Us about Jesus,” 61.

11 Boyarin, “How Enoch Can Teach Us about Jesus,” 53 (emphasis original).

12 Although Fletcher-Louis has been writing on related matters for almost two decades, he has taken up the challenge of writing a projected four volume work on Christian origins entitled *Jesus Monotheism*, of which only the first volume is published.

Testament contains “evidence to suggest that the Similitudes provides a golden key to unlock the puzzle that is the origins of Christ devotion.”¹³ In contrast to Hurtado, he argues that *1 En.* 37–71 provides concrete evidence of Jewish expectations concerning a pre-existent Son of Man, his role as eschatological judge who is seated on God’s throne as ruler of all, the readiness of Jews to worship this figure, and that “... he is included in, or that he clearly manifests, the divine identity.”¹⁴ He argues that,

... whilst it is true that the worship of the Enochic Son of Man is a future, not a present reality, that is nevertheless of inestimable significance for the understanding of both the *origins* and the *shape* of “Christological monotheism.” On the matter of origins, it offers an obvious and straightforward explanation of Christ devotion: the earliest Jewish believers worshipped Jesus because they believed he truly was, as he had claimed to be, the (preexistent) Son of Man they had been waiting for.¹⁵

A third recent scholar swimming against the current is Benjamin Reynolds.¹⁶ As part of his study’s focus on the Son of Man in the Gospel of John, he also examined the widespread influence of Daniel 7 on Second Temple Jewish literature, the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and Revelation. In his discussion of the Parables of *1 Enoch*, he confirms that these chapters are important pre-Christian evidence for how Daniel 7 was being interpreted by some Jews.¹⁷ He concludes that some characteristics present in Daniel are carried over into *1 Enoch* (Son of Man is similar to God in description and action; he is recognized by kings of the earth), some characteristics only implicit in Daniel become explicit in *1 Enoch* (Son of Man is a heavenly figure; he is a messiah; he is the eschatological judge), and other characteristics not found in Daniel are present in *1 Enoch* (the righteous dwell with the Son of Man; he will save the righteous; he is the Servant of the Lord; he is preexistent; he is identified as the human Enoch).¹⁸ He understands the writer of the Parables taking “some interpretive license” with the basic portrait presented in Daniel 7.¹⁹

13 Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, 1.180.

14 Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, 1.179.

15 Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, 1.180 (emphasis original).

16 Benjamin E. Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2.249 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

17 Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 41–49.

18 Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 49.

19 Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 49.

Building on the insights of these and others, this study will review selected evidence from the Parables of *1 Enoch* in order to demonstrate that its depiction of the Son of Man is a significant development in the interpretation of Daniel 7 as well as an important precursor to the presentation of Jesus as the Son of Man in the Gospels in these seven characteristics:²⁰

1. “The Son of Man” has become a title.
2. The Son of Man will be the eschatological judge.
3. The Son of Man will be seated on God’s Throne.
4. The Son of Man is preexistent prior to creation.
5. The Son of Man shares the divine name of the Lord of the Spirits.
6. The Son of Man is worshipped.
7. The Son of Man is also identified as a human (Enoch).

Although the importance of these characteristics for the presentations of the Son of Man in the four Gospels will be self-evident, the conclusion of this study will offer some observations about how Jewish expectations about Son of Man are further redefined in the Gospels.

1 The Son of Man in *1 En.* 37–71

1.1 *The Son of Man as a Title*

Although God appears elsewhere within the Hebrew Bible in a man-like form standing or enthroned in the heavenly realm (e.g., Gen 28:12–17; Isa 6:1–5; and Ezek 1:26), it is only in Daniel 7:13 where that man-like form is described as “one like a son of man.” Although the Aramaic phrase *כְּבַר אֱנוֹשׁ* is not a title, it clearly developed from Daniel 7:13 and not from elsewhere (e.g., Ps 8:4; 80:17) into one of the four titles used for the messianic figure in the Parables.²¹ Although rendered in a different ways in the Ethiopic text, “Son of Man” appears 15 times in the Parables (*1 En.* 46:2, 3, 4; 48:2; 60:10; 62:5, 7, 9, 14; 63:11; 69:26, 27, 29 [twice],

20 For a discussion of these characteristics about which there is some debate, see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 44–45, 113–123; see the examination of the Parables by Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 41–56. Elsewhere I discuss five important characteristics of divinity in theophanies: Divine Position, Divine Appearance, Divine Functions, Divine Name, and Divine Veneration. See Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, AGAJU 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998) [reprinted in the Library of Early Christology Series (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018)], 30–33. Characteristics 2–6 above reflect these criteria.

21 The title Son of Man is used here with an awareness that three other titles are used for this composite figure in the Parables (Chosen One, Righteous One, and Anointed One); see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 113–120.

70:1; 71:14, 17). “The Chosen One” or “the Elect One” is from Isa 42:1 and appears 17 times (1 *En.* 39:6; 40:5; 45:3, 4; 49:2, 4; 51:5a, 3; 52:6, 9; 53:6; 55:4; 61:5, 8, 10; 62:1). The other two titles used for this figure both occur twice: “The Righteous One” (1 *En.* 38:2; 53:6) is from Isaiah 53:11, and “His Messiah” or “His Anointed One” (1 *En.* 48:10; 52:4) is a title originating with Psalm 2:2 and Isaiah 11:2–4. A very important development has taken place whereby the phrase from Daniel has been transformed into one of the primary titles for a messianic figure with royal characteristics (enthroned and ruling). As is already clear, the Enochic Son of Man is a composite figure with several influences beyond Daniel 7. In addition to those already mentioned, other influences include Wisdom (Prov 8:22–31; Sir 24:1–12; 1 *En.* 42:1–2; 49:1), Isaiah’s Servant (Isa 49:6; 1 *En.* 48:4), and the Glory of YHWH (Ezek 1:26–28; 1 *En.* 46:1).

1.2 *The Son of Man as Eschatological Judge*

Eschatological judgment is mentioned in Daniel 7 (Dan 7:10, 22, 26), and “one like a son of man” is given universal dominion or rule (Dan 7:14), but nowhere in Daniel 7 is the “one like a son of man” identified as the judge. In 1 *En.* 37–71, however, this is one of the primary functions of the Son of Man, introduced very early: “When the congregation of the righteous appears, the sinners will be judged for their sins, and from the face of the earthy they will be driven; and when the Righteous One appears in the presence of the righteous ... Where (will be) the dwelling places of the sinners? ... It would be better for them, if they had not been born” (1 *En.* 38:1–2).²² The judgment of “all secrets things” and evil by the Son of Man is a recurrent theme (1 *En.* 48:6; 63:11; 69:27). This eschatological judgment will also bring salvation for some: “... the righteous and chosen will be without number before him [the Chosen One/Son of Man] forever and ever” (1 *En.* 39:6). The state of the righteous upon judgment will be dwelling in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits and the Son of Man: “And the Lord of the Spirits will dwell over them, and with that Son of Man they will eat and lie down and rest and rise forever and ever” (1 *En.* 62:14). The assignment of judgment to the Son of Man is an important development not present in Daniel 7.

1.3 *The Son of Man on God’s Throne*

Although Daniel 7:9 speaks about “thrones being placed,” one for the Ancient of Days and one for the “one like a son of man,” 1 *En.* mentions only “the throne of glory” (cf. Ezekiel 1) upon which the Chosen One/Son of Man will sit: “On

²² All translations of 1 *Enoch* are from Nickelsburg and VanderKam, 1 *Enoch* 2.

that day, my Chosen One will sit on the throne of glory and he will (test) their works, and their dwelling place(s) will be immeasurable. And their souls will be (distressed) within them, when they see my chosen ones, and those who appeal to my glorious name" (*1 En.* 45:3). Sitting on God's throne is a very significant divine characteristic.²³ It is also stated that the one divine throne of the Lord of the Spirits is shared with the Chosen One/Son of Man: "And the Lord of the Spirits seated the Chosen One upon the throne of glory; and he will judge all the works of the holy ones in the heights of heaven, and in the balance he will weigh their deeds" (*1 En.* 61:8). This is made more explicit when the Lord of the Spirits is depicted sitting on the throne of glory (*1 En.* 62:2, 3) and then "... pain will seize them when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory" (*1 En.* 62:5). In the scene of the eschatological revelation of the Son of Man's divine name in *1 En.* 69, it is stated twice that the Son of Man "sat on the throne of glory" (*1 En.* 69:27, 29). The Son of Man seated on the one throne of God is another significant development not found in Daniel 7 where he appears to have a throne separate from the Ancient of Days. This characteristic testifies not only that he is a royal messiah, but he shares in the unique mystery of the God of Israel because he shares his throne.

1.4 *The Preexistence of the Son of Man*

Daniel 7 implies the Ancient of Days is eternal by his very name, but there is no explicit mention of the preexistence of the one like a son of man, even though one could argue it is implicit from his divine status.²⁴ The Parables of *1 Enoch*, however, makes the preexistence of the Son of Man explicit, as it depicts him with the Lord of the Spirits during Enoch's journey.

There I saw one who had a head of days, and his head was like white wool; and with him was another, whose face was like the appearance of a man, and his face was full of graciousness like one of the holy angels. And I asked one of the angel peace, who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, about that son of man—who he was, and whence he was (and) why he went with the Head of Days. And he answered me and said

23 Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 31; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 150–181; and Darrell Hannah, "The Divine Throne and Heavenly Mediators in Revelation and the Similitudes of Enoch," *ZNW* 94 (2003): 68–96.

24 Much has been written about the "original meaning" of the vision in Daniel 7, but our focus here is on how certain Jews who wrote and read *1 Enoch* were interpreting this vision in the first-century CE. To examine what else may be implicit in this vision, see Markus Zehnder, "Why the Danielic 'Son of Man' Is a Divine Being," *BRR* 24 (2014): 331–347.

to me: “This is the son of man who has righteousness, and righteousness dwells with him, and all the treasures of what is hidden he will reveal; for the Lord of Spirits has chosen him, and through uprightness his lot has prevailed through truth in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits forever.”

1 En. 46:1–3

Although the characters are those of Daniel 7, the setting of eschatological triumph in Daniel is not the scene here; that setting is the basis for the depiction of the Son of Man in *1 En.* 69:26–29. This scene is emphasizing the existence of the hidden Son of Man as the Chosen One long before he will be revealed to all on the final day (cf. *1 En.* 48:2–3, 6; 62:7). Furthermore, the language here implies that the author understood the “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7 to also be the Glory of YHWH who was seen by Ezekiel: “whose face had the appearance of a man” (*1 En.* 46:1; cf. Ezek 1:26–28). His preexistence “even before the creation of the sun and the constellations” is emphasized when speaking about his naming, as will be seen below (*1 En.* 48:2–3). While some have argued that the naming is testimony to the Son of Man’s election and not his preexistence, the Parables emphasize preexistence prior to creation in two other places.²⁵ *1 En.* 48:6 states, “For this (reason) he [the Son of Man] was chosen and hidden in his presence, before the world was created and forever.” *1 En.* 62:7 restates similar content, “For from the beginning the Son of Man was hidden, and the Most High preserved him in the presence of his might, and he revealed him to the chosen.” Once again, *1 En.* has developed the understanding of Daniel 7 in the direction of understanding him within the mystery of the one God, since only God existed prior to creation (Gen 1:1).

1.5 *The Divine Name of the Son of Man*

One of the most intriguing Jewish examples of a second heavenly figure sharing the divine name is the Son of Man in the Parables of *1 Enoch* (chapters 37–71).²⁶ Before discussing the name of the Son of Man, however, it is important to observe that the Parables give significant attention to the other primary figure from the throne room scene in Daniel: the “one who was Ancient of Days”

25 For the arguments and defense of preexistence, see Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 44–45.

26 For a fuller discussion, see Charles A. Gieschen, “The Name of the Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch,” in Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 238–249. For an understanding of the divine name in the wider context of Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity, see Charles A. Gieschen, “The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology,” *VC* 57 (2003): 115–158.

(Dan 7:9). This one is often identified in the Parables as “the Lord of the Spirits,” a translation of the Ethiopic title that reflects the Hebrew title יהוה צבאות (“YHWH of Hosts”; Isa 6:3).²⁷ These chapters also testify repeatedly that the Lord of the Spirits has a special and unique name.²⁸ Two examples will suffice to illustrate this point. *1 En.* 38:2 asserts that “sinners” deny this name: “Where (will be) the dwelling places of the sinners, and where (will be) the resting place of those who have denied the name of the Lord of the Spirits?” *1 En.* 49:7 notes, however, that the righteous know and praise this name: “Their lips will praise the name of the Lord of the Spirits.” That this “name” of the Lord of the Spirits is יהוה (hereafter YHWH), God’s unique personal name, is self-evident for any Jewish reader or hearer of this text.

The Lord of the Spirits is not the only one to possess the divine name according to the Parables. Far from being a scene of eschatological triumph inspired by Daniel 7, *1 En.* 48 depicts the Son of Man as a preexistent being who was given a special name by the Lord of the Spirits in the primal “hour” prior to creation. Because YHWH is the only being that existed prior to creation, this Jewish text expresses a very profound understanding of the relationship between the Lord of the Spirits and the Son of Man: “And in that hour, that son of man was named in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits, and his name before the Head of Days. Even before the sun and the constellations were created, before the stars of heaven were made, his name was named before the Lord of the Spirits” (*1 En.* 48:2–3).

Although this scene is certainly developed from the naming of the servant in Isa 49:1–2 (“YHWH called me from the womb; from the body of my mother he named my name”), the Isaiah text has been reinterpreted by changing the setting of the naming: it does not take place at the calling of the Son of Man from a mother’s womb, but it is done prior to creation.²⁹ In *1 En.*, “the name” by which the Son of Man “was named” appears to be the divine name of the Lord of the Spirits because there are numerous references to “the name of the Lord of the Spirits” throughout the Parables.³⁰ Especially noteworthy is the description

27 Matthew Black, “Two Unusual Nomina Dei in the Second Vision of Enoch,” in William C. Weinrich, ed., *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Riecke*, 2 vols (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1984), 1:53–59.

28 The phrase “the name of the Lord of Spirits” is used repeatedly in these chapters; see *1 En.* 38:2; 39:7, 9, 14; 40:4, 6; 41:2, 8; 43:4; 45:1, 2, 3; 46:7; 47:2; 48:7, 10; 50:2, 3; 53:6; 55:4; 61:3, 9, 11, 13; 63:7; 67:8.

29 For the influence of Isaiah on the Son of Man in *1 En.*, see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 116–120, 169.

30 Although there is clear testimony that this name is possessed before creation by the Son of Man, it should be noted that an enigmatic discussion about the Evil One revealing this

that follows in this scene: “And all who dwell on the earth will fall and worship before him [the Son of Man]; and they will glorify and bless and sing hymns to the name of the Lord of the Spirits” (1 *En.* 48:5). They will use the name of the Lord of the Spirits in worshipping the Son of Man because both possess the same divine name.³¹

The fulfillment of this bold promise is depicted in the eschatological enthronement scene near the conclusion of the Parables: “And they [the righteous] had great joy, and they blessed and glorified and exalted, because the name of that Son of Man had been revealed to them” (1 *En.* 69:26). This scene may have been understood as the fulfillment of what Isaiah promised about the eschatological revelation of the divine name, “My people will know my name in that day, that I am he who speaks” (Isa 52:6). The significance of the revealing of the name of the Son of Man becomes readily apparent when one sees the relationship between the divine name, the oath used in creation, and the name of the Son of Man in 1 *En.* 69.³² Immediately preceding the dramatic revelation of the name of the Son of Man to the righteous, 1 *En.* has an elaborate ascription of the creation and its sustenance to this “powerful and strong” oath (1 *En.* 69:14–25). This description of the cosmogenic power of the divine name reflects similar understandings of the divine name as powerful in contemporary Jewish and Christian literature, even as the word used in creation.³³

1.6 *The Worship of the Son of Man*

The Danielic “one like a son of man” is given universal dominion and glory, with the result that all serve him (Dan 7:14). The status of the Enochic Son of Man is similarly depicted, but worship of him is given explicit testimony and is implied to begin on earth prior to the eschatological revelation of the Son of Man: “And all who dwell on the earth will fall down and worship before him [the Son of Man], and they will glorify and bless and sing hymns to the name of the Lord of

name to Michael and placing it in his hand (1 *En.* 69:14–15) introduces the verses that describe this name as the source of creation (1 *En.* 69:16–26).

31 The concept of persons sharing the same divine name is prominent and important in first-century Christianity (e.g., Matt 28:19; Rev 3:12; 14:1); see Gieschen, “Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology,” 115–158.

32 Regarding the relationship of this enigmatic chapter to mystical contemplation of the divine name, see Daniel C. Olson, *Enoch: A New Translation* (New Richland Hills, TX: Bibal Press, 2004), 128–131 at 270–273.

33 Ps 124:8; *Pr Man* 2–3; *Jub.* 36:7; 3 *En.* 13:1; Heb 1:3; 1 *Clem.* 59.8; *Herm. Sim.* 9.14.5. The understanding that the divine name was the word used in creation probably originates from the close relationship between the divine name יהוה and the creative command יהי (“let there be”).

Spirits" (*1 En.* 48:5). Worship of the Son of Man is prominent at the eschatological judgment: "And the kings and the mighty and all who possess the land will bless and glorify and exalt him who rules over all, who was hidden" (*1 En.* 62:6). This worship is stated again a few lines later, but even more explicitly: "And all the kings and the mighty and the exalted and those who rule the land will fall on their faces in his presence; and they will worship and set their hope on that Son of Man" (*1 En.* 62:9; cf. 60:6). While worship of the "one like a son of man" in Daniel is implicit, it is presented with great clarity in *1 Enoch*.

1.7 *The Son of Man Identified as a Human*

Perhaps the most shocking revelation in the Parables comes in the final scene (*1 En.* 71) when the mysterious identity of this preexistence messianic deliverer is revealed in an even fuller way.

And he took my spirit—even me, Enoch—to the heaven of heavens, and I saw there, as it were, ⟨a house⟩ built of hailstones, and between those stones were tongues of living fire. ... And there came out of that house Michael and Raphael and Gabriel and Phanuel and many holy angels without number. And with them was the Head of Days, and his head was white and pure as wool, and his apparel was indescribable. And I fell on my face and all my flesh melted, and my spirit was transformed. ... And that angel came to me and greeted me with his voice and said to me, "You are that Son of Man who was born for righteousness, and righteousness dwells on you, and the righteousness of the Head of Days will not forsake you. ... And all will walk in your path since righteousness will never forsake you; with you will be their dwelling and with you, their lot, and from you they will not be separated forever and forever and ever."

1 En. 71:5, 11, 14, 16

This is an amazing scene that makes it clear the messianic Son of Man does not just appear as a man, but is a man. The human Enoch is transformed through his ascension to the heavenly throne and is identified with the pre-existent and hidden Son of Man. Very seldom in Second Temple Jewish literature does one read of an enthroned heavenly figure being also an actual human.³⁴

34 Another occurrence is the exalted angel/messenger Israel being also Jacob in *Pr. Jos.* fragment (cf. the description of Jacob in *Jos. Asen.* 22:6–8); see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 137–142. For background on the transformation of Enoch into a heavenly being in literature related to *1 Enoch*, see Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, TSAJ 107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

In summation, while affirming the significant continuity between Daniel 7 and *1 Enoch*, these seven characteristics of the Enochic Son of Man are not explicitly found in Daniel: the Son of Man is used as a title for a messianic figure; he is the eschatological judge; he is preexistent prior to creation with the Lord of the Spirits and hidden until his end-time revelation; he is seated on God's throne, he shares the divine name of the Lord of the Spirits; he is worshipped as divine; and he is identified to be also a human. All of these are important characteristics of Jesus as presented in the four Gospels.³⁵ *1 En.* 37–71 provides solid historical evidence that Jews prior to Jesus and the evangelists were thinking about the Son of Man with such characteristics. These chapters also evince a rather complex understanding of Jewish monotheism with a second divine figure who has divine functions, shares the divine throne, shares the divine name, receives worship, and yet is also a human.

2 Conclusion

In light of the depiction of the Son of Man in *1 Enoch*, what may have been puzzling for Jesus' earliest followers was not that he spoke of himself as the Son of Man, but specifically how he spoke of himself as the Son of Man. Jesus is not only to be revealed as the Son of Man when he is enthroned in heaven at the end of time, but—most importantly—on earth upon the cross in time (e.g., Matt 24:64; John 12:23, 32–34). The so-called “earthly” and “suffering” Son of Man sayings show a redefinition of some Jewish Son of Man expectations in light of humiliation and suffering (e.g., the servant songs of Isaiah). Oscar Cullmann reflected upon this redefinition decades ago.

One may ask why Jesus preferred the title Son of Man to that of the *ebed* Yahweh rather than the reverse. This becomes quite understandable when we consider that the Son of Man idea is more comprehensive. ... It was therefore more appropriate to subordinate the *ebed* Yahweh concept to that of the Son of Man. Jesus did this in such a way that the vocation of the *ebed* becomes, so to speak, the main content of the Son of Man's earthly work. ... Both the “Suffering Servant” and the “Son of Man” already existed in Second Temple Judaism. But Jesus' combination of precisely

35 See Leslie W. Walck, “The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and the Gospels,” in Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 299–337; see also Leslie W. Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parable of Enoch and in Matthew* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

these two titles was something completely new. “Son of Man” represents the highest conceivable declaration of exaltation in Judaism; *ebed* Yahweh is the expression of the deepest humiliation. ... This is the unheard-of new act of Jesus, that he united these two apparently contradictory tasks in his self-consciousness, and that he expressed that union in his life and teaching.³⁶

Much like the parables (e.g., Matt 13:10–17), the Son of Man sayings reveal Jesus’ true identity to those who believe he is the Son of God, but are at the same time confusing to those who reject him (i.e., “How can this ‘man’ be the preexistent, end-time ‘Son of Man’ promised by Daniel?”). To those who do not receive him for who he actually is, he will remain an enigmatic son of man (i.e., “a human offspring”) who will be vindicated at the end and shown to be the Son of Man (Matt 26:63–64). The Son of Man sayings in the Gospels, therefore, do not show a dismissal of Jewish Son of Man expectations based upon Daniel 7 or *1 Enoch*, but evince a further redefining of these expectations by pointing to Jesus’ crucifixion as where the Son of Man will be revealed and the cosmic reign foretold in Daniel 7 begins (e.g., Matt 26:64), a reign that will be consummated on the last day (e.g., Matt 25:31). The Gospels present a radical interpretation of Daniel 7, not only in the so-called earthly and suffering Son of Man sayings, but especially in presenting the crucifixion as the commencement of the Son of Man’s eschatological enthronement and reign.

This brief study has sought to demonstrate that there are several characteristics of the Enochic Son of Man that are important for understanding the Son of Man in the Gospels even while recognizing the unique redefinition of Jewish Son of Man expectations that are also present in the Gospels. Joel Marcus offers this witty observation about the conclusion that the Parables of *1 Enoch* is pre-Christian and, thus, reflects Jewish conceptions of the Son of Man present before and at the time of Jesus:

This conclusion is supported by the way in which Jesus, in the Gospels, generally treats the Son of Man as a known quantity, never bothering to explain the term, and the way in which certain of this figure’s characteristics, such as his identity with the Messiah or his prerogative of judging, are taken for granted. With apologies to Voltaire, we may say that if the

36 Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament, Revised Edition*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A.M. Hall (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 160–161. As noted above, *1 En.* has already depicted its Son of Man with some features from Isaiah’s Servant.

Enochic Son of Man had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him to explain the Son of Man sayings in the Gospels.³⁷

Acknowledgments

This essay is offered to honor my friend, Fr. Alexander Golitzin. I have benefited from his writings, conversations, and his Marquette University students for almost three decades. His commitment to both scholarship and the church is mirrored in my own life of being both a professor and pastor.

37 Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 530.

Driven Away with a Stick: The Femininity of the Godhead in *y. Ber.* 12d, the Emergence of Rabbinic Modalist Orthodoxy, and the Christian Binitarian Complex

Silviu N. Bunta

This article, in a very preliminary form, was my very first contribution (in 2005) to the seminar on the “Jewish Roots of Christian Mysticism” which then Father, but now Bishop Alexander and we, his doctoral students, put together at Marquette University. Therefore it seems to me to be only fitting that I present to him this final form of the article as a very small token of my gratitude for everything he has done for us, his students, and for the whole field of Christian and Jewish mysticism in antiquity.

The Masoretic text of Gen 1:26–27 confusingly reads: “And God said, ‘Let us create humanity (אדם) in our image (בצלמנו), according to our likeness (כדמותנו) ...’ And God created humanity (האדם) in his image (בצלמו), in the image of God He created him (אתו), male and female (זכר ונקבה) He created them (אתם).” The Septuagint version contains the same grammatical oddities: “And God said, ‘Let us make humanity (ἄνθρωπον) according to our image and according to likeness ...’ And God made humanity (ἄνθρωπον), according to the image of God He made him (αὐτόν), male and female (ἄρσεν και θήλυ) He created them (αὐτούς).”

In an article published two decades ago,¹ Johannes C. de Moor decried the lack of sensitivity among contemporary biblical scholars toward a century old statement by Elisabeth Cady Stanton that the creation of both male and female humanity in the image of God implies a male-female bifurcation in the divine.² Regrettably de Moor’s complaint is still very much actual two decades later. There de Moor proposed that Gen 1:27 be read in the context of ancient Near

1 Johannes C. de Moor, “The Duality in God and Man: Gen. 1:26–27 as P’s Interpretation of the Yahwistic Creation Account,” in Johannes C. de Moor, ed., *Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 112–125.

2 Elisabeth Cady Stanton, ed., *The Woman’s Bible*, 2 vols. (New York: European Publishing Company, 1895, 1898), 1:14.

Eastern conceptions of mixed gendered deities and in light of the fact that several other texts in the Hebrew Bible attribute female characteristics to God. Therefore, for de Moor androgynous humanity reflects an androgynous God. However, de Moor does not provide any patristic or rabbinic sources that suggest the androgyny of God. The only text he can put forward is *Odes of Solomon* 6:13–14:

And before they had existed, I recognized them; and imprinted a seal on their faces. I fashioned their members, and my own breasts I prepared for them, that they might drink my holy milk and live by it.³

Unfortunately de Moor hastily categorizes the Syriac text as gnostic.⁴ While the passage does suggest a certain divine femininity, it is far from describing “the creation of mankind ... as the work of an androgynous being,” as de Moor would have it.⁵ He does not seem aware of the ever-increasing number of studies on the feminine depictions of the godhead in early gnostic movements; nor is de Moor seemingly familiar with Irenaeus’ explicit mention that “some” (followers of Marcion) misguidedly maintain, based precisely on Gen 1:26–28, that “humanity (ἄνθρωπος), made according to the image and likeness of God, [was] masculo-feminine (ἀρσενόθηλυσ).”⁶ Moreover, there is also an increasing amount of studies on the femininity of the Holy Spirit in early Christianity, particularly in its Syrian branches.⁷

3 Translation from James H. Charlesworth, “Odes of Solomon,” in idem, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 2:725–771 at 742.

4 De Moor, “The Duality in God and Man,” 124.

5 De Moor, “The Duality in God and Man,” 124.

6 *Haer.* 1.18.2; my translation of the Greek text in William Wigan Harvey, *Sancti Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libri quinque adversus haereses*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1857), 1:172. For gnostic traditions about the divine male-female couple that acts as the image and source of human gender differentiation see Peter Schäfer, *Mirror of His Beauty. Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 58–78.

7 See particularly Sebastian Brock, “The Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature,” in Janet Martin Soskice, ed., *After Eve. Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), 73–88, reprinted in a slightly revised and updated form in Sebastian Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), 175–188; idem, *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 863 (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 249–257; Sarah Coakley, “Introduction—Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*,” in Sarah Coakley, ed., *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 1–14; eadem, “‘Femininity’ and the Holy Spirit?,” in Monica Furlong, ed., *Mirror to the Church: Reflections on Sexism* (London:

My intention here is not to review these studies on early Syrian feminization of God or to offer corrections or additional support to de Moor's argument. Rather, I am looking for the particular interpretive processes through which classical rabbinic exegesis, particularly attentive to textual oddities,⁸ might have perceived an implication in Gen 1:26–28 that there is a male-female bifurcation in the divine. My argument here is twofold. First, I suggest that *y. Ber.* 12d exhibits exactly that textual sensitivity which, as de Moor laments, contemporary scholars in general do not possess. Second, I propose that the talmudic text puts forth a binitarian reading of the difficult biblical passage, reading in which the divine constitutes a duality reflected in the human couple. This proposal challenges the prevailing scholarly opinion that the early rabbis do not present any understanding of a masculine-feminine duality in the divine, not even in their concept of the *Shekinah*.

1 Classical Rabbinic Judaism on the Godhead

In his 1960 book *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, Gershom Scholem argued:

The Kabbalistic conception of *Shekhinah* ... is a radical departure from the old Rabbinical conception ... Nowhere in the older literature is a distinction made between God and His *Shekhinah*; the *Shekhinah* is not a special hypostasis distinguished from God as a whole. It is very different in the usage of the Kabbalah ... Here the *Shekhinah* becomes an aspect of God, a quasi-independent feminine element within Him. Such an independence

SPCK, 1988), 124–135; Susan A. Harvey, "Feminine Imagery for the Divine: The Holy Spirit, the Odes of Solomon, and Early Syriac Tradition," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 37 (1993): 11–39; Verna E.F. Harrison, "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology," *JTS* 41 (1990): 441–471; Yves Congar, "The Motherhood in God and the Femininity of the Holy Spirit," in idem, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 vols. (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 3:155–164; Gedaliahu Stroumsa, "Le couple de l'ange et de l'esprit: Traditions juives et Chrétiennes," *RB* 88 (1981): 42–61; Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 312–320.

8 For the central role that textual oddities play in early rabbinic interpretation, see especially David Stern, "Midrash and Indeterminacy," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (1988): 132–161; Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990); Gerald L. Bruns, *Hermeneutics, Ancient and Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 104–132; James Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); idem, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999).

... is realized in a sense in the third *sefirah*, which is the upper mother or upper *Shekhinah*, but also, strange to say, the demiurgic potency.⁹

According to Scholem, the femininity of the *Shekhinah* is also a kabbalistic novelty:

In all the numerous references to the *Shekhinah* in the Talmud and the Midrashim ... there is no hint that it represents a feminine element in God ... Nowhere is there a dualism, with the *Shekhinah*, as the feminine, opposed to the “Holy One, praise be to Him,” as the masculine element in God. The introduction of this idea was one of the most important and lasting innovations of Kabbalism.¹⁰

For lack of a better explanation for this radical kabbalistic innovation, Scholem resorts to Eliade, in spite of the fact that, as Joseph Dan perceptively notes, he “fought throughout his life” against the Eliadean/Jungian archetypal approach of religious phenomena.¹¹ “The Kabbalists,” says Scholem, “had uncovered one of the primordial religious impulses still latent in Judaism.”¹² For Scholem, the last pre-Kabbalistic expressions of this impulse lie in Gnosticism, the second pier of an arch that passes over the classical rabbis.¹³

Ever since Scholem’s pioneering research scholars have consistently assumed that concepts of a divine couple or divine femininity are completely nonexistent in classical rabbinic Judaism and have repeatedly emphasized the striking chronological gap between the presence of the concept in Second Tem-

9 Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. R. Manheim (6th ed.; New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 104–105.

10 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 229.

11 “Foreword” to Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), 3–14 at 8.

12 Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 105.

13 At times Scholem posits a direct dependence of the kabbalists on “gnostic exegesis” (*On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 105); thus he assumes the kabbalistic identification of the *Shekhinah* with the community of Israel was “a specifically Jewish metamorphosis in which so much of the gnostic substance entered into Jewish tradition” (Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 106). See also his *Major Trends*, 229–230. However, on another occasion, as Peter Schäfer notes, Scholem is content to assume that kabbalistic innovations “took shape in the course of the creative reflection of anonymous Jewish God-seekers of the twelfth century upon the meaning of the images of their own tradition” (*On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 170–171). See comments in Schäfer, *Mirror of His Beauty*, 139–140.

ple and gnostic sources, on the one side, and kabbalistic mysticism, on the other. More recently, Peter Schäfer, who otherwise disagrees fundamentally with Scholem's reconstruction of the development and nature of ancient Jewish mysticism,¹⁴ expressed a very similar opinion:

There [in rabbinic Judaism], it [the Shekinah] refers to the presence of God in the world and is always synonymous with God; as such it does not have any feminine characteristics. In the Kabbalah, however, the Shekinah is not only included as a distinctive principle within the inner divine life, but this distinctive principle is explicitly, and quite graphically, described as female.¹⁵

Moreover, just like Scholem, Schäfer also locates the closest similar portraits of the Shekinah in Gnosticism.¹⁶

This circumvention of classical rabbinic Judaism is problematic at a very basic, intuitive level. As Moshe Idel remarks astutely on the presupposition of a similar circumvention of rabbinic sources when it comes to the concept of the cosmic Adam, "any suggestion that originally Jewish conceptions were suppressed for centuries in Jewish sources has inherent difficulties."¹⁷ Moreover, while there is a certain amount of discontinuity between the kabbalistic texts of the Middle Ages and classical rabbinic thought, they show in general a significant and surprising continuity, particularly on the conception of the divine, in which they exhibit the same modalist orthodoxy.¹⁸ Quite probably

14 For this disagreement see particularly Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); idem, *Gershom Scholem Reconsidered: The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism. 12th Sacks Lecture* (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1986).

15 Schäfer, *Mirror of His Beauty*, 4.

16 Ibid., 142–143.

17 Moshe Idel, "Enoch is Metatron," *Imm* 24/25 (1990): 220–240 at 223. Despite these difficulties, he finds the suggestion "more convenient than the alternative," which is that originally gnostic conceptions penetrated into Judaism, were transmitted orally for centuries, and were committed to writing only in medieval times ("Enoch is Metatron," 223).

18 On the rabbis' modalist orthodoxy, see particularly Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven. Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977) and Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines. The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Several Christian sources suggest that modalism was a widespread rabbinic orthodoxy by the fourth century. Thus, several of Basil of Caesarea's letters identify Judaism with the modalism of Sabellius and Marcellus (letters 189, 210, 226, and 263). In letter 210 the Asia Minor bishop straightforwardly contends that "Sabellianism is Judaism brought into the preaching of the gospel under the disguise of Christianity" (letter 210.3;

in polemics against the philosophers of the early Middle Ages, the inventors of “Jewish monotheism”¹⁹ for whom the Shekinah is a created power, in most kabbalistic thought the one godhead unfolds in emanations or energies (*sefirot*) that embody different aspects of the divine essence. In this context the Shekinah as the tenth and lowest of the ten *sefirot* is, to quote Schäfer, “included as a distinctive principle within the inner divine life.”²⁰ Moreover, the Shekinah is paired with the ninth *sefirah*, a masculine principle, in quite a sexual embrace. Together, according to the earliest extant kabbalistic writing, the *Bahir*, they form the two Wheels of the throne of glory:

What is the ninth? He said to them: The ninth and tenth are together, one opposite the other ... They are like two Wheels (אופנים). One inclines toward the north, while the other inclines toward the west. They reach down to the lowest earth.

Bahir 169²¹

In this regard the language of the kabbalists replicates quite closely the classical rabbinic ideal of modalist orthodoxy:

One passage says: His throne was fiery flames; and another passage says: Till thrones were places, and One that was ancient of days did sit (Dan 7:9)!—There is no contradiction: one [throne] for Him, and one for David;

my translation of the Greek text in Yves Courtonne, *Saint Basile. Lettres*, 3 vols. [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1957, 1961, 1966]). For the early Kabbalah, the depiction in certain kabbalistic texts of the fourth and fifth *sefirot*, respectively the right and the left hand of the godhead, as the divine mercy (חסד) and justice (דין) is particularly significant.

19 By “Jewish monotheism” I refer to the view according to which only one being, God, possesses divinity or the “attributes of God.” Until late medieval philosophy Judaism did not subscribe to this monotheistic conception of the divine. On the contrary, Jewish sources abound with texts in which God shares his divinity/attributes, including omniscience, omnipotence, eternity, and even his quintessential name, with other beings. If there is any difference between God and these other beings, it is relational rather than ontological: while God possesses divinity in and of himself, in an absolute way, these other beings possess it in a relative way, from God. As Elliot Wolfson has repeatedly pointed out, on the background of modalism ancient and medieval Jewish sources collapse all ontological boundaries between angels and other divine manifestations, on the one hand, and the divine, on the other (see for example *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997], 256–260). For further discussions, see the seminal study of Peter Hayman, “Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?,” *JJS* 42 (1991): 1–15.

20 *Mirror of His Beauty*, 4.

21 Aryeh Kaplan, *The Bahir* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1989), 64.

this is the view of R. Akiba. Said R. Jose the Galilean to him: Akiba, how long wilt thou treat the Divine Presence as profane! Rather, [it must mean], one for justice (יָד) and one for grace (צַדִּיקָה). Did he accept [this explanation from him, or did he not accept it]?—Come and hear: One for justice and one for grace; this is the view of R. Akiba. Said R. Eleazar b. ‘Azariah to him: Akiba, what hast thou to do with Aggadah? Cease thy talk, and turn to [the laws concerning defilement through] leprosy-signs and tent-covering! Rather, [it must mean] one for a throne and one for a stool; the throne to sit upon, the stool for a footrest, for it is said: The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My foot-rest (Isa 66:1).

*b. Hag. 14a*²²

Rabbi Akiba opportunely converts to the modalist orthodoxy, thus narrowly shunning the destiny of the two-power heretic Aher, unveiled shortly after Rabbi Akiba's story.²³ Nevertheless, the presence of this story of conversion in the rabbinic corpus raises the intriguing possibility that certain rabbis were not too quick to abandon traditional non-modalist theologies and to adopt the newly found rabbinic orthodoxy.²⁴ As the stories about both Rabbi Akiba and Aher indicate, the rabbinic orthodoxy was not quite able to drown out completely the dissenting voices. The task, undoubtedly desired among most of

22 This and all subsequent translations of the Babylonian Talmud are from Isidore Epstein, ed., *Babylonian Talmud. Hebrew-English Edition* (London: Soncino Press, 1983).

23 *b. Hag. 15a*; see also 3 *En. 16:2*. For comments on this story see Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 139–145; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 60–73.

24 The scene in *b. Hag. 14a* has been deemed quite appropriately “the apostasy of rabbi Akiba” (Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 139). The paradigm increasingly predominant in current scholarship, introduced by Naomi Janowitz (“Rabbis and Their Opponents: The Construction of the ‘Min’ in Rabbinic Anecdotes,” *JES* 6 [1998]: 449–462), proposes that the views commonly regarded as heretical by the late rabbinic corpus constituted traditional ideological options in the pre-orthodox environment of late antiquity Judaism. As it has been pointed out, since Judaism was not yet producing the conception of heresy and orthodoxy, “‘Two Powers in Heaven’ could not have been an early category of heresy, but could only have been one of the options for the Jewish belief at the time” (Boyarin, “Two Powers in Heaven,” 333). In the words of the same scholar, “the orthodoxy that the Rabbis were concerned about was an orthodoxy that they were *making* [my emphasis] by constructing ‘Two Powers in Heaven’ as heresy” (Boyarin, “Two Powers in Heaven,” 332). Traditional options were repudiated and bordered out, thus constructing a heretical “other” or a designated outsider and concomitantly defining an orthodox “self.” On these points, see also Boyarin, *Border Lines*; idem, “Two Powers in Heaven,” esp. 332–339; Christine E. Hayes, “Displaced Self-Perceptions: The Deployment of *Minim* and Romans in *B. Sanhedrin* 90b–91a,” in Hayim Lapin, ed., *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine* (Potomac: University Press of Maryland, 1998), 249–289.

the rabbis, was from its foundation impractical, since the rabbinic “orthodoxy” itself was tempted to indulge on occasion in the theological ideas that it otherwise painstakingly attempted to exorcise. Furthermore, one cannot expect such consistency from the rabbis as to assume that in their corpus all resilience toward their emerging orthodoxy would be unfailingly pointed out and condemned.²⁵ It is reasonable to expect that a complete expulsion of the “other” would have injured or marked the “self” to a certain extent. In my estimation this is precisely the case with *y. Ber.* 12d: the rabbis succumb internally to that which they refute externally.

2 *y. Ber.* 12d: The *Minim* Are Somewhat Right

In light of all the above considerations, the common early midrash on Gen 1:26–28 (*Gen. Rab.* 8:9, *Deut. Rab.* 2:13, and *y. Ber.* 12d) gains a particular significance for our topic. The version of the midrash in *y. Ber.* 12d reads:

The *minim* asked R. Simlai: “How many gods created the world?” He said to them: “Do you ask me? Go and ask the first man, as it is written, ‘Ask now the former days which were before thee, since God created man upon the earth’ (Deut 4:32).²⁶ It is not written here ‘(they) created’ (בראו), but ‘(he) created’ (ברא) (Gen 1:1).” They said to him, “It is written, ‘In the begin-

25 The Two Powers heresies and the alternative rabbinic orthodoxy have been reevaluated in more recent scholarship. The paradigm that used to govern most of the scholarship on the topic tended to replicate rather than deconstruct critically the rabbinic agendas, assuming with the classical rabbis that the Two Powers and other heresies were differences either from without or from the margins of orthodoxy, inoculating and rarely infesting an otherwise firm rabbinic “orthodoxy.” To the deconstruction of this paradigm, see the insightful remarks in Daniel Boyarin, “Two Powers in Heaven; Or, The Making of a Heresy,” in Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman, ed., *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, JSJSS 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 331–370 at 335–336; Janowitz, “Rabbis and Their Opponents,” 449–462. Yet, I would like to point out that Janowitz is too optimistic about the effectiveness of rabbinic orthodoxy: “Only a few decades ago late antique Judaism was reconstructed through the eyes of the rabbis with, not surprisingly, rabbis at the center of the picture as conveyors of normative, orthodox Judaism. Attention to new sources (archaeological finds, Jewish texts written in Greek) and new questions (where are the women?) has so changed our view that we now find ourselves asking: How is it that rabbis were able to build an institutional basis that so thoroughly drowned out the many other voices?” (ibid., 449).

26 As Alan Segal already noted, different versions of the story make reference to different authorities at this point (*Two Powers in Heaven*, 126). *Gen. Rab.* 8:9 refers to the first days and *Deut Rab.* 2:13 mentions the record of creation.

ning gods (אלהים) created' (Gen 1:1).” “Is it written ‘(they) created’? It is only written, ‘(he) created’ (ברא).” R. Simlai said, “In every passage where the *minim* go wrong, the answer to them is close by.” They (the *minim*) returned and asked him, “What of that which is written ‘Let us make man in our image (בצלמנו), after our likeness’ (Gen 1:26)?” He said to them, “It is not written here ‘And they created man in their image,’ but ‘And God created man in his image (בצלמו)’ (Gen 1:27).” His disciples said to him: “Rabbi, thou has driven away these men with a stick (בקנה). But what dost thou answer to us?” He said to them, “At the first, Adam was created out of the dust, and Eve was created out of the man. From Adam onward (it is said) ‘in our image according to our likeness.’ It is impossible for man to exist without woman, and it is impossible for woman to exist without man, and it is impossible for both to exist without the Shekinah (שכינה).”

y. Ber. 12d²⁷

The dialogue of rabbi Simlai with the *minim* is followed by four more confrontations with similar double answers.²⁸

The key to this passage lies in its structure and linguistic conventions. Many other classical rabbinic texts contain stories of the same structural pattern—an outsider asks a polemical question, the rabbinic authority replies dismissively, the outsider walks away, the disciples complain that the reply is unsatisfactory, and the rabbinic authority offers the real explanation, different from his initial answer. As an example *b. Hul. 27b* contains the following confrontation between Rabbi Samuel the Cappadocian and “a Galilean”:

[A Galilean] put to [R. Samuel of Cappadocia] this further question: One verse says, “And God said: Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and let birds fly above the earth” (Gen 1:20), from which it would appear that birds were created out of the water; but another verse says, “And the Lord God formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the air” (Gen 2:19), from which it would appear that they were created out of the earth?—He replied: They were created out of the alluvial mud. He thereupon noticed his disciples looking at each other with surprise. You are no doubt displeased, said he, because I brushed aside my opponent with a straw (בקש). The truth is that

27 Translation from Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 124. For the original text I have consulted the Vilna edition (1835), the Leiden manuscript Or. 4720, and Rabbi Shlomo Sirilio's 1875 Mainz edition of the tractate Berachot. There is insignificant variation among these sources.

28 Y. Ber. 12d–13a.

they were created out of the water but they were brought before Adam only in order that he might name them. Others say that he replied to the [Roman] general in accordance with the latter view, but to his disciples he gave the first explanation, since they [birds] are mentioned in connection with the expression: And He formed.

b. Hul. 27b

The double answer here, as in similar stories,²⁹ marks a switch from a simplistic, even self-evident argument (commonly the rabbinic authority finds the answer in a weakness of the question itself or turns the question against the inquirer), to a real explanation. The rabbinic authority alternates between opposite views. Nevertheless, Rabbi Samuel clearly offers real explanations only to his disciples.

The *minim* of Rabbi Simlai wish to prove that there is a bifurcation or a plurality in the godhead based on the scriptural text. They appeal to the divine council imagery of Gen 1:1 and 1:26 to support the concept that “many gods” created the world. Rabbi Simlai’s response is based on the same exegetical principle attributed in *b. San. 38b* to Rabbi Yohanan, his teacher and colleague: the answer is in a nearby text. Thus the plural אלהים is accompanied by the singular ברא and the plural pronominal suffix in בצלמינו is followed by the singular suffix in בצלמו, solutions that Rabbi Yohanan also uses against similarly-minded *minim* in *b. San. 38b*. The disciples seem to accept their teacher’s interpretive principle—namely that the key to every plural is in a nearby singular, specifically a plural noun or pronoun takes a singular verb.

However, as it is true for all the initial, exoteric answers that the rabbis offer to their interlocutors in *b. Hul. 27b* and similar narratives, Rabbi Simlai’s disciples find their teacher’s response to the heretics unsatisfactory. It is, as the text itself would have it, as ineffective and inept an admonition as driving someone away with a “stick,” a “straw,” as in *b. Hul. 27b*, or a “broken reed,” as other parallel stories would have it.³⁰ The fact that the Galilean in *b. Hul. 27b* and Rabbi Simlai’s *minim* in our *y. Ber. 12d*, all outsiders to an equal degree, leave without receiving a real explanation, that they accept the stick or the straw, seems to function as a negative reflection on their intellectual perspicacity. In contrast,

29 See also *Exod. Rab. 3:17*; *Exod. Rab. 29:1*; *Num. Rab. 9:48*; *Num. Rab. 19:8* (parallels in *Pesiqta Rabbati 14*, *Tanḥuma Ḥuqat 26*, *Pesiqta de Rab Kahana pisqa 4* [ed. Mandelbaum], uses קנה; *y. San. 19b* (uses קנה); *Lev. Rab. 4:6* (uses קנה). Some of these passages and Rabbi Simlai’s disingenuousness have been noted in David Daube, “Public Denouncement and Private Explanation in the Gospels,” *ExpTim 57* (1945–1946): 175–177.

30 See, for example, *Eccl. Rab. 7:16*.

the rabbinic authority can only be praised for his ability to employ efficiently such ineffective means of admonition.³¹ As also Rabbi Simlai's disciples can receive praise for detecting the feebleness, the stick of their teacher's answer: the interpretive strategy cannot be applied to Gen 1:26. As Alan Segal rightly points out, "the correct understanding of Gen 1:26 was not evident."³² In Gen 1:26 both subject and verb are plural. The only solution "at hand" could be the singular of Gen 1:27, but it is conceivable that a god can create alone (hence, the singular of Gen 1:27) as a delegate of a divine assembly (the plural of Gen 1:26). Rabbi Simlai's appeal to Gen 1:27 without elucidating Gen 1:26 in itself does not offer sufficient proof, at least to his astute disciples, that God was not accompanied by other heavenly beings in conceiving the creation.

Just like Rabbi Samuel in *b. Hul.* 27b, Rabbi Simlai does not simply dismiss the disciples' confusion; he appears fully aware of the fact that he did not offer a true rebuttal to the *minim's* question about Gen 1:26. Just like in the narrative about Rabbi Samuel, Rabbi Simlai's evasiveness toward the *minim* and the secretiveness of the ensuing real, esoteric answer set the stage for an inevitable conclusion: the *minim* were somewhat right, at least in regard to Gen 1:26. Indeed, a closer analysis of the esoteric explanation suggests that Rabbi Simlai himself understands Gen 1:26 to point to a bifurcation in the godhead. The key to the real, behind-closed-doors explanation of Gen 1:26 lies in the rabbi's final remark:

מיכן ואילך בצלמינו כדמותינו לא איש בלא אשה ולא אשה בלא איש ולא שניהם בלא
שכינה³³

According to Rabbi Simlai, the divine image is not imprinted on the initial human being, Adam, androgynous or not, nor on Eve, but rather it is only manifested in the human couple, and more specifically in their procreation, as the phrase "neither man without woman, nor woman without man" makes clear. The same phrase also indicates sexual procreation in another interpretation

31 Pace Jacob Neusner, who wonders whether the rabbinic authorities in these passages are even portrayed positively, given that their real explanations do not seem to respond to the initial question effectively (Jacob Neusner, *Development of a Legend* [Leiden: Brill, 1970], 138–139).

32 Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 126.

33 Tellingly, when the story resurfaces in *Deut. Rab.* 2:13, the final, esoteric dialogue, the capitulation, is omitted. Yet, the most important manuscripts of all the other versions of the story have it. See Julius Theodor and Chanock Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1903–1928), 1.63 (*Gen. Rab.* 8:9).

attributed to Rabbi Akiba, the almost heretic of *b. Hag.* 14a, namely that **תא** of Gen 4:1 means “with the help of” and that human multiplication is impossible without the Shekinah:

R. Ishmael asked R. Akiba: “Since you have served Nahum of Gimzo for twenty-two years, [and he taught], Every *ak* and *rak* is a limitation, while every *eth* and *gam* is an extension, tell me what is the purpose of the *eth* written here [that is, Gen 4:1]?” “If it said, ‘I have gotten a man the Lord,’” he replied, “it would have been difficult [to interpret]; hence *eth* [with the help of] the Lord is required.” Thereupon he quoted to him: “‘For it is no empty thing from you’ (Deut 32:47), and if it is empty, it is so on your account, because you do not know how to interpret it. Rather, *eth* the Lord [teaches this]: In the past, Adam was created from the ground, and Eve from Adam; but henceforth it shall be, ‘In our image, after our likeness’ (Gen 1:26): neither man without woman nor woman without man, nor both of them without the Shechinah.”

Gen. Rab. 22:2³⁴

Rabbi Akiba’s inherited reading of Gen 1:26 is not exceptional or without context. It ties well with the rabbinic teaching that a celibate life translates into the diminishing of the divine image: “Some say: He [that is, the celibate] impairs the divine likeness; thus it is written, ‘For in his image did God make the adam’ (Gen 1:27); and follows, ‘Be fertile, then, and multiply’ (Gen 1:28).”³⁵

34 This and all subsequent texts from the *Midrash Rabbah* follow the translation in Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 10 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1961). Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah*, 1:206.

35 *Gen. Rab.* 17:2. See also *b. Yeb.* 62b–63b. Similar statements about the diminishing of the divine image are only made in relation to murder (cf. *b. Yeb.* 62b–63b). These principles are also registered in a sixteenth-century legal code as follows: “Every man is obliged to marry in order to fulfill the duty of procreation, and whoever is not engaged in propagating the race is as if he shed blood, diminishing the divine image and causing His Presence to depart from Israel” (*Shulhan Arukh*, Even haEzer 1:1). This is not to say that classical rabbinic Judaism was able to excise traditional celibate tendencies altogether. On the contrary, traditions and practices throughout Jewish history suggest that singleness for the sake of complete dedication to God has been a constant feature, although marginal, in Judaism, even in rabbinic Judaism. In the Dead Sea community the Damascus Document (VII 6; XIX 20) implies that at least some members of the community practiced celibacy. The *therapeutae* were, according to Philo, celibate “out of an admiration for and love of wisdom” (*De Vita Contemplativa* 68). Rabbi Simeon b. Azzai, while condemning celibacy, spent his life as celibate because his soul “was in love with the Torah” (*b. Yeb.* 63b). The Zohar depicts Moses as having to separate himself from Sephorah after being united with

What role does the Shekinah play in the attribution of the image to the human couple by both Rabbi Simlai and Rabbi Akiba? She is only mentioned at the very end of the two stories: it is impossible for both man and woman to exist without the Shekinah. It is tempting to interpret this last succinct statement in the broadest terms: the Shekinah denotes God's participation in human procreation. It has also been proposed that the Shekinah forms an androgyny in the godhead, to reflect the androgyny of the protoplast: like the first human, God is mixedly male and female.³⁶ However, these interpretations are blatantly non-contextual when it comes to *y. Ber.* 12d. In the context of our story, the esoteric reference to the Shekinah serves the function of an explanation for the plurality of the divine image; specifically, the pluralistic image is found expressed in the procreating human couple. Therefore the human couple must mirror a bifurcation in the godhead, expressed in this case as God and the Shekinah. It seems clear that in his esoteric explanation Rabbi Simlai agrees with the heretics that there is a bifurcation in the divine image in Gen 1:26 (which does literally read "our image" בצלמנו) and that this plurality is reflected into the human couple. The feebleness of the refutation of the *minim*, the driving away stick, might have been handled by the subconscious.

It is difficult to fit Rabbi Simlai's concession to the *minim* into the frames of either modalism or dualism. On the one hand, he does not suggest at any point a complete split, conflict, or tension in the binary godhead. On the other, his esoteric interpretation of Gen 1:26 moves outside the boundaries of modalism. It no longer explains plurals with singulars. It describes the divine in terms of complementarity. In sharp contrast to the response given to the *minim*, the singularity of the divine is not part of Rabbi Simlai's real answer to his disciples. I would suggest that the Shekinah is chosen to express this vision of the divine, at once both non-dualist and non-modalist, for her considerable flexibility: while functioning as a companion of God, somewhat independent from him, she also constitutes one godhead with him. In the terms of Rabbi Simlai's analogy, just as Adam's distinction from Eve does not generate two humanities or two images, the Shekinah does not double the divine.

the Shekinah (1:21b, 236b, 239a; 2:5b, 245a; 3:4b, 148a, 180a). On this tradition see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 226–227; Moshe Idel, "Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in the Kabbalah," in David Kraemer, ed., *The Jewish Family: Metaphors and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 179–224 at 206. See also Harvey McArthur, "Celibacy in Judaism at the Time of Christian Beginnings," *AUSS* 25 (1987): 163–181.

36 Lieve Teugels, "The Creation of the Human in Rabbinic Interpretation," in Gerard P. Lutikhuisen, ed., *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 107–127 at 111.

3 Rabbi Simlai and the Christian Binitarian Complex

Further evidence that Rabbi Simlai's reading of Gen 1:26 bifurcates the divine comes from the unlikeliest of places (since no direct interaction can be posited): early Christian sources. Several Christian texts oppose readings of Gen 1:26 that are strikingly similar to what I suggest here is the binitarian reading of Rabbi Simlai.³⁷ The following statement of the seventh-century Syrian bishop Jacob of Edessa³⁸ both places Rabbi Simlai's bifurcation of the godhead in clearer focus and provides a wider context for the theological difficulties presented by Gen 1:26–27:

And that Eve was formed from the rib of Adam and not from the dust like him is that she not seek nor seize for herself the rulership like him. And that [she was created] from the rib and not from the head is that she spend the night deprived of *παρρησία* and her face be covered like a rib. And the Lord did not breath a spirit into Eve, not soul from soul was she born—this time flesh of my flesh—and not soul from soul. And “the two shall become one flesh,” lest those who are in error consider and say that the formation of Adam was one thing and that of Eve another and that there are many gods in the heavens.

JACOB OF EDESSA, *Scholia*³⁹

The Syrian writer does not explain how a separate formation of Adam and respectively Eve would translate into belief in multiple gods, at least two. However, the argument amounts to a refusal to dissociate the male and the female within the creative act for such a move would amount at least to ditheism or binitarianism.

37 Although it is not analyzed here, mention should also be made of the council of Sirmium (341), which opposed Christians that assumed a plurality of divine beings based on Gen 1:26. On this decision see John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminar Press, 2004), 84.

38 On Jacob of Edessa, little known to English-language scholarship until very recently, see the comprehensive essays in Bas ter Haar Romeny, ed., *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) and Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and George Anton Kiraz, eds., *Studies on Jacob of Edessa* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010).

39 MS Harv. Syr. 123, f. 6^v, quoted from Edward G. Matthews, *The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian*, CSCO 573 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 19, n. 122. On this text see Dirk Kruisheer, “Reconstructing Jacob of Edessa’s *Scholia*,” in Judith Frishman and Lucas van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation: A Collection of Essays* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 187–196.

The ability of Gen 1:26–27 to suggest a bifurcation in the divine and the existence of a feminine element in it is even clearer in the following fourth century Christian text, also attributed to another renowned Syrian of the same city, Ephrem:

And when it (Scripture) says “[God] took one of [Adam’s] ribs [OR rather, “sides”] and built it into the form of a woman,” [means] that she would become the beginning of the world, and that [God] took her out of him [was] in order to fulfill the word which says, “Male and female he established them,” and so that no one think that there was a different creator for woman.

*The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian*⁴⁰

The argument is that the creation of Eve from Adam precludes any possible bifurcation of the protoplast. If the attribution to Ephrem the Syrian is correct, as the scholarship on the passage argues,⁴¹ he would have a clear concept of the androgyny of the first human and the need to make the above argument would be more cogent.⁴²

These two Christian passages are also best read against the background of the ubiquitous early Christian fears of accusations of polytheism.⁴³ As the doctrine of the Trinity coalesces in essence-hypostasis language, trinitarian theologians understand the precarious position of their theology in an unsteady balance between polytheism and modalism. When it comes to these two Syriac texts, their anti-polytheistic argument should also be read more specifically as against an internal danger: the aforementioned early Syrian feminization of

40 Matthews, *The Armenian Commentary*, 18–19. Armenian text in idem, *The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian*, CSCO 572 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 16.

41 See David D. Bundy, “Ephrem’s Exegesis of Isaiah,” in Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica 18.4. Papers of the 1983 Oxford Patristic Conference* (Kalamazoo/Leuven: Peeters, 1990), 235–236; Edward G. Matthews, “The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian,” in Judith Frishman and Lucas van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation: A Collection of Essays* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 143–161.

42 On Ephrem’s understanding of the first human as androgynous see Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 301–303.

43 The early Christian “not three gods” texts are too many to list here. Representative are Augustine’s common statement “not three gods, but one God” (e.g., *De Trinitate* 1.ix.19, v.viii.9, vi.ix.10, viii.1, xv.xvii.28; *The Trinity* [trans. Edmund Hill; Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991], 79, 195, 212, 241, 419) and Gregory of Nyssa’s treatise *On “Not Three Gods.”*

the Holy Spirit. As recent scholarship has documented, after the fourth century Syrian Christianity tries to expunge thoroughly its previous feminization of the Holy Spirit. It is telling that the two Syriac sources quoted here leave the femininity of the “different creator for woman” as merely implied.

It must be pointed out that the exegetical move of Rabbi Simlai does exactly what these two Christian texts find problematic: it locates humanity’s resemblance to God not in the initial, unbifurcated human, androgynous or not, but in the human couple. The basic theological premise of the two Syrian sources—the bifurcation of the male and the female within the creative act would amount to a bifurcation of the godhead—illuminates further the binitarianism of Rabbi Simlai’s explicit association of the divine image with the human couple, with Adam and Eve as separate beings.

At this stage of the research it is impossible to determine whether these two Christian texts counter the interpretation espoused by the *minim* and by Rabbi Simlai, that is, whether “those who are in error,” to quote Jacob of Edessa, are the *minim* of the rabbis and, indeed, some rabbis themselves, such as Rabbi Simlai; yet, this must remain for now a distinct possibility. Recent scholarship has revealed such direct polemics between Syrian theologians and the early rabbis.⁴⁴ This is not surprising, given the linguistic, cultural, and geographical proximity of the two groups. When it comes to Edessa itself, it is estimated that in the fourth century the Syrian city had a Jewish community that comprised between 8 and 12 percent of its population.⁴⁵ The repeated local Christian warnings against fraternization with Jews also suggest that at least some of the Christians there were attracted to Judaism and even influenced by it.⁴⁶ Several studies have pointed to intriguing parallels specifically between the Edessan Ephrem and rabbinic literature,⁴⁷ against which he otherwise polemi-

44 Specifically with regard to debates between Syrian authors and their neighboring rabbis, see Naomi Koltun-Fromm, “A Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Iran,” *JJS* 47 (1996): 45–63; eadem, “Aphrahat and the Rabbis on Noah’s Righteousness in Light of Jewish-Christian Polemics,” in Judith Frishman and Lucas van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Traditions* (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 57–71.

45 See Han J.W. Drijvers, “Syrian Christianity and Judaism,” in Judith Lieu et al., eds., *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 124–146 at 138; idem, “Jews and Christians at Edessa,” in Everett Ferguson, ed., *Early Christianity and Judaism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 350–365; idem, “Syrian Christianity and Judaism,” 124–146 at 90; Bas ter Haar Romeny, “Judaism and the Origins of Christianity in Edessa: Drijvers’ Reconstruction,” in Huub van de Sandt, ed., *Matthew and the Didache* (Asen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2005), 13–33 at 28.

46 Drijvers, “Syrian Christianity and Judaism,” 141.

47 Sebastian Brock, “Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources,” *JJS* 30 (1979): 212–232; Tryggve Kron-

cizes fiercely.⁴⁸ Ephrem also employs language that is strikingly similar to that of the Palestinian Targums.⁴⁹ Some of his scriptural quotes even go against the Peshitta, but agree instead with the Palestinian Targums.⁵⁰

Regardless, the heretics of our two Edessan authors, for whom the image of God applies separately to Adam and Eve and thus reflects a bifurcation in the divine, presumably male-female, are strikingly similar in their reading of Gen 1:26 to the *minim* of Rabbi Simlai, and indeed the rabbi himself, who similarly take the image of God to be reflected in the human couple and to mirror a male-female bifurcation in the godhead. If “those who are in error” are not one and the same with the *minim* and the sympathetic rabbis, their striking similarity should be viewed as an indicator of a similar exegetical culture, determined by akin cultural and linguistic milieus, a common textual heritage, similar exegetical issues and sensitivities to “textual irritants,”⁵¹ parallel solutions to these issues, and common interpretive principles. To this shared Jewish-Christian exegetical ground speak similar interpretive moves attested in even earlier texts. The Valentinian tradition mentioned in Clement of Alexandria that “the finest emanation of Wisdom is spoken of in ‘He created them in the image of God, male and female created he them’” probably reflects such exegetical move.⁵² It is possible that the imagery in Eph 5:29–32 draws its language from such binitarian background:

He who loves his wife loves himself, for no one ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as the Lord does the Church, because we are members of his body, from his flesh and from his bones. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will cleave to his wife,

holm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian with Particular Reference to the Influence of Jewish Exegetical Tradition* (Lund: Gleerup, 1978).

48 For a thorough examination of such polemics, see Christine Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-century Syria* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

49 Sebastian Brock, “A Palestinian Targum Feature in Syriac,” *JJS* 46 (1995): 271–282.

50 Michael Weitzmann, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 137–139.

51 See also the perceptive remarks in Burton L. Visotzky, “Jots and Tittles: On Scriptural Interpretation in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures,” *Prooftexts* 8 (1988): 257–269. To my knowledge the term “textual irritants,” as a short-hand for textual oddities that elicit special attention and extraordinary exegetical techniques (nothing short of linguistic acrobatics), was first proposed by James Kugel (see especially his *In Potiphar's House*). For more on this device see Boyarin, *Intertextuality*; Stern, “Midrash and Indeterminacy,” 132–161.

52 *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 21.1; text in François Sagnard, ed., *Clément d'Alexandrie. Extraits de Théodote*, SC 23 (2nd ed.; Paris: Cerf, 1948), 52–212.

and the two will be one flesh" (Gen 2:24). This is a great mystery, and I mean in Christ and in the Church.

Eph 5:29–32—my own translation

With the above evidence in mind, the intriguing possibility presents itself that the emphasis on Gen 2:24 applying to Christ and the Church is a polemic against binitarian interpretations of the verse. A similar emphasis is found in 2 *Clement* 14.1–2, which does not explicitly quote Ephesians or Gen 2:24 on this point. However, 2 *Clement* does associate the pair Christ-Church with the statement in Gen 1:27 that God made humanity as male and female.

4 Conclusions

Based on the Christian evidence presented above it can be safely concluded that Rabbi Simlai's *minim* and Rabbi Simlai in his own right do not read Gen 1:26 in any innovative way. The confrontation in *y. Ber.* 12d between the rabbinic authority and the *minim* suggests that the femininity of the divine was never fully excised from Judaism, including from the rabbinic mind. At best, the rabbis seem to have obfuscated this traditional Jewish thought behind closed doors, veils of esoteric vocabulary, and obscure textual conventions.

Rabbi Simlai's exegesis of Gen 1:26, in postulating that the divine image is given to the human couple and not to the initial Adam and therefore reflects a male-female differentiation in the divine, can now be presented as a precedent to later kabbalistic speculations. Contrary to the opinion expressed by Scholem and Schäfer and still dominating the field of Jewish mysticism, this early rabbinic midrash suggests that a binitarian pairing of God to his Shekinah circulated at least at the fringes of classical rabbinic theology.

That a God-Shekinah binitarianism would exist in classical rabbinic literature should not be surprising. Recent scholarship has already noted the difficulty of assuming a circumvention of rabbinic literature in a direct trajectory between Gnosticism and the Kabbalah. Such circumvention, particularly on the Shekinah/femininity of God, would stand in sharp contrast to the otherwise significant continuity between the Kabbalah and the early rabbis on the conception of the godhead. Moreover, several texts indicate the rabbis' inability, possibly even unwillingness, to drown out completely non-modalistic theologies.

I do not wish to suggest here that this rabbinic binitarian interpretation of Gen 1:26–27 is the only or even the predominant way in which ancient Judaism read the biblical passage. As the paucity of the sources adduced here indicates,

this interpretation was quite marginal in ancient rabbinic thought. The same can be said of early Christianity. Arguably, what recent scholarship has repeatedly shown, namely that prominent ancient interpreters from both sides of the increasingly less porous Jewish-Christian borders (such as Philo, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa) opposed any attribution of gender to any aspect of the divine image, is partly to blame for this marginalization.⁵³ Even a greater impact had the awareness, common in both early Jewish and Christian sources, that categories of human language can only fail in any portrayals of the divine.

Acknowledgments

In 2009, a second, greatly expanded version of this article was read at Duquesne University's symposium on *The Reception History of the Bible*. I wish to express my gratitude to all those present at both the Marquette and Duquesne meetings and particularly to their organizers, Professors Andrei Orlov (Marquette), Bogdan Bucur, and William Wright IV (Duquesne). The understanding of *y. Ber.* 12d that is advanced here was also presented to Dayton's Ryterband Symposium in 2011, in response to a talk given by Prof. Daniel C. Matt. I wish to thank the coordinator of the symposium, Prof. Mark Verman (Wright State University), and the main presenter of the meeting, Dr. Matt, for that opportunity and for the discussions we had afterwards on this interesting rabbinic text. Last but not least thanks are also due to my graduate assistant during the 2011–2012 year, Mr. James C. Wykes, who read this paper and offered valuable corrections.

53 See for example Philo, *Opif.* 76, 137, 151 (the image of God cannot contain any male-female differentiation); Gregory of Nyssa, *In Cant.* 7, 11; *De Hom. Opif.* 16:5–7. It should be noted that Gregory of Nyssa makes the point that both the negation and the affirmation of any gender differentiation in the divine do not affect or draw even close to describing the divine genderlessness. Paradoxically this means that in Gregory's transcendentalism, as Sarah Coakley astutely notes, "we are freed up ... to speak of God as 'mother'" ("Introduction," 10) just as much as we can speak of him as father.

The Nativity of Ben Sira Reconsidered

James R. Russell

It is an honor to dedicate this little paper on the Iranian facets of a strange little Hebrew book to his Grace Bp. Alexander Yurevich Golitsin, who in both his academic work and spiritual life has cast great light on some Jewish sources of the contemplative traditions that swelled into the mighty river of Russian Orthodox spirituality, which in turn irrigated the roots of Hasidism; one also humbly offers homage to a scion of a princely family who have for centuries served the Great Russian state and nation with self-sacrifice, zeal, and glory.

While working recently on a paper that considers the similarity of Esperanto and Modern Hebrew as both *Plansprachen* and “Jewish” languages, one had occasion to review the case of a planned *a priori* language whose purpose, the Creation of the universe, would afford it consideration as an early example. It is described in the *Sefer Yešira*¹ (“Book of Creation,” perhaps composed as early as the third century CE) and was studied by Prof. Joseph Dan in an article that I first heard when he delivered it as a lecture at Columbia University in New York in 1992.² That lecture, a thrilling experience, marked the beginning of a long friendship with one of the great scholars of Judaism of our time. Prof. Dan stressed the anomalous, nearly context-less features of *Sefer Yešira*. It does not suggest that history has a meaning or purpose, it says nothing of Israel or the Commandments, and it regards good and evil as mere dimensions. The very concise text is in two parts: in one, language is generated through two rotating wheels of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet that throw off the 231 possible binary combinations of these to form biliteral roots. These are arbitrary—the question one encounters in natural language of the relation of signifier to signified does not exist. The other part concerns the ten *Sefirot*: these are units of quality or energy that form a pattern which is the template of existence. The unknown author invented the term *sefira*, most likely from the same Hebrew root that produces *mispar* (“number”) and indeed the word *sefer* itself. One has since proposed, in a study of Armenian letter and number magic and

1 Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yešira: Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary*, TSAJ 104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

2 Joseph Dan, “The Language of Creation and Its Grammar,” in idem, ed., *Jewish Mysticism, Late Antiquity* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), 129–154.

mysticism, that the Hebrew neologism might have been intended to resemble Greek *sphaira*, “sphere.”³ The *Sefer Yešira*, though it later was to become the proof text of Jewish mysticism, is an isolate—there is nothing else like it. At the time of Prof. Dan’s lecture I proposed to him that the theories of language and of shape or pattern that are so exotic in a Jewish text would be wholly unexceptional in contemporary India, a civilization in contact with the cultures of both Parthia and Rome, where the developed (and complementary) theories of *mantra* and *yantra* were already commonplace. One recommended to him A. Padoux’s study, *Vac*, which is footnoted in his published study. But he did not pursue that line of inquiry further. Indeed on present evidence it is not possible to suggest a direct connection and borrowing, in the absence of any clearly Sanskritic reference.

It seems, nonetheless, methodologically sound to propose that when ideas and practices that are ordinary in India or Iran emerge in startling isolation from any other known context in Jewish texts, at a time when cultural contacts with the two great civilizations to the east of the Roman Near East were commonplace, it is reasonable to suggest they might have sparked the further development of nascent themes that would otherwise perhaps not have advanced very far. One encounters at times the dismissal of such research in the history of ideas as “essentialism” or “influence-hunting”; but this militates against the reality of cultural interchange, and thus against the process and development of thought. In Deutero-Isaiah, who hails the Persian Achaemenid king Cyrus as a messiah, one finds a consideration and rejection of dualism in rhetoric that reflects a familiarity, perhaps *via* an oral intermediary, with the *Gathas* of Zarathustra, in particular with the “holy questions” of the Prophet. The subsequent evolution in the Intertestamental period in Israel of concepts of an independent and wholly malign Satan, and of heaven and hell—beliefs

3 See Appendix II, “Mashtots’ the Magician,” to James R. Russell, “On an Armenian Magical Manuscript: New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, Ms 10558,” *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences* 8 (2002–2014) (Jerusalem, 2015), 121–208. It is interesting in retrospect that the ancients chose to ascribe great mystical and cosmological significance precisely to the sphere, given the celebrated conjecture in topology of the mathematician Henri Poincaré, propounded at the beginning of the 20th century, that “every closed three-dimensional manifold that is homotopy-equivalent to a three-dimensional sphere is, in fact, a sphere” that is, that such a three-dimensional sphere is the *only* kind of bounded three-dimensional object that has no holes in it: see Amir D. Aczel, *A Strange Wilderness: The Lives of the Great Mathematicians* (New York: Sterling, 2011), 239–240. The conjecture was proven in 2003 by the Russian Jewish mathematician Grigorii Perelman, who lives in St. Petersburg. See Masha Gessen, *Perfect Rigor: A Genius and the Mathematical Breakthrough of the Century* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009).

that found a stronger foothold in the offshoots of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, than they did in the older parent faith, where they proved to be in the main a passing fancy—should likewise be considered in the light of the Zoroastrianism of the Parthian Arsacids, whose popularity among the Jews in the Roman period aroused messianic hopes of liberation.

This appreciation of the influence of a significant Iranian element in the formation of Judaism was respectable in scholarship of the late nineteenth century but later fell into disrepute when it came to be stained, thanks to German Iranists and other academics who promoted actively the racist fantasies of “Aryan” superiority of the Nazi era. Scholarship of the postwar era, partly in consequence of this, but partly also because of new academic fashions and a diminution of interest in the demanding study of Iranian philology, tended to stress Iranica less than before, and the study of Zoroastrian Iran receded from the center of the study of antiquity. A new sort of academic totalitarianism, this time on the left rather than the right, that enforces an orthodoxy of post-colonialism, political correctness, and so on, now imposes upon scholars, at the risk of marginalization of worse, the unfounded assumption that cultural exchange presupposes that one culture is to be regarded as superior to another, with the consequence that borrowing belittles the recipient. However the salutary growth of Irano-Judaica and in particular Irano-Talmudica in Jewish studies, particularly in Israel, where the neo-Puritan left-orthodoxy of American academia has not yet taken hold everywhere, offers some hope for the future and the assurance that intellectual integrity may endure. So one would seek to entertain the strong possibility that an Iranian inspiration, a catalyst, underlies the ur-text of Kabbalah; and to approach the subject of the present essay in the same methodological spirit, with respect to a Zoroastrian inspiration behind the perplexing *Alphabet of Ben Sira*.

The *Sefer Yesira* seems to have languished in obscurity for some centuries (the Talmud ignores it or is unaware of it), while the visionary texts and practices of the *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and the *Hekhalot* (the Divine Chariot and the Heavenly Palaces) were evolving.⁴ But whatever the unattested reception of the earlier text in the intervening time might have been, the book emerged from the shadows into prominence in the post-Geonic period, as Jewish mystics widened their concern with the cosmological *Ma'aseh Bereshit*. One particular

4 One has indeed proposed that Iranian designations and architectural visions of the other-world inspired aspects of a *Hekhalot* text: see James R. Russell, “Iranian in the Hekhalot,” in Matteo Compareti, ed., *Fabulous Creatures and Spirits in Ancient Iranian Culture* (Bologna: Casa Editrice Persiani, 2018), 93–110.

group that Joseph Dan has studied in detail,⁵ the “Unique Cherub” circle among the Pious ones of Germany, the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz*, twelfth century, employed the *Sefer Yešira* as well another text that is likewise enigmatic, and seems to be so in very similar ways. It was long ago considered partly in an Iranian context,⁶ but that approach was subsequently forgotten, downplayed, or rejected outright—perhaps due to the impact of the trends surveyed above. However in view of additional evidence that approach merits revisiting. This text is the *Alef-Bet de-Ben Sira*, the “Alphabet of Ben Sira,” in spirit a work without piety, at times bleakly cynical, and also trenchantly parodic.⁷ Like *Sefer Yešira*, it is a peculiarly context-less and anomalous work, at odds with the values and beliefs one might associate with the mainstream Judaism of its era. The text in Dan’s view is probably to be dated to the Geonic period; and the locus of its composition was likely, depending on one’s point of view, to have been a place one might call either early Islamic Iraq or post-Sasanian Mesopotamia (or both). The text is called an alphabet because of the alphabetically arranged aphorisms in Hebrew and Aramaic attributed to the prodigy Ben Sira. This is the Jesus ben Sira of *Ecclesiasticus*, but his given name is for some reason not used, and as might indeed be expected in a pseudepigraphon he differs considerably from his namesake in the Apocrypha. At birth, Ben Sira wins a contest with a teacher (an act of *lèse majesté* the Talmud considers worthy of death, but a commonplace of folklore) and predicts that he, Ben Sira, will compose a difficult book people will want to destroy. The principal concern of the text is the conviction that death is purely evil, though normative Judaism, for all its hope in resurrection of the dead (one of the thirteen points of the later creed of Maimonides) accepts death as part of the purposes of an all-powerful God, though it mitigates this reality with the conviction that there is a world to come with its rewards. The author has compiled from various Talmudic and Midrashic sources a list of people (and one bird, Milcham) who have escaped death: many of them are obscure and as Prof. Dan points out,⁸ it is a seemingly random and haphazard assembly of figures that achieves immortality, but not by dint of any

5 See Joseph Dan, *The “Unique Cherub” Circle: A School of Mystics and Esoterics in Medieval Germany*, TSMEMJ 15 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

6 Israël Lévi, “La Nativité de Ben Sira,” *REJ* 29 (1894): 197–205, to be more fully appreciated *infra*.

7 ‘Eli Yassif, *The Tales of Ben Sira in the Middle Ages: A Critical Text and Literary Study* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984) [Hebrew].

8 Dan, *The “Unique Cherub” Circle*, 26–27. The bird may be compared perhaps to the Phoenix, except that the latter does die, only to be resurrected. An immortal eagle-like bird of composite features, Avestan Saēnō.mərəγa, Middle Persian Sēnmurw, New Persian Sīmorgh, who occupies a prominent place in Iranian heroic epic, mythology, and magic, is a more likely candidate for the model the author of the text might have considered.

apparent merit. That is, immortality was not a reward, they merely managed to evade something that the text takes for granted as manifestly bad.

This bizarre narrative would be far less remarkable in a Zoroastrian context. The ancient religion of the Iranians is dualistic: the evil spirit Angra Mainyu, not the good Creator God Ahura Mazda, is the author of all darkness, lying, disease, and above all death. Escaping death, then, is not necessarily a divine gift. In the Pahlavi *Ayādgar ī Zarērān* (“Memorial of Zarēr”), which I have argued might have been the crucial, climactic episode of a longer Parthian epic cycle—an Iranian parallel to the *Bhagavad Gītā*—king Vištāsp, the first ruler to accept the new revelation of the Prophet Zarathustra, is given a choice. He can either fight bravely the enemies of the newly-revealed Zoroastrian faith, thereby assuring its continuation but dooming himself and his beloved brother to death (Zarēr, on the battlefield; the king, in some unspecified way, and indeed he was to be the last of the Kayanian line), or choose immortality in a fortress of bronze, in which case the ultimate outcome of the cosmic battle between good and evil is uncertain. It is very much a dualist reflex of the moment of decision for the hero Arjuna in the parallel Indian epic.⁹ The king chooses to fight, accepting death for the sake of a greater good but not thereby justifying death itself as in any way natural; and one recalls that Zarathustra himself fell at the hands of an assassin, that incident also underscoring the inherent wickedness of human mortality.

The Shangri La-like magic enclosure of metal that was offered as a refuge of immortality to the Kayanian heroes seems to have been borrowed from Sasanian Persian into the Muslim cycle of stories *A Thousand Nights and a Night*, but the only eternal life in the City of Brass is the mechanical animation of metallic robot-guards. It has been transformed, as would be proper to the ideology of Islam, into a pious object lesson on the vanity of human ambition.¹⁰ Death, the Prophet Mohammed is supposed to have said, is the only sermon you need. In Zoroastrian apocalyptic and later Persian heroic literature there is a paradisiacal fortress called Gang or Kang *diz* (“fortress”), Avestan Kangha, where various legendary heroes (but, as we have seen, by no means all) enjoy uninterrupted bliss, waiting to be summoned for the last battle at the end of days.¹¹ It

9 See James R. Russell, “A Parthian Bhagavad Gita and its Echoes,” in Jean-Pierre Mahé and Robert W. Thomson, eds., *From Byzantium to Iran: In Honour of Prof. Nina Garsoian* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996), 17–35 at 20.

10 See James R. Russell, “The Tale of the Bronze City in Armenian,” in Thomson Samuelian and Michael E. Stone, eds., *Medieval Armenian Culture*, University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies 6 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 250–261.

11 See Mary Boyce, “On the Antiquity of Zoroastrian Apocalyptic,” *BSOAS* 47.1 (1984), 57–75

is thus for some a legitimate, strategic retreat; but for others a place to which only a coward would fly. And for still others, Shangri La is just a lucky escape. Kangdiz is a prominent feature of the Zoroastrian apocalyptic and epic imagination that enjoyed a long afterlife in Persian epic and Islamic storytelling. It is a place of which the anonymous author of Ben Sira could well have heard, living exactly when and where the tale of it would have been best known, and transmitted, and become most varied in its interpretation by diverse cultures with diverging views on mortality. He would then have fitted it into his narrative in such a way as parodically to illustrate its incongruity in respect to the Rabbinic Jewish tradition to which he belonged, and in which he was so well versed. (Rabbinic tradition adeptly co-opted the text anyhow, but that procedure is not the present concern of this essay and has been adequately studied by others.)

In another episode, Ben Sira answers a question put to him by Nebuchadnezzar, “Why did the earth receive the right to gobble up and swallow the whole world?” He explains that God could have made man out of heavenly material, but instead borrowed our clay from the earth and was obliged to repay the debt with our corpses at death. Dan points out that the story deprives death of any mitigating connection with divine justice, and offers no hope of resurrection.¹² The earth merely swallows us. There is at least some scriptural foundation for this grim forecast, given the character of Biblical evocations of Sheol and the famous verse *Lo ha-mētīm yehallelū Yāh, we-lo kol yōrdēi dūmāh* “The dead will not praise God, nor all who descend into the silence” (Ps 115:17).¹³ Where Judaism has expanded its understanding of the afterworld, there may have been a Persian catalyst or inspiration. But in the case of Ben Sira’s strange tale, one might note that the image of Mother Earth—Russian *Мать Сыра Земля*, etc.—as the powerful taker of the dead is commonplace in Indo-European mythology in a way that it is not in the Semitic lore of Abrahamic believers.

and James R. Russell, “The Interrupted Feast,” in Bernard Outtier, Cornelia B. Horn, Basil Lourié, and Alexey Ostrovsky, eds. *Armenia between Byzantium and the Orient: Celebrating the Memory of Karen Yuzbashian (1927–2009)* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

- 12 Dan, *The “Unique Cherub” Circle*, 24–25. The idea of a human tragedy as not at all a great moral dilemma but merely the result of a mere contract or conversation between God and another being is not unique, to be sure, in Biblical literature. All Job’s travails are the result of a wager our Lord makes with Satan—as the reader knows but the suffering hero does not, as his faith is tested to the limit.
- 13 The Psalm continues and concludes, “But we will bless the Lord, from now until evermore, Halleluyah!” Even so, what does the preceding verse say of an afterlife? The pious, Hasidic explanation that I have heard is that many who appear to be alive and among us are spiritually the dead, in the depths of silence, and indeed do not praise God.

In Iran and contiguous cultures from Armenia in the west to Khotan in the east, the Zoroastrian Aməša Spənta (“Holy Immortal,” a being somewhat like an archangel, in charge of both a moral quality and the corresponding creation) Spəntā Ārmaitī (“Holy Devotion,” mistress of the earth) is not just the lovely goddess of Zarathustra’s vision but retains also the aspect of earth the devourer of bodies, the powerful abode of the dead. The Armenian S(p)andaramet, an Iranian loan and a supernatural being that has very much the latter character in folklore,¹⁴ would well play the role of Ben Sira’s animated Earth.

We may now address the much-discussed episode that is the principal focus of the present essay: the birth of Ben Sira as described in the text. His father, the Prophet Jeremiah, came to bathe in a public bathhouse and found a number of “the evil men of Ephraim” committing onanism there, that is, masturbating. They threatened to rape him (to commit the sin of Sodom) if he did not join them. He therefore ejaculated into the water, his virgin daughter came to bathe there later on, and she was impregnated by her father’s semen. The young woman gave birth nine months later, in the way of nature but at the same time miraculously—for the little boy who emerged from her womb was fully formed and articulate. The name the boy chose for himself, Ben Sira, which is equivalent by *gematria* to that of Jeremiah but still hides the latter, highlights the fact that he is the offspring of an incestuous union. This circumstance is best concealed from the world, as he precociously explains to his mother. David Stern considers the story in the light of the genre of parody, a form seldom encountered in ancient Jewish literature. In particular, it satirizes *Pesikta Rabbati* on Jer 1:1, for both that text and the narrative contain the word *yeširah*; and cites also *b. Hag.* 14b–15a, where it is mentioned that a virgin can become pregnant through semen preserved in bath water. Stern notes also that Lot cohabited incestuously with his daughters.¹⁵ The tractate *Ḥagigah* 14b–15a of the Babylonian Talmud in a pericope on Ben Zoma considers the way a virgin may become pregnant in a bathtub, in the context of a larger discussion of Creation and the Divine Chariot. It is possible that the discussion has to do with the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, who as a youth also defeated Rabbis in argument; and the birth of Ben Sira would be a parody of the same. One has noted that the name Jesus

14 See James R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, H1S 5 (Cambridge, MA, 1987), chapter 10 (“Spandaramet-sandaramet”), pp. 323–359. Spandaramet, from NW Middle Iranian, is the Mazdean goddess, likened to Dionysus; but Sandaramet, apparently from an older, SW Iranian loan, is purely chthonic: in later medieval lore, her name contracts to produce evil subterranean beings, *sandark’*.

15 David Stern, “The Alphabet of Ben Sira and the Early History of Parody in Jewish Literature,” in Hindy Najman and Judith Newman, eds., *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, JSJSS 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 423–448 at 435–438.

is omitted in the text, perhaps out of distaste for Christianity, which when the *Ecclesiasticus* was composed had not yet come into existence.

Prof. Stern's insight is doubtless correct and supports his contention that this is a Rabbinic parody. But it is also possible—without detracting from the parodic character of the text—that the Ben Sira episode does a sort of double duty here, by alluding also the Zoroastrian legend of the birth of the Savior. That legend would have been commonly known to Persians in Iraq and to Jews who rubbed shoulders with them. In that narrative, Zarathustra's seed is conveyed by the messenger god Nairyō.sangha to lake Kāsaoya (identified by tradition with Hāmūn-e Seistān, in the southeast of present-day Iran) and towards the end of days a virgin will bathe there, become pregnant, and give birth to the Saošyant, Astvat.ərətā. The legend pervades the Zoroastrian sacred literature (*Yašt* 19.92, *Greater Bundahišn* 33.36–38, 35.56–60, *Dēnkard* 7.10.15–19) and was known in the eighth century to Theodore bar Kōnai, who reports in his *Book of Scholia* in Syriac that Zarathustra sat by an 'eina de-maya, a spring of water, and told his disciples Gushtasp (i.e., Vishtaspa, mentioned above), Sasan (a common name in Parthian as well as Middle Persian but still an anachronism, unless its original meaning, "protector", is employed as the epithet of an unnamed patron) and Meheman (this would be his early disciple Maidhyō.mangha, literally, "Half-moon") that around the end of time a virgin was to conceive. He then packed them off to Bethlehem.¹⁶ The story neatly conflates two virgin births and accounts besides for the journey of the Magi. Israël Lévi back in 1894 already proposed the similarity of the birth of Ben Sira to that of the Zoroastrian eschatological Savior, and noted that in Christian and Islamic tradition the Prophet Zoroaster was believed to have been a disciple of the Prophet Jeremiah (Ben Sira's father). He suggested the story might have come to the Jewish author through a Muslim intermediary, perhaps from an Arabic text that ridiculed Zoroaster in the manner that the *Tōledōt Yešū'* parodied Jesus. Importantly, Lévi stressed the centrality of Persians to the intellectual milieu of Iraq in the early Islamic period, noting such relevant translations as Ibn Muqaffa's of the cycle of animal fables *Kalila wa Dimna*. He concludes, "Notre roman serait la dernière étape d'un mythe religieux devenu simple conte amusant sous la plume d'un écrivain éclectique de mauvais gout. Cette dernière aventure n'est pas rare: c'est la destinée de beaucoup de leg-

16 See Tal Ilan and Reuven Kiperwasser, "Virginity and Water: Between the Babylonian Talmud and Iranian Myth," in Almut Hintze, Desmond Durkin, and Claudius Naumann, eds., *A Thousand Judgements. Festschrift for Maria Macuch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019), 193–208.

ends sacrées.”¹⁷ And then, he might have added with reference to the use of the text in medieval Ashkenaz by the Unique Cherub Circle of Jewish pietists and mystics, it returned again to sacred legend, among readers who could no longer understand it in any other way (and would not want to).

In their learned study of virgin birth from water, Tal Ilan and Reuven Kiperwasser carefully and exhaustively document the Talmudic and Zoroastrian material but conclude that Ben Sira is beholden to the former, not the latter. Considering that the telltale mention of the sin of Sodom would in their view betray European, not Middle Eastern authorship, they disagree with the conclusion of the most recent editor of the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, Eli Yassif,¹⁸ that it emerged in post-Sasanian Iraq. However certain additional factors should be taken into consideration, and these, in my view, would support strongly an Iranian milieu and vindicate Lévi’s judgment of nearly a century and a quarter ago. Here is the first factor. The Virgin Mary, and the lady in the Talmudic bathtub, are *not* the next-of-kin of the child’s father, but Ben Sira’s mother is Jeremiah’s daughter and, as we have seen, the hero in the text highlights that incestuous relationship by concealing his father’s name in a numerical code. Incest, though attested in the Bible, is scandalous to normative Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (and, indeed, to present-day Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians, though their recent ancestors still practiced it). But in the Zoroastrian scripture itself, it is one of the cardinal virtues, called in Avestan *xvaētvadāḡa-* and in Pahlavi *xwēdōdāh*. It is mentioned in the *Frāvarānē*, the Credo, that Zoroastrians recite whenever they tie the sacred girdle—at least thrice daily. Marrying one’s mother, sister, or daughter is even recommended as a means of expiating a sin. The birth of Ben Sira is a parody—so what, if not Zoroastrian legend and custom, is the text here parodying? Moreover, the men whom Jeremiah meets threaten anally to rape him unless he joins them in their circle-jerk (if the gentle reader will pardon the Americanism, but we are dealing here with the most vulgar kind of satire). Pahlavi *Kunmarz*, homosexual anal intercourse, is a perennial topic of humor in the Classical Persian literature that began in the early Islamic period—in a parody of the *Šāh-nāme* the archetypal hero Rostam boasts of his feats of athletic buggery, and Herodotus wryly noted long before that the Persians learned pederasty from the Greeks but came to excel in it. But in the Zoroastrian texts, whose concern is procreation and the prolongation of the family line, in opposition to the evils of infertility and extinction, it is regarded as the worst of all possible sins, the one for which there is no possibil-

17 Lévi, “La Nativité de Ben Sira,” 205.

18 ‘Eli Yassif, *Sippurei Ben Sira bi-yemei ha-beinayyim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984).

ity of expiation, the one for which the death penalty may be imposed without intervening legal procedure. Perhaps they protest too much: then, as now, it was a large part of human sexuality.

And consider too, a second additional factor that can argue for Iranian origins. This is the setting of the whole episode: not a bathtub, but a public bathhouse. Jews and Muslims enjoy the *mikveh* and *hammam*; but as we learn from a responsum of the priest Emēd ī Ašawahištān that undoubtedly addresses conditions after the Muslim conquest, the *garmābag* (lit. “(place of) warm water,” i.e., bathhouse) of the *akdēnān* (“those of evil religion,” i.e., Muslims) is strictly forbidden to Zoroastrians no matter what their reason for wanting or needing to use it, because there is no rule in Islam that protects water and fire from impurity (*hixr*, “excrement,” and *nasā*, “dead matter”—a term that includes any bodily discharge). The author of the responsum notes that *andar huxwadāyih* (“in the time of good rule,” i.e., the Sasanian period) it was common for bathhouses to be located near the fire temples—at that time, presumably, laws of religious hygiene were observed. And indeed Zoroastrians must wash before prayer, using even sand if nothing else is available (this and perhaps Jewish rituals of hand-washing were perhaps the source of the same Muslim rule).¹⁹ If the author of the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* was indeed parodying a Zoroastrian legend, then this episode may lewdly suggest that the semen in lake Hamun was no less repulsive in the sight of the law of the Mazdeans themselves than the water of a Turkish bath in which grown men have been toying with themselves. If the satire extends as well to the Christian virgin birth, *tant pis*—but nobody ever claimed that the Blessed Virgin Mary became of child through taking a bath.²⁰ Insemination in the water of a virgin destined to give birth to an important person is a *topos* that is not limited in any case to strictly Zoroastrian mythology: it is found in two epic cycles of the Iranian world as well, so it would take some special pleading for a Persian tale, however it may have been transmitted, *not* to have been the source of *Ben Sira*.

In the Armenian epic cycle of Sasun, the lady Covinar steps into lake Van, drinks one and a half handfuls of a milky liquid spurting from a tumescent rock in the water, and nine months later gives birth to twins, one of whom is shorter than the other. In the Ossetic epic of the Narts, a shepherd sees the naked lady

19 Nezhat Safa-Isfahani, *Rivāyat-i Hēmīt-i Ašawahištān: A Study in Zoroastrian Law*, HIS 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 145–148.

20 And there is a hilarious satire, most definitely from Europe, of the Christian virgin birth. In the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, two corrupt monks travel around the Italian countryside charging gullible rustic oafs good money to see a parrot feather that they claim fell off the angel Gabriel's wing while he was lustily “annunciating” Mary. No bathhouse here.

Satana washing clothes in the river Terek: she sees him and hides behind a rock, he ejaculates, the semen hits the rock, and a hero is born from there. Armenian folklore is rich in milky fountains; and imagery of this kind may well go back in Anatolia to the Hittite era. But the epic of Sasun crystallized around the ninth century, with the Armenians' enemies the "idolatrous" Arabs of Misr, "Egypt" (by which they meant the Caliphate to the south, with its center in Iraq). Thus the story was current around the same time that the satire of the nativity of Ben Sira took shape.²¹

Where might the author of Ben Sira have heard and traded witty, learned tales? One setting could have been a gathering of other learned Jews. In his study of Ben Sira, Stern cites, importantly if perhaps somewhat anachronistically, the testimony of the Rambam (Moses Maimonides, 1135–1204), who reported that the Rabbis when they tired of their studying (*garsayhū*) would speak among themselves words of amusement (*mīlēi de-vdihūtā*).²² It is certainly possible that some of the Amoraim and Geonim did likewise, in earlier ages. In Geonic Iraq the *mutakallimun* ("discourers") of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity met each other in *majālis* (lit. "sessions," i.e., social gatherings; the Arabic word is now used also to mean a parliament) to seek answers in their various faiths to the questions posed by Greek philosophy.²³ The Persian poet Ḥāfez in an ode encourages his friends, *Majles-e 'ons ast, ghazal khwān ō sorūd*, "It is a gathering of intimate friends; sing odes and play music." Participants in such gatherings often drank wine, and conversation was free indeed. If one considers the writings of 'Obeid-e Zākānī, the bounds of satire were liberal and lewdness was a commonplace weapon of wit. In the later syncretic Dīn-i Ilāhī ("Religion of the Divine") sponsored by the Mughal emperor Akbar, the only structure that might be compared to a temple was a beautifully designed *majlis* at Fatehpur Sikri near Delhi—a seminar room for the wise men of the religions of the empire. In the Iraq of the Geonic period, there was ample room for the expression of diverse religious views: Šahrastānī (1076–1153) wrote on the beliefs of Magians (i.e., Zoroastrians), Jews, Christians, Muslims, secular philosophers, Sabaeans, Manichaeans, worshippers of stars and idols, and Brahmins (Hindus). Moreover, he claims that the Magians had 70 sects; the

21 On the Armenian and Alan epics see James R. Russell, "Argawan: The Indo-European Memory of the Caucasus," *Nartamongae* 13:1–2 (2018): 151–187.

22 Stern, "The Alphabet of Ben Sira and the Early History of Parody in Jewish Literature," 448, n. 50.

23 Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 285.

Jews, 71; the Christians, 72; and the Muslims, 73.²⁴ This seems hyperbolic, but one might at least suggest that each religion had many divisions; and the more adherents it enjoyed, the more divisions there were. Abū Manṣūr al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) had argued against a plethora of religious and irreligious opponents, including *dahrīyūn* (materialists or fatalists, for whom the Iranian designation of the Manichaeans, *zandīg*, Arabic pl. *zanādiqah*, “(false) interpreter,” was also employed) and *ṭabīṭīyūn* (“naturalists” who denied the future life and the rewards and punishments there).²⁵ One imagines the author of the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* would have found congenial company in such a motley crew of imaginative and garrulous savants ready to deploy every literary strategy available to argue with an opponent, or just have some fun at his expense.

Humor was common in the early Islamic world and Central Asia.²⁶ I do not know why the devout Jews of the mystic circle of the Unique Cherub apparently failed to understand that a text they regarded with reverence was a parody, at times cynical and nihilistic—a grand joke. At least two texts securely within the Biblical canon express a cynicism that pious commentators have either adroitly circumvented or failed to notice: these are Job and Ecclesiastes. The presence of these in the canon might argue for the existence, indeed, of a cold undercurrent—not to mix metaphors—of cynicism deep within the warmer mainstream of the thought of Israel. Perhaps they were not equipped with an awareness of the very existence of the genre that would enable them to receive and perceive it. Jorge Luis Borges (no stranger to parody, satire, obscure sects, and the world of early Islam) in a short story illustrates such a predicament: the learned Ibn Rushd—Averroes—is in his library, trying to figure out what Aristotle meant by “comedy.” Outside in the courtyard below, three boys are clowning about: one of them, standing on the shoulders of another, is acting like a muezzin, which the third plays a worshipper. Ibn-Rushd is barely annoyed by the distraction of the silly boys—a performance of comedy, which, had he but known how to see and hear, would have served as a living answer to his question—and returns to the solemn, humorless study of his scholarly books.²⁷

24 A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn, eds., *Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, Muslim Sects and Divisions* (The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa’l-Niḥal) (London: Kegan Paul, 1984), 9, 31.

25 W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazālī* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), 30.

26 See Holly Adams, “Clowns on the Silk Road,” in Ken Parry, ed., *Art, Architecture and Religion Along the Silk Roads*, Silk Road Studies 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 221–232.

27 Jorge Luis Borges, “Averroës’ Search,” in Andrew Hurley, ed., *Jorge Luis Borges. Collected Fictions* (New York: Viking, 1998), 235–241 at 236.

PART 2

Theophany and Transformation



Historical Memory and the Eschatological Vision of God's Glory in Irenaeus

Khaled Anatolios

The two most prominent themes in scholarly treatments of Irenaeus's eschatology are, first, his anti-gnostic insistence on the salvation and glorification of the flesh—*salus carnis*—and, second, his millenarianism, the belief that the consummation of the present phase of history will bring about an earthly kingdom which the righteous will inherit, and in which they will become prepared for the fullness of assimilation to the divine nature.¹ Almost altogether missing from these scholarly treatments is the recognition that Irenaeus conceived of humanity's historical memory as intrinsic to and, at least to some extent, constitutive of the eschatological vision of divine glory.² This Irenaean motif anticipates a pervasive stress in modern theological treatments of eschatology on the persistence of historical memory in eternity. Exemplifying this modern theme, Romano Guardini writes that in eschatological eternity, a person's "history is included in the present, and all the successive moments of [his] past exist in an absolute now There must also be present his joys, sorrows, frustrations, liberations, victories, defeats, his love and his hatred ... for the resurrection of the body means the resurrection of the life that has been lived, with all its good and evil Nothing that has been is annihilated. Man's deeds and his destiny are a part of him, and, set free from the restrictions of history, will remain for all eternity"³

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- 1 On Irenaeus's eschatology as centered on the theme of *salus carnis*, see especially Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993), 56–64; Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 229 ff.; Ysabel de Andia, *Homo Vivens. Incorruptibilité et divinization de l'homme selon Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1986), 333–343. For a succinct but synthetic account of Irenaeus's eschatology, which attends to both the themes of *salus carnis* and millenarianism, see Brian Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church. A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 28–32.
 - 2 By way of slight exception, Brian Daley does mention in passing that, for Irenaeus, "our souls ... will retain the 'form' of their body and memory of their existence on earth, but not its fleshly substance." (Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church*, 30). However, Daley does not focus on how the memory of historical existence is intrinsic to the eschatological vision of divine glory, which is the subject of the present essay.
 - 3 Romano Guardini, *The Last Things: Concerning Death, Purification after Death, Resurrection*,

Notwithstanding Irenaeus's affinity with the modern emphasis on the eternal persistence of human history, his treatment of this theme has its own distinctive character and needs to be interpreted within the native context of his unique theological vision. Only when we have done this work of contextual interpretation can we properly ascertain the unique contribution that Irenaeus can make to the modern discussion of the question of the relation between history and eternity. In this essay, I will offer such a contextual interpretation by first demonstrating that Irenaeus does indeed speak of humanity's recollection of its historical experience as integral to its eschatological vision of divine glory and that this theme, though fleetingly expressed, is in organic continuity with the major axes of his theology. Secondly, I will provide evidence that despite the seemingly offhand and sporadic appearances of such passages, they are entirely consistent and indeed intertwined with at least three of Irenaeus's pervasive thematic preoccupations: the irreducible difference and positive relation between God and creation; the knowledge of God manifest in human history; and the mutually related glories of God and humanity. In conclusion, I will offer some brief reflections on what I consider to be Irenaeus's distinctive contribution to modern discussions of the relation between history and eschatology.

1 Two Irenaean Passages Indicating the Persistence of Historical Memory in the Eschatological Vision of God

A paradigmatic passage in which Irenaeus lays out the implicit logic for his assumption that the remembrance of humanity's historical experience will persist in the condition of eschatological glorification can be found in Book 3, chapter 20, of *Against the Heresies*. Here, in the course of countering the Gnostic division between the earthly Jesus and the Christ from the

Judgement, and Eternity (New York: Pantheon, 1954), 68–69. For an overview of this prominent theme in modern eschatological reflection, along with a bibliography of its most illustrious expressions, see Paul O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope. An Introduction to Eschatology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 109–112. Callaghan comments: "Emphasis on the ethical relevance of final resurrection brings us to the remarkable conclusion that the risen state to which humans are elevated by the power of God consists of *the manifestation and perpetuation of the personal life history of each person*. Everything people do and are during their lifetimes, even the smallest, most apparently hidden actions, will remain forever impressed on their risen body, will seal their eternal identity That the *Parousia* will bring about the resurrection of the life one has lived is a common position among many recent theologians, both Protestant and Catholic." (p. 109; italics in original text).

Pleroma, Irenaeus insists not only on the unity of Jesus Christ but also on the unity and meaningfulness of all of human history, which is recapitulated salvifically in Christ. In this passage, Irenaeus depicts human history as a story of sin, repentance, and redemption whose narration continues to be performed within humanity's eschatological glorification of God:

God was magnanimous (*magnanimis*) when humanity transgressed because he foresaw the victory which would be granted to humanity through the Word. For, when strength was made perfect in weakness (2 Cor 12:9), it showed the kindness and transcendent power of God. In the same way, He patiently suffered Jonah to be swallowed by the whale, not that he should be swallowed up and perish altogether, but that, having been cast out again, he might be all the more subject to God (*sed ut evomit magis subiceretur Deo*), and might glorify all the more the One who had conferred upon him such an unhoped-for deliverance, and might bring the Ninevites to a lasting repentance. Likewise, at the beginning, God permitted humanity to be swallowed up by the great whale, who was the author of transgression, not so that they would perish altogether. Rather, he arranged and prepared the plan of salvation, which was accomplished by the Word ... [He did this] so that humanity, receiving an unhoped-for salvation from God, might rise from the dead, and glorify God ... and in order that human beings might always continue to glorify God, and to give thanks without ceasing for that salvation which they received from Him, and so that no flesh should boast in the Lord's presence (1 Cor 1:29) and in order that human beings should never adopt an opposite opinion with regard to God, supposing that the incorruptibility which belongs to them is their own naturally, and by thus not holding the truth, should boast with empty superciliousness, as if they were naturally like to God (*quasi naturaliter similis esset Deo*).⁴

In this passage, Irenaeus speaks of the eschatological state of human perfection as "incorruptibility, ἀφθαρσία." In her magisterial study, *Homo Vivens. Incorruptibilité et divinization de l'homme selon Irénée de Lyon*, Ysabel de Andia has extensively demonstrated that the language of incorruptibility denotes the reality of deification for Irenaeus, since the bishop of Lyons considered "incorruptibility"

4 Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* (= *Haer.*) 3.20.1. [Philip Schaff, et al., eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers. Vol. 1. The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), xxx (altered); Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre III tome 2)*, SC 211 (Paris: Cerf, 1974), 383–387].

to be an attribute of divine being.⁵ But we should note well that Irenaeus does not here speak of humanity's eschatological perfection as merely a physical incorruptibility, a theme, which as I noted earlier, tends to draw the lion's share of attention in scholarly interpretations of Irenaeus's eschatology.⁶ Rather, Irenaeus here describes the condition of deified incorruptibility as a particular condition of consciousness, of which a significant element is humanity's memory of its own historical experience. This historical memory will forever safeguard humanity's awareness that its deified condition is a gift acquired from God and not something intrinsic to human nature. In turn, that awareness is an indispensable ingredient, according to Irenaeus, in the eschatological perfection of humanity's glorification of God. This glorification will consist principally of humanity's abiding recognition and thankful remembrance of how its historical downfall was reversed by God's gracious salvation.

In the paragraph immediately following the excerpt quoted above, Irenaeus once again responds to the question of theodicy by invoking the prospect of humanity's deified incorruptibility and its eschatological glorification of God through the remembrance of God's saving work throughout human history:

Such was the magnanimity (*magnanimitas*) of God that He allowed humanity to pass through all these things and to acquire the knowledge of death so that it may attain to the resurrection from the dead and learn by experience (*experimento discens*) what it had been liberated from. In this way human beings will always give thanks to the Lord, having obtained from him the gift of incorruptibility and will love him all the more. For the one to whom more is forgiven loves more (Luke 7.43).⁷

5 De Andia, *Homo vivens*, 333–334. On the attainment of incorruptibility as coterminous with the process of deification, see also Michel Aubineau, “Incorruptibilité et divinization selon saint Irénée,” *RSR* 44.1 (1956): 25–52.

6 So, for example, de Andia focuses principally on the understanding of incorruptibility as transformation of the flesh. In speaking of the Spirit's role in this process, she explains: “Pour Irénée, l'*opus Spiritus* est la ‘maturation’ ou la ‘preparation’ de la chair à la vision de la lumière paternelle incorruptible, par une spiritualization progressive de la chair, grâce à l’incarnation du Verbe et à la Pentecôte de l’Esprit sur l’Église.” (334). She further describes humanity's eschatological fulfillment as “la parfait ressemblance au Verbe incarné, Image de Dieu, par la ‘transformation’ (μεταμόρφωσις) de la chair par l’Esprit et sa ‘conformité (συμμόρφωσις)’ au Fils.” (335).

7 *Haer.* 3.20.2; Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 450 (altered); Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon*, 388.

In these and similar passages, Irenaeus clearly presumes that the deified eschatological condition of humanity will consist not merely of a vision of the naked divine essence but also of the glory of God manifested in God's salvific activity throughout the course of human history. This remembrance will ensure that the condition of deified human beings will be forever Eucharistic, containing an eternal thankful anamnesis of God's salvific activity within human history. The eschatological song of humanity's glorification of God will thus forever recapitulate the utterance of Jonah: "I cried by reason of my affliction to the Lord my God, and he heard me out of the belly of the whale." Humanity's memory of its experiences within the belly of human history will reverberate into eternity.

It can be readily conceded that Irenaeus does not present an explicit and thematic treatment of the perseverance of historical memory in the consummated condition of deification. Nevertheless, as these passages attest, he does seem to presuppose that historical memory endures within humanity's eschatological vision of God and indeed forever animates and informs that vision. The question to be answered now, in the second part of this essay, is whether this presupposition on Irenaeus's part is merely a fleeting improvisation to which he occasionally resorts, or whether it is indeed integral to his global theological vision. In order to argue for the latter position, I will now try to show that Irenaeus's presumption of the perseverance of historical memory in the eschatological stage of human deification is seamlessly intertwined with three other key principles of his theological vision: 1) the irreducible difference between God and creation; 2) the knowability of God through the medium of human history; and 3) the mutually related glories of God and humanity.

2 Three Irenaean Principles Underlying the Affirmation of the Eschatological Persistence of Historical Memory

2.1 *The Difference between God and Creation*

In the first Irenaean passage quoted above (*Haer.* 3.20.1), the bishop of Lyons cited as one of the eschatological benefits of human history that it will afford humanity an eternally unforgettable education in its own creatureliness. Moreover, Irenaeus asserts that the integrity of the condition of eschatological deification in fact depends on humanity's recognition that its likeness to God does not accrue to it naturally but is an undeserved gift from God. Irenaeus suggests that it is precisely the historical experience of humanity's fall and God's salvation that will forever prevent it from once again throwing away the gift of

its divine likeness out of the mistaken and prideful assumption that it is not a superadded (“unhoped for”) gift but simply a feature of its own nature.

However fleeting may be this intimation of the persistence of historical memory within humanity’s condition of deification, it is a completely organic outgrowth of Irenaeus’s pervasive emphasis on the irreducible distinction within the positive relation between God and creation. This conception was honed against Gnostic teaching that threatened both sides of this dialectic.⁸ On the one hand, Irenaeus reports his Gnostic opponents as teaching that this world was the product not of the true God but of the renegade Demiurge, who was in turn the result of the inordinate passion of Sophia, the youngest of the aeons within the divine *Pleroma*.⁹ In opposition to this conception, Irenaeus emphasized the mutual positive relation between God and creation. This world was directly fashioned by the true God, without the use of any extraneous intermediaries, but through his own “two hands”, the Son and the Spirit.¹⁰ Creation is both entirely dependent on God and the testimony to His power and goodness. On the other hand, some Gnostics held that some human beings, the “pneumatics,” contained a divine spark which granted them a natural kinship with the realm of the *Pleroma*.¹¹ Irenaeus consistently counters both the Gnostic separation and the Gnostic conflation of the divine and the creaturely, insisting that God and the world are both positively related and irreducibly distinct. The positive relation does not mitigate the irreducible difference and the difference does not lessen the positive relation but rather establishes it.¹²

Invoking the language of John Henry Newman, we can say that, for Irenaeus, humanity’s eschatologically enduring historical memory will enable it to eternally give a real assent and not just a notional assent to its own creatureliness.¹³ For Irenaeus, this real, historically-informed assent to its own creatureliness is

8 For the purposes of this essay, we need not be detained by recent debates about the viability of the “gnostic” label for describing Irenaeus’s opponents, since we are here only concerned with Irenaeus’s theological response to his own construction of his opponents’ position and not directly with the accuracy of that construction. The case against the aptness of the “gnostic” label has been made most notably by Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: an Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

9 For Irenaeus’s account of the creation of the world by the Demiurge, along with the collaboration of Sophia of which the Demiurge itself was not aware, see *Haer.* 1.5.1–6.

10 See *Haer.* 4.20.1; 5.6.1.

11 *Haer.* 1.7.3.

12 See Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius. The Coherence of His Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998), 19–24.

13 John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), 49–92.

indispensable for humanity's appropriation of its gifted deification. Without such historical memory, Irenaeus intimates, humanity would once again be in danger of grasping the gift of deification as if it was its natural birthright, just like Adam and Eve did in the garden. It is important to take careful note at this point of Irenaeus's studied ambivalence with regard to the language of deification, which he by turns both accepts and rejects. At times he applies the verse from Ps 82:6 "I have said, you are gods, and all sons of the Most High" to humanity's eschatological attainment to the full likeness of God.¹⁴ But elsewhere, invoking the irreducibility of the Creator-creature distinction, he insists that human beings can never be called "gods" in the most proper sense:

But the things established are distinct from him who has established them, and what have been made from the One who made them ... so that indeed the one who made all things can alone, together with His Word, properly be termed God and Lord. But all the things which have been made cannot have this term applied to them, neither should they justly assume that title which belongs to the Creator.¹⁵

Irenaeus's apparent ambivalence with regard to the language of deification should not be interpreted as vacillation or indecision on his part. Properly situated within the architectonic of his thought, it is rather an expression of his consistent qualification that the gift of humanity's assimilation to God is precisely a gift of God's power manifested in human weakness. This Pauline trope (cf. 2 Cor 12:9), which was employed by Irenaeus in the first passage quoted above (*Haer.* 3.20.1), is typically used by Irenaeus with an eschatological inflection, in order to assert that the fruition of humanity's perfection must coincide with the consummation of humanity's grasp of its own weakness.¹⁶ As we saw in *Haer.* 3.20.1, humanity's recognition of its own weakness enables it to be more subject to God and thus more receptive of the divine power which assimilates it to God. The more human beings learn how different they are from God, the more they are enabled to become like God, and that is how the whole extent of human history becomes an education in deification. The consummation of this deification is also a consummation of humanity's loving subjection to God.

14 *Haer.* 3.6.1; 4.38.4. For Irenaeus's employment of this verse in the construction of his theology of deification, see Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 105–110.

15 *Haer.* 3.8.3; Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 422 (altered).

16 Apart from *Haer.* 3.20.1, discussed above, see *Haer.* 5.2.3; 5.3.1; 5.9.2.

Irenaeus's conception of this historical pattern is given expression, among other places, in the course of his response to the Gnostic repudiation of the dispensation of the Old Testament. Rejecting a strict antithesis between the Old Law and the Gospel, Irenaeus maintains that the two dispensation should not be opposed in terms of the slavery of the Law and the freedom of the Gospel. Rather, Christ has intensified the precepts of the Law so as to bring about a greater subjection to God which coincides with the fulfillment of humanity's capacity to glorify its Maker: "the more extensive operation of liberty implies that a more complete subjection and affection toward our liberator has been implanted within us. For He did not set us free for this purpose, that we should depart from Him ... but that the more we receive his grace, the more we should love Him. Now the more we have loved Him, the more glory shall we receive from Him, when we are continually in the presence of the Father."¹⁷

Note that in the first passage we looked at, Irenaeus had said that God allowed sin so that humanity might become all the more subject to God and glorify God all the more. We can see now that this notion is consistent with Irenaeus's distinctive interpretation of the meaning of human history, as paradigmatically exemplified in the transition from the Old to the New Covenant. The persistence of historical memory informs the subjection to God which, for Irenaeus, enables the glorification of God by which humanity itself is glorified and deified. Irenaeus's presumption of the persistence of historical memory within the eschatological condition of human deification is thus deeply inter-twined with his understanding of the inner meaning of human history, his preoccupation with the absolute irreducibility of the Creator-creature distinction, as well as with his strongly dialectical understanding of deification as a condition in which human beings become divine precisely by fully appropriating their creatureliness.

2.2 *The Knowability of God in History*

Irenaeus's occasional intimations that humanity's historical experience is integral to the eschatological vision of God should also be logically situated within his general affirmation of the knowability of God throughout every phase of human history. Though this affirmation is pervasive in Irenaeus's work, it can be obscured by an overemphasis on his apophaticism.¹⁸ It is admittedly easy to

¹⁷ *Haer.* 4.13.3; Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 478.

¹⁸ For a generally balanced and nuanced portrait of Irenaeus as a "mystical theologian" and "the first really apophatic theologian," see Nicholas Gendle, "St. Irenaeus as Mystical Theologian," *The Thomist* 39 (1975): 185–197. However, Gendle sometimes lapses into the inter-

fall into such one-sided exaggeration if we put too much non-contextual stock on certain passages where Irenaeus rails against the “knowledge that puffs up,” or insists that God is unknowable as far as his greatness but known only with regard to his love.¹⁹ Taking account of the entirety of his treatise and interpreting each of the parts in its local context, we are bound to come to the conclusion that Irenaeus does not categorically deny human knowledge of God *in se*, but rather strongly affirms such knowledge as long as it is conceived in terms consistent with the God-world distinction. According to these terms, created beings cannot achieve knowledge of God by their own powers but must be granted this knowledge as a gift by God Himself. For Irenaeus, the problem with the Gnostics was not that they claimed to know God, but rather that they simply made up this so-called knowledge. Their knowledge of God was erroneous because it was not an authentically creaturely, which is to say, genuinely receptive knowledge. Irenaeus insists that in order to purify oneself of the tendency to apply one’s own concepts and suppositions onto to God, one must “reflect that the human being is infinitely inferior to God ... For you, O human being, are not an uncreated being, nor did you always co-exist with God, as His own Word, but now through his pre-eminent goodness, receiving the beginning of your creation, you gradually (*sensim*) learn from the Word the dispensations of God who made you.”²⁰

In the last sentence of this passage, Irenaeus expresses the two essential features of his conception of the creaturely knowledge of God: first, that it is enabled by Trinitarian divine agency; and second, that it is a gradual process that unfolds throughout human history.²¹ Irenaeus has occasion to articulate these two features in the midst of an exegetical debate over the interpretation of Matt 11:27 and its Lukan parallel, “No one knows the Son but the Father and no one knows the Father but the Son and the one to whom the Son has willed to reveal him.” With respect to the first aspect, that of the Trinitarian self-mediation of the human knowledge of God, Irenaeus elaborates:

pretation that Irenaeus’s apophaticism amounts to the stipulation of “humanity’s inability to know God *in se*,” (p. 193), which is a position against which I will argue below.

19 *Haer.* 4.20.1.

20 *Haer.* 2.25.3. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 396–397 (altered); Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre II)*, sc 294 (Paris: Cerf, 1982), 254.

21 For an excellent account of the centrality of the theme of divine manifestation in Irenaeus as coextensive with salvation history see Réal Tremblay, *La manifestation et la vision de dieu selon saint Irénée de Lyon*, MBTh 41 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), 67–120.

For the Lord taught us that no one is capable of knowing God, unless he be taught by God; that is, that God cannot be known without God; but that this is the express will of the Father, that God should be known.²²

For the Son, being present with his own handiwork from the beginning, reveals the Father to all Therefore, in all things and through all things, there is one God the Father and one Word and one Son and one Spirit and one salvation to all who believe in Him.²³

The second feature of Irenaeus's conception of the knowledge of God, the emphasis on the progressive and gradual, which is to say historical, character of this knowledge, was deployed to counteract the Gnostic reading of Matt 11:27 which changed the verb "knows" ["No one knows the Father but the Son"] ... to the past tense, so as to read, "No one knew the Father but the Son" This reading was used by Irenaeus's Gnostics to support their doctrine that the true God revealed by the Christ from the *pleroma* was unknown during the Old Testament dispensation. Against this teaching, Irenaeus emphasized the pervasiveness of the availability of the knowledge of God at every period of human history, insisting that it would show neglect on God's part if there were any period of human history bereft of knowledge of him. What then of the ostensible apophaticism of that famous passage to which we have already alluded in 4.20.1, where Irenaeus says:

With respect to his greatness [*secundum magnitudinem*], it is not possible to know God, for it is impossible for the Father to be measured. But with respect to his love [*secundum dilectionem ejus*] (for this is what leads us to God by his Word), those who obey Him always learn that He is so great a God [*semper discunt quoniam est tantus Deus*], and that it is He who has established and selected and adorned and contains all things, including both ourselves and our world.²⁴

To our modern sensibilities, shaped by Kantian epistemological agnosticism and pietistic emotionalism, these words easily come to mean that the extent of our knowledge of God is merely that He exists and that He loves us and that it

22 *Haer.* 4.6.4. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 468 (slightly altered).

23 *Haer.* 4.6.7. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 469.

24 *Haer.* 4.20.1. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 487 (altered); Adelin Rousseau, Bertrand Hemmerdinger, Louis Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier, eds., *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre IV)*, SC 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 624.

cannot extend as far as an apprehension of God's very being, God *in se*. Along such lines, one commentator offers the explanation that, for Irenaeus, "human beings do not see God in the divine greatness and glory. In this sense God is truly incomprehensible ... The sense seems to be, 'the all-powerful God enables his lovers to see him, not insofar as God is great and glorious, but rather as God is loving and kind.'"²⁵ But such an interpretation jars against the immediate context of Book 4 of *Against Heresies*, in which Irenaeus is preoccupied with affirming precisely the knowledge of the Father through the Incarnate Word. In fact, Irenaeus is not at all suggesting that the knowledge of God's greatness has a different objective content than the awareness of God's love. Rather, knowing the greatness of God "according to love" simply means knowing the greatness of God through Christ. The evidence in support of the latter reading is extensive, as long as we are careful not to read discrete statements out of context and without attention to their inter-textual signification. So, for example, shortly before the statement quoted above, Irenaeus contends that "God cannot be measured in the heart and is incomprehensible to the mind."²⁶ The apophaticism of this statement, however, is transformed into a Christological cataphaticism as soon as we recall Irenaeus's declaration, earlier in Book 4, that the Son *is* the measure of the Father: "the unmeasurable Father was himself subjected to measure in the Son, for the Son is the measure of the Father."²⁷ What Irenaeus is saying, then, is that it is indeed impossible to know God in his greatness, since the Father cannot be measured, *except through his loving manifestation in the Son*, who is the measure of the Father, and who enables those who obey Him to learn the greatness of the Father.

This interpretation is further confirmed by other occurrences of the motif of the contrast of the knowledge of God "according to his greatness" and "according to love". Thus, a few paragraphs after 4.20.2, Irenaeus speaks of "one God ... unknown as far as his greatness, but as regards his love, He is *always known* through him by whose means he ordained all things (*unus igitur deus ... qui secundum magnitudinem quidem ignotus ... secundum autem dilectionem cognoscitur semper per eum per quem constituit omnia*)."²⁸ And in the paragraph

25 Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1997), 117.

26 *Haer.* 4.19.1. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 487.

27 *Haer.* 4.4.2. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 466. "Et bene qui dixit ipsum immensum Patrem in Filio mensuratum; mensural enim Patris Filius." Adelin Rousseau, Bertrand Hemmerding, Louis Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier, eds., *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre IV)*, SC 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 420.

28 *Haer.* 4.20.4. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 488 (altered; my emphasis); Adelin Rousseau,

after that: “As far as his greatness and unutterable glory ‘no one shall see God and live,’ for the Father is incomprehensible, but according to his love and his kindness toward humanity and almightiness, He even grants to those who love that they may see him. (*Sed secundum magnitudinem quidem ejus et inenarrabilem gloriam nemo videbit Dominum et vivet, incapabilis enim Pater, secundum autem dilectionem et humanitatem et quod omnia possit, etiam hoc concedit his qui se diligunt, id est videre Deum*).”²⁹ As we can see from these passages, it is impossible, in Irenaean terms, to understand God’s greatness and glory as delineating a separate and higher realm of divine being which cannot be seen as distinct from some lower levels of divine benevolent emotion which can be seen. Rather, Irenaeus is saying that the one true great and glorious God can be seen, through Jesus Christ, who is the visibility of the Father,³⁰ but that this vision is only rendered accessible to creatures through God’s love and kindness. God’s greatness and glory is in itself unattainable, but becomes accessible through his loving self-mediation.³¹

It might seem that in dwelling on these fine distinctions within Irenaeus’s theological epistemology, we have strayed from our specific focus on his understanding of historical knowledge as integral to the eschatological vision of God. But, in fact, the distinction which Irenaeus draws between the knowledge of God according to his greatness and the learning of God’s greatness according to his love goes to the very heart of our theme. Indeed, this distinction provides us with a framework for articulating the two basic options for conceiving of eschatological knowledge of God. Will such knowledge be a comprehension of the divine greatness in and for itself, independently and in abstraction from God’s loving self-disclosure through human history which is recapitulated

Bertrand Hemmerdinger, Louis Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier, eds., *Irénee de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre IV)*, SC 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 634.

29 *Haer.* 4.20.5. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 489 (altered); Adelin Rousseau, Bertrand Hemmerdinger, Louis Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier, eds., *Irénee de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre IV)*, SC 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 638.

30 *Haer.* 4.6.6: “The Father is the invisible of the Son and the Son is the visible of the Father (Invisible etenim Filii Pater, visibile autem Patris Filius).” Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 469; Adelin Rousseau, Bertrand Hemmerdinger, Louis Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier, eds., *Irénee de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre IV)*, SC 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 450.

31 The interpretation offered above accords with that of Ysabel de Andia, who further points out Irenaeus’s exegetical transposition of the paradox of the unknowability of God according to his greatness and his knowability according to his love through a synthesis of Ex 33:20 (“You cannot see my face, for no one shall see me and live”) and Luke 18:27 (“what is impossible to human beings is possible to God”). De Andia aptly summarizes Irenaeus’s point as asserting that “voir Dieu est impossible aux homes, se laisser voir par les homes est possible à Dieu.” (*Homo Vivens*, 322).

in Christ? Or will it in fact consist of an eternal learning of God's greatness that will always include an eternal remembrance of God's loving Christological self-disclosure in history in such a way that history itself will be drawn up into our eschatological knowledge of God? As we have seen, Irenaeus categorically rejects the first option with regard to our knowledge of God within human history and nowhere suggests that it is a valid option in the eschatological knowledge of God. Quite to the contrary, the passages we have looked at earlier, in which Irenaeus seemed to presume that the historical memory of humanity's salvation will provide material for an eternal doxology, suggest that he was committed to the second option. Consistently with these passages, Irenaeus's celebrated dictum about the unknowability of God according to his greatness and his knowability according to his love, does not in fact assert an apophatic limit to our objective knowledge of God, but rather proclaims that we can only know God through his loving interaction with us through Christ, as manifested throughout the course of human history. To know God "according to his love" means to know God through Christ and thus, through human history, which is recapitulated in Christ and whose recapitulation defines the very person of Christ.

2.3 *The Mutual Glorification of God and Humanity*

The texts which I cited at the beginning of this essay asserted that humanity's historical experience will enable it to perform a greater eschatological glorification of God, "so that humanity, receiving an unhopéd-for salvation from God, might rise from the dead, and glorify God ... and in order that human beings might always continue to glorify God, and to give thanks without ceasing for that salvation which they received from Him."³² In that passage, as we have seen, Irenaeus linked the notion of the eschatological persistence of historical memory with one of his grand architectonic motifs, that of the mutual glorification of God and humanity. Let us now explore the logical and semantic connections between these two themes in order to further appreciate how the notion of the eschatological persistence of human history, though implicit, is still integral to Irenaeus's theological vision.

Irenaeus speaks of humanity's glorification in both an active sense, in terms of humanity's rendering glory to God, and in a passive sense, in terms of humanity's being glorified by God. According to the latter passive sense, Irenaeus identifies humanity's glorification by God with the consummate stage of human deification. In this ultimate stage of human perfection, humanity is said

32 *Haer.* 3.20.1. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 450 (altered).

to “partake” or “receive” the glory of the Father.³³ As is well known, Irenaeus says that the glory of God is the living human being, and this statement is sometimes taken to be emblematic of his characteristic positive and optimistic humanism. As is somewhat less widely known, he also says that the glory of the human being is the vision of God: “The glory of God is a living human being; and the life of the human being consists in beholding God. *Gloria enim Dei vivens homo; vita autem hominis visio Dei.*”³⁴ The proper starting place for properly ordering these corresponding aspects of Irenaeus’s teaching on the mutual glorification of God and humanity is his understanding that the human glorification of God consists in a participation in God’s own self-glorification. Irenaeus insists that humanity’s glorification of God can add nothing to God’s self-standing glory, which precedes creation and which consists in the eternal mutual glorification of the Father and the Son. God does not stand in need of human glorification, says Irenaeus, because “not only before Adam but before all creation, the Word glorified his Father, remaining in Him and was himself glorified by the Father, as [the Lord] himself said, ‘Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with you before the world was’ (John 17:5).”³⁵ However, out of his goodness and love, God granted humanity the opportunity to serve and worship him, and this doxological servanthood constitutes simultaneously humanity’s glorification of God and God’s glorification of humanity, since the rendering of service and worship to God is itself the summit of human glory:

Thus, also, service to God (*servitus Deum*) does indeed profit God nothing, nor has God need of human obedience; but He grants to those who follow and serve Him life and incorruption and eternal glory ... For as much as God is in need of nothing, so much does humanity stand in need of communion with God. For this is the glory of the human being, to continue and remain permanently in the worship of God (*permanere in Dei servitute*).³⁶

If the glory of the human being consists in the worship and service of God, while the glory of God is primarily the glory which the Son renders the Father,

33 See *Haer.* 5.35.1; 5.35.2; cf. 4.20.4.

34 *Haer.* 4.20.7. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 490 (altered); Adelin Rousseau, Bertrand Hemmerdinger, Louis Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier, eds., *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre IV)*, SC 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 648.

35 *Haer.* 4.14.1. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 478 (altered).

36 *Haer.* 4.14.1. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 478 (altered); Adelin Rousseau, Bertrand Hemmerdinger, Louis Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier, eds., *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre IV)*, SC 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 538. Cf. 4.14.4.

what does Irenaeus mean when he speaks of “the glory of God” as residing in the “living human being”? In posing this question, we come to the threshold of ascertaining how the theme of the mutual glorification of God and humanity is interwoven with that of the persistence of historical memory within humanity’s deified state. At the heart of the issue is the question of the exact signification of “living” and “life” in Irenaeus’s famous *dictum*, “The glory of God is a living human being; and the life of the human being consists in beholding God. *Gloria enim Dei vivens homo; vita autem hominis visio Dei*” (4.20.7). One has only to read this sentence in its immediate context, and to correlate it with similar passages, in order to glean that the language of “living” and “life” in this famous sentence does not refer to natural life, but to resurrected life—as Antonio Orbe has already persuasively argued.³⁷ The “living” human being who is the glory of God is thus the resurrected human being who sees God, and who glorifies God, not merely by apprehending the naked divine essence, but rather by praising God precisely for the experience of being brought from death to life.³⁸ This interpretation is substantiated by an important passage in book 5, where Irenaeus speaks of the gradual progression of the human being toward the fullness of deification and the glorification of God:

But we now receive a certain portion of his Spirit, tending towards perfection and preparing us for incorruption, being little by little accustomed to receive and bear God If therefore, at the present time, having the first installment, we cry, “Abba, Father,” what shall it be when, on rising again, we behold him face to face; when all the members shall burst out into a

37 Antonio Orbe, “Gloria Dei vivens homo (Análisis de Ireneo, *Adv. Haer.* 1v, 20, 1–7),” *Gregorianum* 73.2 (1992): 205–268. However, Orbe exemplifies the prevalent tendency to focus on the theme of “salus carnis” and accentuate the transformation of the flesh, while ignoring the theme which we are highlighting here, that of the role of historical memory in human glorification: “Al decir Ireneo que ‘la gloria de Dios es el hombre viviente’ piensa sobre todo en la última etapa: el hombre dotado en herencia del Espíritu del Padre; carne olvidada de sí y de sus cualidades congénitas para asumir la cualidad del Espíritu paterno, hecha conforme al Verbo de Dios.” (264). As I shall argue below, for Irenaeus, human glorification comes about not only through the flesh “forgetting its natural qualities,” but also through the mind’s remembering of its history of sin and salvation.

38 Thus, this famous sentence in *Haer.* 4.20.7 is immediately followed by a contrast between the natural life of all other creatures and the life that comes from beholding Christ, who thereby enables us to see the invisible Father: “For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of the creation affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word give life to those who see God.” (Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 490).

continuous hymn of triumph glorifying Him who raised them from the dead and gave them the gift of eternal life?³⁹

Taking into consideration these intertextual connections, we should understand Irenaeus's famous dictum that the "glory of God is the living human being and the life of the human being is the vision of God" to mean that God will be glorified by the human being who has been brought from death to life and whose glorification will consist of a hymn of praise and gratitude to God precisely for this paschal journey. Of course, this is exactly the conception that we find in the passages cited at the beginning of this essay, in which Irenaeus refers to the contribution of humanity's historical experience of sin and redemption in its eschatological glorification of God. In *Haer.* 3.20.1, Irenaeus explained that God permitted humanity's downfall, "so that humanity, receiving an unhopedor salvation from God, might rise from the dead, and glorify God ... and that they might always continue to glorify God, and to give thanks without ceasing." In the next paragraph, in *Haer.* 3.20.2, Irenaeus gives a preview and pre-interpretation of his later celebrated dictum that the glory of God is a living human being and the life of the human being is the vision of God when he says: "For the glory of the human being is God, and the receptacle of God's activity and all his wisdom and power is the human being (*Gloria enim hominis Deus, operationis vero Dei et omnis sapientiae eius et virtutis receptaculum homo*)."⁴⁰ As we have already pointed out the logic of Irenaeus's argumentation in *Haer.* 3.20.1 is that humanity's resurrected state will include an abiding memory of the history of its own salvation, its long historical sojourn in the belly of the whale and its paschal deliverance onto the shores of eternity. Enfolded within the eschatological glorification of God, this history will not give rise to sorrow or shame but to an eternal gratitude, a doxological subjection to the God whose glorious strength was manifest throughout the history of human sin and weakness. The glimpses which Irenaeus gives us of the notion that humanity will retain such historical memories in their eschatological vision of God might be fleeting and tantalizing, but they are entirely consistent, in both conceptualization and formulation, with Irenaeus's pervasive theme of the mutual glorification of God and humanity.

39 *Haer.* 5.8.1. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 533.

40 *Haer.* 3.20.2. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 450 (altered); Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies (Livre III tome 2)*, SC 211 (Paris: Cerf, 1974), 388.

3 Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented evidence that Irenaeus presumes that the eschatological consummation of humanity's deification will include an ineradicable memory of its historical experience of sin and salvation. While conceding that this theme is implicit and presupposed rather than explicitly articulated, I have nevertheless endeavored to show that it is pervasively intertwined with three fundamental premises that structure his theological vision as a whole: the irreducibility of the God-creature distinction; the availability of knowledge of God throughout human history; and the mutual glorification of God and humanity.

Irenaeus was not unique among early Christian theologians in his affirmation of the persistence of historical memory in eternity. Augustine, also, concluded his massive theology of history, *De civitate Dei*, by reiterating this notion in notably Irenaean terms. Like Irenaeus, Augustine insisted that the eternal extension of historical memory will provide the matter for an everlasting gratitude and glorification of God. The heavenly city, says Augustine, "will be freed from all evil and filled with all good, enjoying without fail the delight of eternal joys; and it will have no memory of faults or punishments. It will not however, have forgotten its own liberation, and so it will not be ungrateful to its liberator. As a matter of rational knowledge, then, it will always remember its past evils; but as a matter of felt experience it will not remember them at all (*oblita culpae, oblita poenarum; nec ideo tamen suae liberationis oblita, ut liberatori suo non sit ingrata: quantum ergo adtinet ad scientiam rationalem, memor praeteritorum etiam malorum suorum; quantum autem ad experientis sensum, prorsus immemor*) Otherwise, if [the saints] were to have no knowledge at all that they were once in misery—how, as the Psalm says, will they sing the Lord's mercies *forever*? Nothing will give more joy to that city than this song to the glory of the grace of Christ, by whose blood we are delivered."⁴¹

Indeed, as this passage from Augustine intimates, the denial of the persistence of historical memory in eternity is not at all sustainable from the point of view of Christian faith, especially on the basis of faith in the eternal persistence of Christ's humanity. If Christ does not ever shed his humanity but has ascended with his humanity to sit eternally at the right hand of the Father, then all of human history sits there with him and in him, if indeed all of human history has been "recapitulated" in Christ. Yet, I think it is evidence of the perennial attraction of the Gnostic worldview, that we are always inclined to forget this

41 Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 22.30. English translation: William Babcock, ed., *Saint Augustine. The City of God. De Civitate Dei (XI–XXII)*, The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century. Part 1. Volume 7 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013), 553.

scandalous claim and to imagine eternity precisely as including a massive forgetting of history. Over against this perennial temptation, the distinctive virtue of Irenaeus's sounding of this theme is precisely the way in which he presupposes it as not some outlying speculation, but as intertwined with the whole fabric of Christian faith.

At the beginning of this paper, I suggested that Irenaeus has an affinity with a trajectory in modern theology which explicitly emphasizes the persistence of historical memory in eternity. Yet, it seems to me that there is a notable difference in tone between Irenaeus's presentation of this theme and his modern counterparts. Modern theologians tend to stress the persistence of humanity's positive achievements in the stage of eschatological glory. This emphasis is at least partly due to the pressures felt by modern theologians to concede some ground to the positive valuations of the dynamics of human history offered by Hegel and Marx. Irenaeus's vision certainly does not preclude an affirmation of the eternal persistence of human achievements in the state of eschatological glory. But it seems to me that Irenaeus's conception of the relation between history and eschatology has a more properly theocentric orientation as well as a more biblical—and more realistic—vision of the *pathos* of human history. Hegel and Marx and the Enlightenment notwithstanding, we know very well that human history is not just a history of achievement and progressive illumination but also of failure and tragedy and sin and suffering. At the same time, for Irenaeus, human history is not finally a tragedy and not merely a comedy, but above all, a doxology in which divine power and love will be glorified on the basis of the tortuous history of human weakness and sin.

In order to fully appreciate the scandal and the challenge of Irenaeus's claim, I would suggest that it might be more productive to compare it not so much with the rhetoric of some strands of modern Christian eschatology but with the austere and triumphalistic realism of Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return of the same.⁴² I would agree with the interpretation of this weird notion of Nietzsche's which considers it as not so much a cosmological and empirical claim but as a thought experiment designed to test the absoluteness of the superman's "yea-saying," the unqualified affirmation of what is and what has been.⁴³

42 "For your animals know well, O Zarathustra, who you are and must become: behold, *you are the teacher of eternal recurrence*-that is your destiny! That you as the first must teach this doctrine Behold, you know what you teach; that all things recur eternally, and we ourselves too; and that we have already existed an eternal number of times, and all things with us." Frederick Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in Walter Kaufmann, ed., *The Portable Nietzsche* (London: Penguin, 1954), 332.

43 For such an interpretation of Nietzsche's notion of eternal recurrence as "a provocative

The Christian version of the claim of the eternal persistence of historical memory is, of course, much more profoundly dialectical than Nietzsche's notion but its dialectic subsumes the partial validity of the latter's genuine insight. There is an element of the eternal return of the same in the Christian claim. The paschal transformation of history in eternity presumes a dialectic of both sameness and massive glorified difference. But the sameness is necessary in order for the difference to be intelligibly apprehended. Irenaeus reminds us that we must be able to remember our mournful sojourn in the belly of the whale in order to cry out with eternal gratitude: "I cried by reason of my affliction to the Lord my God, and he heard me out of the belly of the whale."

Of course, what is ultimately at stake for Irenaeus in his insistence on the eternal persistence of this dialectic is not the self-affirmation of the superman through his unqualified yea-saying, but rather the glorification of God through the history of human sin and suffering. That is why, in the end, I would venture to suggest that Irenaeus's intimations about the contribution of historical memory to eschatological glorification very much bear the stamp of the message of the prophet Isaiah, who described the manifestation of divine glory as an event in which "the haughty eyes of people shall be brought low, and the pride of everyone will be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted on that day." (Isa 2:11). Irenaeus seems to strongly suggest that humanity's eschatological deification will be eternally informed by the humbling memory of its own historical experience, thus ensuring that even in the condition of humanity's eschatological deification, the Lord alone will be exalted on that everlasting day. Humanity's eschatological glory will thus coincide with its eternal glorification of the greatness of God that was lovingly manifested in Christ, in the midst of the long and humbling history of human weakness.

and serious theory of human personality," rather than a cosmological claim, see Alexander Nehamas, "The Eternal Recurrence," *PhilosRev* 89.3 (1980): 331–356 at 356.

Flesh Invested with the Paternal Light: St Irenaeus on the Transfiguration of the Body

John Behr

Behold I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality.

1 Cor 15:51–54

So speaks the Apostle. The mystery he is speaking about is one which is greater in scope even than death and resurrection—“not all will sleep but we shall all be changed.” The proclamation of this mystery comes at the conclusion of his analysis of the transformation effected through death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:35–50): “what is sown does not come to life unless it dies,” and what is sown is a bare kernel of the body which is to be; just as God has given different but suitable bodies to each, bodies which differ in their glory, so it is with the resurrection: our body is sown in dishonor, but it is raised in glory; it is sown as animated by a breath of life, but it is raised by the life-giving Spirit, transforming the body made of the dust of the earth into a heavenly human being, so that even if flesh and blood does not inherit the kingdom, they will, as Irenaeus asserts against the Gnostics, *be inherited*, transformed into a heavenly glory.

The transformation of the body spoken of by the Apostle Paul is brought together with the theme of the glory of God spoken about by the disciple John in a unique way by St Irenaeus of Lyons. There is probably no other theologian in whose writings the theme of glory reverberates so profoundly and beautifully as St Irenaeus. The work of Christ culminates, he says, with the paternal light resting upon the flesh of our Lord and coming to us from his resplendent flesh, so that we might attain to immortality, having been invested with the paternal light (*Haer.* 4.20.2). The glory of God that dwelt in “the tent of meeting” or “witness” (regularly translated as ἡ σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου in the LXX), and likewise in the Temple, now culminates in the specific handiwork of God itself, for, as Irenaeus puts it in one of his most beautiful statements, “the glory of God is a living human being” (*Haer.* 4.20.7), meaning by this, as we will see, the martyr.

These statements come in the midst of a long chapter replete with further Johannine themes, such as life and seeing and knowing God. Irenaeus begins by contrasting the greatness of God, on account of which it is not possible to know God, with his love, by which the Word leads us to God (*Haer.* 4.20.1). Scripture asserts that there is one God, and so too does the Lord when he claims that “all things have been delivered to me by my Father” (Matt 11:27, *Haer.* 4.20.2). Irenaeus then explains the scope of this “all things” by way of the Apocalypse:

But in “all things” [it is implied that] nothing has been kept back, and for this reason the same one is “the judge of the living and the dead” [Acts 10:42]; “having the key of David, he shall open, and no one shall shut, he shall shut, and no one shall open” [Rev 3:7]. “For no one was able, either in heaven or in earth, or under the earth, to open the book” of the Father, “or to behold him” [Rev 5:3], with the exception of “the Lamb who was slain” [Rev 5:12], and who redeemed us with his own blood, receiving power over all things from the same God who made all things by the Word [cf. John 1:3], and adorned them by [his] Wisdom, when “the Word was made flesh” [John 1:14]; so that even as the Word of God had the sovereignty in the heavens, so also might he have the sovereignty in earth, inasmuch as [he was] a righteous human, “who did no sin, neither was there found guile in His mouth” [1Pet 2:22]; and so that he might have the pre-eminence over those things which are under the earth, he himself being made “the first-begotten of the dead” [Col 1:18]; and so that all things, as I have already said, might behold their King, and so that the paternal light might meet with and rest upon the flesh of our Lord, and come to us from his resplendent flesh, and so that in this way the human being might attain to immortality, having been invested with the paternal light.

Haer. 4.20.2

Only the slain Lamb has received all power, wealth, wisdom and might [cf. Rev 5:12] and so he alone is able to open the book, and this, Irenaeus specifies, is “the book of the Father.” The revelation of the content of the paternal book by the slain Lamb is associated by Irenaeus with the Word becoming flesh, for it is the slain, enfleshed, Word who alone makes known or exegetes (ἐξηγήσατο) the Father, as the Prologue of John concludes. This action enables five things: (1) it grants the Word preeminence upon earth and also under the earth; (2) it brings all to behold their King; (3) and it enables in this way the paternal light to come to rest on the flesh of Christ; (4) and, through his resplendent flesh, to us; (5) so that we too, finally, robed in this paternal light, might attain immortality.

Irenaeus then begins the next section by showing that there is one Word, the Son, who is always with the Father, and that Wisdom, the Spirit, is always present with him. He then continues:

Now this is His Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the last times became a human being among humans, that he might join the end to the beginning, that is, the human being to God. Wherefore the prophets, receiving the prophetic gift from the same Word, announced his advent according to the flesh, by which the blending and communion of God and the human being took place according to the good pleasure of the Father, the Word of God foretelling from the beginning that God should be seen by human beings, and hold converse with them upon earth, should confer with them, and should be present with his own creation, saving it, and becoming capable of being perceived by it, and freeing us from the hands of all that hate us, that is, from every spirit of wickedness; and causing us to serve him in holiness and righteousness all our days, in order that the human being, having embraced the Spirit of God, might pass into the glory of the Father.

Haer. 4.20.4

That at least is how the Latin and Armenian versions of the text read, translating the now-lost Greek original independently. There is a Greek fragment which has instead, “who in the last times became a God among humans.”¹ It is possible that this reading might be original, preserving as it does a chiasm in the text; and there are words in Ignatius which might be taken similarly.² But it is more likely to be a scribal error, or perhaps, perplexed at the idea of Jesus Christ (and not simply the Word) becoming “a human being among human beings,” a scribe thought it better to say that he was a God among humans. However, if the Latin and Armenian versions are indeed correct, and Jesus Christ became “a human

1 Florilegium Achridense: Codex Ochrid, Mus. Nat. 84 (Inv. 86), 145; ed. M. Richard et B. Hemmerdinger, *ZNW* 53 (1962): 252–255 at 254: “Ἔστι δὲ οὗτος ὁ Λόγος αὐτοῦ ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ ἐν ἐσχάτοις καιροῖς θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις γενόμενος, ἵνα τὸ τέλος συνάψῃ τῇ ἀρχῇ, τουτέστιν ἀνθρώπων θεῶ. Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο προφήτῃται περὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Λόγου τὴν προφητείαν λαβόντες προεφήτευσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἔνσαρκον παρουσίαν.

2 Cf. Ignatius, *Eph.* 7.2: “There is one Physician, fleshly and spiritual, begotten and unbegotten, in a human being becoming God (ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ γενόμενος θεός), in death true life, both from Mary and from God, first suffering and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Such is Lightfoot’s reading; Ehrman and Stewart prefer the reading ἐν σαρκὶ and translate as “God come in the flesh” or “God in the flesh” respectively. Although the construction “first ... then” only occurs in one clause, it would seem to govern each pair.

being among human beings,” it falls within the same pattern of thought that we can also see in St Ignatius, who urges the Christians at Rome not to interfere with his impending martyrdom: “allow me to receive the pure light; when I shall have arrived there, I will be a human being” (*Rom. 6: ἐκεῖ παραγενόμενος ἄνθρωπος ἔσομαι*). It is a theme I am exploring further in a book on the Gospel of John, in which I would connect Christ’s words, when elevated in glory on the cross, “it is finished” (19:5), to God’s stated purpose in the opening verses of Scripture, “Let us make a human being in our image” (*Gen 1:26–27*), which, unlike every other aspect of creation is given in the subjunctive rather than an imperative: Scripture opens with God stating his purpose or project, and concludes with Christ on the cross in glory in the Gospel of John announcing its completion.

Irenaeus continues the chapter we are considering by claiming that this is what the prophets spoke about beforehand: they were not speaking of “another” visible God, alongside the Father, as some assert, but rather were speaking prophetically. In this way they could indeed assert beforehand that God should be seen by human beings, for Christ himself has confirmed that “blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (*Matt 5:8*). On this basis Irenaeus is then able to go from God’s declaration to Moses that “no one shall see me and live,” to the conclusion that it is in fact by seeing God that human beings live!

But in respect to his greatness, and his wonderful glory, “no one shall see God and live” [*Exod 33:20*], for the Father is incomprehensible; but in regard to his love and kindness, and as to his infinite power, even this he grants to those who love him, that is, to see God, which thing the prophets did also predict. “For those things that are impossible with human beings, are possible with God” [*Luke 18:27*]. For a human being does not see God by his own powers; but when he pleases he is seen by human beings, by whom he wills, and when he wills, and as he wills. For God is powerful in all things, having been seen at that time indeed, prophetically through the Spirit, and also seen adoptively through the Son; and he shall also be seen paternally in the kingdom of heaven, the Spirit truly preparing the human being in the Son of God, and the Son leading him to the Father, while the Father, too, confers incorruption for eternal life, which comes to every one from the fact of his seeing God. For as those who see the light are within the light, and partake of its brilliancy, so also those who see God are in God, and receive of his splendor. But [his] splendor vivifies them; those, therefore, who see God, do receive life. And for this reason, he, [although] beyond comprehension and boundless and invisible, rendered himself visible and comprehensible and within the capacity of those who believe, so that he might vivify those who receive and behold him through faith.

For as his greatness is past finding out, so also his goodness is beyond expression; by which having been seen, he bestows life upon those who see him. It is not possible to live apart from life, and the means of life is found in participation in God; but participation in God is to know God, and to enjoy his goodness. Human beings therefore shall see God that they may live, being made immortal by that sight, and attaining even unto God.

Haer. 4.20.5–6

He continues that as human beings live by seeing God, the Word both reveals the Father through many economies, so that they should not cease to exist, but at the same time preserves his invisibility, so that they might always have something towards which to advance (*Haer.* 4.20.7). And then he concludes:

For the glory of God is a living human being; and the life of the human being consists in beholding God. For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of the creation, affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word, give life to those who see God.

Haer. 4.20.7

The transition from the word of God to Moses, that “no one shall see me and live,” to living by seeing God is *not*, as it is often explained, made on the basis of “the Incarnation,” understanding by that term “an episode in the biography of the Word” (as Rowan Williams characterizes this approach),³ who was previously without flesh, and so invisible, but having taken flesh is now visible in this world, alongside other things that also “appear” in the world. That would be a “sight” only available to a handful of people present at the time, all of whom have died! It is “the pure in heart” that are blessed “to see God,” as Christ says (Matt 5:8), and while Philip clearly “saw” the one standing in front of him, his request, “Show us the Father and we shall be satisfied” (John 14:8), clearly indicates that he knows neither Christ nor the Father, as Jesus points out. To see Jesus “in the flesh,” and so to know the Father, and so to live, is for John, Ignatius, and Irenaeus, pivoted upon the cross and sharing in his flesh.⁴ And as such, as Irenaeus makes clear later, “the living human being” is the martyr:

3 Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2001 [1987]), 244.

4 For John, see Saeed Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ: A Theological Inquiry into the Elusive Language of the Fourth Gospel*, WUNT 2.120 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 331–406, and Josaphat C. Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2.399 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

For it is testified by the Lord that as “the flesh is weak,” so “the Spirit is ready” [Matt 26:41], that is able to accomplish what it wills. If, therefore, anyone mixes the readiness of the Spirit as a stimulus to the weakness of the flesh, it necessarily follows that what is strong will prevail over what is weak, so that the weakness of the flesh will be absorbed by the strength of the Spirit, and such a one will no longer be carnal but spiritual because of the communion of the Spirit. In this way, therefore, the martyrs bear witness and despise death: not after the weakness of the flesh, but by the readiness of the Spirit. For when the weakness of the flesh is absorbed, it manifests the Spirit as powerful; and again, when the Spirit absorbs the weakness, it inherits the flesh for itself, and from both of these is made a living human being: living, indeed, because of the participation of the Spirit; and human, because of the substance of the flesh.⁵

The “Letter of the Christians of Vienne and Lyons to those in Asia and Phrygia,” perhaps written by Irenaeus himself, describes exactly such a martyr, the young slave girl Blandina. Affixed to “the wood,” “hanging in the form of the cross,” she appeared to the Christians in the arena alongside her as the embodiment of Christ: “with their outward eyes they saw in the form of their sister him who was crucified for them, so that she persuaded those who believe in him that all who suffer for the glory of Christ have for ever communion with the living God” (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.41). Although it is said that it is by their “outward eyes” that this is seen, it is however only seen by those alongside her in the arena, or, more accurately, by the author of the letter himself and those who now read the letter.

Irenaeus further explains this changing relationship between life and death by developing the passage from the Apostle with which we began, regarding the transformation of the body: the first Adam was animated by a breath of life, the second is the life-giving spirit (1 Cor 15:44–48; cf. Gen 2:7); we are not given a different body in the resurrection, but the same body living now by the Spirit rather than animated by a breath. Irenaeus further explains the difference between the breath and the Spirit by reference to two verses from Isaiah: the Lord “gives breath [πνοή] to the people upon the earth and Spirit [πνεῦμα] to those who trample on it” (Isa 42:5), and while “the Spirit proceeds from me,” he has, instead, “made every breath.”⁶ Irenaeus concludes that whereas the “breath” is common to all creation and is created, the Spirit is “particu-

⁵ *Haer.* 5.9.2. Cf. PO 12.5, 738–739 (frag. 6); TU 36.3, 14–19 (frag. 10).

⁶ Isa 57:16: πνεῦμα γὰρ παρ’ ἐμοῦ ἐξελεύσεται, καὶ πνοὴν πᾶσαν ἐγὼ ἐποίησα.

larly on the side of God” and bestowed upon the human race in the last times through the adoption of sons (*Haer.* 5.12.2). Moreover, as “the created is other than him who creates,” the breath is temporal, while the Spirit is eternal; the breath increases in strength, flourishes, then expires, while the Spirit “embraces the human being inside and out” and remains with him permanently. For Irenaeus, this movement from breath to Spirit, from animation to vivification, is the arc of the whole economy of God. As he puts it in this carefully coordinated sentence:

Just as, at the beginning [*ab initio*] of our formation in Adam, the breath of life from God, having been united to the handiwork, animated [*animavit*] the human being and showed him to be a rational being, so also, at the end [*in fine*], the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, having become united with the ancient substance of the formation of Adam, rendered the human being living [*effecit ... viventem*] and perfect, bearing the perfect Father, *in order that* just as in the animated we all die, so also in the spiritual we may all be vivified [*vivificemur*].

Haer. 5.1.3, emphasis added

It must be emphasized that Irenaeus is not proposing two different forms of life, a “natural” life contrasted with a “supernatural” life, or that somehow our flesh is not to be vivified by the life-giving Spirit. In another exegetical tour de force, Irenaeus argues against his opponents that while “flesh and blood may not inherit the kingdom” as the Apostle put it (1 Cor 15:50), they can certainly “be inherited” (*Haer.* 5.9–14), in the way that the martyrs, as we saw, do not provide their witness by the strength of the flesh, but by the Spirit vivifying the flesh.

It is only because the flesh is capable of life even now, through the breath (as in *Haer.* 5.1.3), or through the vision of God given by creation (as in *Haer.* 4.20.7), that it is also capable of being vivified by the Spirit through seeing the Father. But, as Irenaeus points out, the two cannot co-exist together (*Haer.* 5.12.2): the reception of the life-giving Spirit requires that the creature die, with Christ, to receive the life given in Christ, through the Spirit bestowed from the cross (John 19:30), and so become living human beings. The “breath” is thus not simply replaced by the Spirit, for it is by using the breath that the natural mortality of the creature can be turned into a voluntary self-offering in witness to Christ. “Whoever seeks to preserve his life [*ψυχὴν*, the ‘animation’] will lose it,” Christ says, “but whoever loses it will gain it” (Luke 17:33, *ζωογονήσει*, literally “will beget life”). This is the life that Christ offers (John 10:10 etc.), that he himself is (John 14:6), or that, as Irenaeus, together with most other early writers and manuscripts, reads John 1:3–4: “what came to be in

him was life and the life was the light of human beings.”⁷ Again, light, life, and human beings for a tight thematic unity.

Irenaeus continues in *Haer.* 5.1.3, by emphasizing that the whole economy is one continuous and uninterrupted project, worked out through the long pedagogy of the economy, at the end of which Adam is finally made in the image and likeness of God:

For never at any time did Adam escape the Hands of God, to whom the Father speaking, said, “Let us make the human being in our image, after our likeness” [Gen 1:26]. And for this reason at the end [*fine*], “not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man” [John 1:13], but by the good pleasure of the Father, his Hands perfected a living human being [*vivum perfecerunt hominem*], in order that Adam might become in the image and likeness of God.

Haer. 5.1.3

According to Irenaeus, the reason for the whole, and single, economy of God, is found in the words of Christ about the glory he had with the Father “before the world was,” the same glory with which he asks to be glorified as he approaches the cross (John 17:5), and further asks that his disciples should be there with him to behold that glory (cf. John 17:24). Following the words of Isaiah, which speak of the gathering of the posterity, that is, “who is called by my name, whom I created for glory, whom I formed and made” (Isa 43:6–7), the disciples gather around his body as the eagles gather around the carcass (cf. Matt 24:28), and so “participate in the glory of the Lord who has both formed us and prepared us for this, that when we are with him, we may partake of his glory” (*Haer.* 4.14.1). It is to share in the eternal glory of God, to be that glory, that the economy, which climaxes upon the cross, is initiated, just as for John, the cross is not presented as a sacrifice atoning for sin, but is primarily the expression of the love that God is: “in this way God loved the world ...” (John 3:16).

And as it is blood and water that comes from the side of the crucified Christ, so our entry into and sharing in his resplendent flesh comes through baptism and eucharist, both of which are understood by Irenaeus as sharing in the Passion of Christ. The life of the Spirit is something that begins with the pledge of the Spirit, given in baptism understood as sharing in the death of Christ (cf. Rom 6:3–11; Eph 1:14), but it is brought to completion in our death and resurrection:

⁷ John 1:3–4; cf. Irenaeus *haer.* 3.11.1 1.8.5; Origen, *Jo.* 2.132.

If then now, having the pledge, we cry “Abba, Father,” what shall it be when rising again we behold him face to face, when all the members shall burst forth in an exuberant hymn of exultation, glorifying him who raised them from the dead and gave them eternal life? For if the pledge, gathering the human being together into himself, makes him now say “Abba, Father,” what shall the full grace of the Spirit, which shall be given to human beings by God, effect? It will render us like unto him, and perfect the will of the Father: for it shall make the human being in the image and likeness of God.

Haer. 5.8.1

Begun in baptism it finds completion in the Eucharist, which, as with Ignatius, is understood as being closely intertwined with sharing in the death and resurrection by those following Christ. Irenaeus knows, and quotes, the passage in which Ignatius speaks about how he hopes to become “the pure bread of Christ” (*Rom.* 4; cf. *Haer.* 5.28.4). However Irenaeus develops this imagery much more fully in a beautiful and complex passage (a single sentence!), which deserves to be quoted in full:

Just as the wood of the vine, planted in the earth, bore fruit in its own time, and the grain of wheat, falling into the earth and being decomposed, was raised up manifold by the Spirit of God who sustains all, then, by wisdom, they come to the use of human beings, and receiving the Word of God, become eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ; so also, our bodies, nourished by it, having been placed in the earth and decomposing in it, shall rise in their time, when the Word of God bestows on them the resurrection to the glory of God the Father, who secures immortality for the mortal and bountifully bestows incorruptibility on the corruptible [cf. 1 Cor 15:53], because the power of God is made perfect in weakness [cf. 2 Cor 12:9], *in order that* we may never become puffed up, as if we had life from ourselves, nor exalted against God, entertaining ungrateful thoughts, but learning by experience that it is from his excellence, and not from our own nature, that we have eternal continuance, that we should neither undervalue the true glory of God nor be ignorant of our own nature, but should know what God can do and what benefits the human, and that we should never mistake the true understanding of things as they are, that is, of God and the human being.

Haer. 5.2.3, emphasis added

The whole economy of God is thus structured in such a way that we might learn the truth about God and the human being, and, in the end, become a human being, the glory of God, with our flesh now invested with the Paternal light.

Flesh and Fire: Incarnation and Deification in Origen of Alexandria

Charles M. Stang

My title is Janus-faced: it looks in two directions simultaneously. On the one hand, the doctrine of the incarnation confesses that God, somehow, became human in the figure of Jesus the Christ; on the other hand, the doctrine of deification explores whether and how humans can, in turn, become god. The threshold over which this Janus figure sits, of course, is the human being, the *ἄνθρωπος*. What is a human such that God can become one it in its entirety—body, soul, and spirit—and what is a human such that it can in turn become God? And, so, the starting point of my essay will be theological anthropology, how Origen imagines the human being in the *longue durée* drama of its fall and restoration. With a foundation in theological anthropology in place, I will then attempt to articulate Origen's distinctive views of incarnation and deification, or, in other words, his Christology and his soteriology. I agree with Anders-Christian Jacobsen that these three—theological anthropology, Christology, and soteriology—are inseparable threads in Origen's thought, although I might cut a slightly different path through these same woods.¹

1 Theological Anthropology

Flesh and fire: these are, in the words of my countryman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the walls between which the human being is swung.² We are accustomed, at least since the apostle Paul, to think of the opposition between flesh and spirit, not between flesh and fire. But as von Balthasar insisted in his thematic anthology, Origen understood spirit and fire—and intellect or mind (*νοῦς*), for that matter—as nearly equivalent terms.³ Across his writings, these three—

1 Anders-Christian Jacobsen, *Christ—The Teacher of Salvation: A Study in Origen's Christology and Soteriology*, Adamantiana 6 (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2015).

2 Joel Porte, ed., *Ralph Waldo Emerson. Essays & Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 426.

3 First published as Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Origenes Geist und Feuer: Ein Aufbus aus seinen*

spirit, fire, and mind—name the very core identity of the human being, that in which the human is created *imago dei* (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ). It is as fiery spirits and minds that we were first created, or better, first *made*. In Gen 1:27, we read in the LXX that “God made (ἐποίησεν) the human, according to divine image he made (ἐποίησεν) it.” ἐποίησεν from ποιέιν, “to make”—from whence we get “poetry.” We were once God’s own poems. In Gen 2:7 LXX, by contrast, we read that “God formed (ἔπλασεν) the human, dust from the earth, and breathed into his face a breath of life, and the man became a living being.” ἔπλασεν from πλάσσειν, “to form” or “to mold”—from whence we get “plastic.” If we were once God’s own poems, we have now become like living plastics, stiff and rigid and enduring over many lifetimes.

Certain that every detail and difference in the scriptures is significant, Origen insisted that these two verbs, and these two stories, tell us of two distinct creations. God first made minds whose sole purpose was to contemplate their creator. Something distracted them, however, some movement within themselves, some force eating away at their powers of attention. All of the minds, except one, turned away from God to varying degrees, and God formed these fallen minds into angels, humans, and demons, depending on the degree of their distraction. Around them all he formed a world in which to house them, to heal them, to restore them.

The question, though, is not what we once were: it is clear, according to Origen, we were once fiery minds. The question is not even what we then became: it is equally clear that with the Fall we fell into flesh, and along the way acquired souls.⁴ The question, instead, is: how does our core identity as minds—an identity we share, by the way, with demons and angels—how does our core identity relate to our accreted identity, that is, to the souls and bodies that are part of the human condition here and now? Are these two identities, the core and the accreted, fully distinct? And if so, what does the core identity have to gain, have to learn, from the accreted identity? Why, in other words, do we have souls and bodies?

There are many ways to answer this question, but I wish to offer two models, both of which can be found in Origen’s own writings. But before I offer these two models, it might be worth remembering Origen’s preface to *Peri archōn*, in which he lays out the apostolic teaching. There, he concedes that apostolic

Schriften (Salzburg: Müller, 1938). English translation by Robert J. Daly, *Origen, Spirit & Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1984).

4 On the descent of the νοῦς into soul, see Benjamin Blosser, *Become Like the Angels: Origen’s Doctrine of the Soul* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012).

teaching has not clearly defined the relationship between the body and the soul, specifically what the soul's beginning is, whether and how the soul is in some continuity with the body that hosts it, perhaps even growing out of it, or whether and how the soul is inserted into the body from elsewhere, as a separate substance. All this, he concedes, "is not explained with sufficient clarity in the preaching."⁵

It should come as no surprise, then, that when we turn to *Peri archōn* and to Origen's other writings, we find him drawn ever deeper into this question of the relationship of the body and the soul, both to each other and to the spirit (πνεῦμα), which of course he equates with the mind (νοῦς). I have come to think that these questions of the ἄνθρωπος constitute the beating heart of Origen's thought.

I promised to offer two models with which to think through these questions of theological anthropology. The first model we might call the "kernel and husk" model, or indeed, the "core and accretion" model. According to this line of thinking, the human, like the demon and the angel, was first created as a naked νοῦς, a mind whose sole aim was to contemplate its creator. When this mind fell, however, and was given a new place in the order of creation, it was given a soul and a body to enable its new life. The soul and the body are like the husk of a kernel, or the accretions on a mineral core. An example of this can be found in Origen's commentary on the Gospel of John, where he is commenting on John 1:6, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." Origen explains that the man (ἄνθρωπος) sent by God was not John the Baptist as we might think of him, but is rather just John's soul, which "being older than his body and subsisting prior to it ... [then became] clothed with flesh and blood."⁶ John's soul is like a Russian doll nestled neatly into his body. Extending the same image, we might imagine his spirit nestled neatly into his soul. This model for under-

5 *De Principiis* Pr. 5. John Behr, ed., *Origen: On First Principles*, 2 vols., OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 16 (text), 17 (trans): "But with respect to the soul, whether it is derived from the seed being transferred, so that the principle or substance of it may be held to be in the seminal particles of the body itself, or whether it has any other beginning, and this beginning itself, whether it is begotten or not begotten, or whether it is imparted to the body from without or not, is not explained with sufficient clarity in the preaching." (*De anima uero utrum ex seminis traduce ducatur, ita ut ratio ipsius uel substantia inserta ipsis corporalibus seminibus habeatur, an uero aliud habeat initium, et hoc ipsum initium si gentium est aut non gentium, uel certe si extrinsecus corpori inditur, necne: non satis manifesta praedicatione distinguitur*).

6 *Commentari in Iohannem* 2.181–182, trans. Ronald Heine, ed., *Origen, Commentary on the Gospel According to John Books 1–10*, Fathers of the Church 80 (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 143–144.

standing the relationship between spirit, soul, and body makes some intuitive sense: we can imagine the νοῦς needing to take on layers of clothing in order to inhabit its new world, or it acquiring accretions of soul and body as it descends into this world. But this model also raises certain crucial questions. If the νοῦς is distinct from its encasements, how do these encasements help the νοῦς learn and grow? How do they help the spirit's slow rehabilitation? And even if we could explain how soul and body somehow help rehabilitate the spirit, still we would run into the question of whether, in the final ἀποκατάστασις or "restoration of all things," the soul and the body would simply fall away, as the νοῦς was returned to its rightful nakedness before God. What would such a model, for example, mean for the doctrine of the resurrection of the body? I will return to the resurrection of the body at the very end of my essay.

The second model we might call the "spectrum" model, or as I prefer, "states of matter." The defining image in *Peri archōn* is that of fire. If, as scripture has it, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Deut 4:24, 9:3; Heb 12:29), and if the first minds were created *imago dei*, then those minds too were fire, or perhaps better, were of a material that could become fire. Origen suggests that the unfallen mind was like a lump of iron in a fire: "receiving the fire throughout all its pores and veins and becoming wholly fire, provided that the fire is never removed from it and it itself is not separated from the fire."⁷ But of course, with The Fall, the lump of iron was separated from the fire, and it cooled. Here Origen famously muses about the etymology of the word for soul, ψυχή:

As God therefore *is fire*, and the angels *a flame of fire* (Exod 3:2), and the saints are all *aglow with the Spirit* (Rom 12:11), so, on the contrary, those who have fallen away from the love of God are undoubtedly said to have cooled in their love for him and to have become cold ... If, then, those things which are holy are termed *fire* and *light* and *aglow*, while those which are contrary are termed cold, and if the love of sinners is said to grow cold, it must be asked whether perhaps even the word "soul" (which in Greek is ψυχή) is so called from a cooling down from a more divine or better condition, and has been transplanted, that is, it is seen to have cooled down from that natural and divine warmth, and therefore to have been placed in its present position with its present designation ... From all these things, this appears to be shown, that the intellect, falling away

⁷ *Prin* 2.6.6, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 210–212 (text), 211–213 (trans): *omnibus suis poris omnibusque uenis ignem recipiens et tota ignis effecta, si neque ignis ab ea cesset aliquando neque ipsa ab igne separetur.*

from its status or dignity, was made or named soul; and if restored and corrected, it returns to being an intellect.⁸

On this model, we are not minds encased in souls and bodies; neither cores with accretions nor kernels with husks. Rather, our souls and our bodies are simply our fiery minds in different “states of matter.” Just as water exists as solid, liquid, and gas, so too do we. As in physics, where the main difference between states of matter is the density of the particles, so too with the Fall we descend into density. We began as God’s poetry and have descended into plasticity. And if body, soul, and spirit are on this material spectrum, then it is easier to understand how the spirit might learn something about itself and its world by sojourning in cooler and denser states, namely in soul and in body.

I have already quoted my countryman and fellow New Englander, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson was hardly an ardent Origenist. As far as I know, he mentioned Origen only once, and in passing, in an essay on Plutarch.⁹ But, appropriately enough, in his essay “The Poet,” Emerson identifies these two models of theological anthropology in his own inimitable way. According to the first, he says, “[w]e were put into our bodies, as fire is put into a pan, to be carried about; but there is no accurate adjustment between the spirit and the organ, much less the latter the germination of the former.”¹⁰ The problem that attends this first model is this: if we imagine ourselves as fire put into a pan or a lamp, then we are left wondering what analogy exists between “the spirit and the organ,” that is, between the fire and the form that holds and sustains it. If we persist of thinking of them as distinct, we are left so bewildered by the question of whether an “accurate adjustment” or *ratio* can obtain between the two that we rarely ask the deeper question: whether the form might itself be the outgrowth of the fire, whether the body might be the spirit in a different state of

8 *Prin* 2.8.3, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 228–232 (text), 229–233 (trans): *Sicut ergo deus ignis est, et angeli flamma ignis, et sancti quique spiritu feruentes: ita e contrario hi, qui deciderunt a dilectione dei, sine dubio refrixisse in caritate eius ac frigidi effecti esse dicendi sunt ... Si ergo ea quidem, quae sancta sunt, ignis et lumen et feruentia nominantur, quae autem contraria sunt, frigida, et caritas peccatorum dicitur refrigerescere, requirendum est ne forte et nomen animae, quod graece dicitur ψυχή, a refrigerescendo de statu diuiniore ac meliore dictum sit et translatum, id est quod ex calore illo naturali et diuino refrixisse uideatur, et ideo in hoc quo nunc est et statu et uocabulo sita sit ... Ex quibus omnibus illud uidetur ostendi, quod mens de statu ac dignitate sua declinans, effecta uel nuncupate est anima; quae si reparata fuerit et correctata, redit in hoc, ut sit mens.*

9 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Works*, Vol. x: *Lectures and Biographical Sketches* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890), 247.

10 Porte, *Ralph Waldo Emerson. Essays & Lectures*, 447.

matter. This second model is in fact precisely what Emerson endorses: “[in fact] we are not pans and barrows, nor even porters of the fire and torch-bearers, but children of the fire, made of it, and only the same divinity transmuted, and at two or three removes, when we know least about it.”¹¹ To my mind, Emerson has captured Origen’s anthropology perfectly. We are children of fire, which is to say that we are children of God. At our best, we are at one remove: irons in the fire of God, in Origen’s words, “becoming wholly fire.” At our worst, we are at two or three removes: fire cooled into soul, soul cooled into body. We are, in Emerson’s words, “divinity transmuted” and the degree of our remove is indexed to our knowledge, both of ourselves and of God.

One of the consequences of this second anthropological model is this: our slow rehabilitation and restoration, which will take place over successive lives and in successive worlds, is not a process of shedding the body or the soul, but rather of transforming them both, or as Emerson put it, transmuting them. The goal, then, is not escape, but transformation. All flesh must once again become fire.

2 Incarnation

The passages from *Peri archōn* to which I have been referring are taken from Origen’s longer discussion of Christ in Book 11, Chapter 6. Here Origen introduces his distinctive, and frankly controversial, Christology. For Origen, Christ is the name we give to that single mind that did not falter in its loving attention to God its maker, the one mind whose fiery ardor did not cool. This single mind enjoyed a complete mutual indwelling with the second divine person: being received wholly into the Son, and receiving the Son wholly into itself. And on the basis of this shared indwelling, there is a shared naming: the mind “is called” (*appellatur*) the Son of God, and the Son of God, in turn, “is named” (*nominatur*) Jesus Christ and “called” (*appellatur*) the Son of man.¹² But crucially—and this point cannot be emphasized enough—the mutual naming preserves the distinction between the divine creator and the created mind. Christ can be *called* the Son of God by virtue of the fact that Christ’s mind has welcomed the Son of God into itself, and thus there is a unity of God and mind that warrants us calling that unity by the names proper to each “half,” so to speak, created and uncreated. But if the mind of Christ

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Prin* 2.6.3, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 208 (text), 209 (trans).

can be said to *be* God, it is in the same sense that an iron in the fire of God can be said to *be* fire: its divinity or its fire depends on its full immersion in its source. You could say that in this case its predicate is borrowed.

The fact that Origen places Christ on this side of the distinction between creature and creator is no small matter. One result is that Origen's theological anthropology evolves hand in hand with his Christology. It should be obvious, by now, that I have been drawing Origen's theological anthropology directly from passages having to do with Christology. Whereas this might not be permissible in the case of other thinkers (such as Cyril of Alexandria), it is not only permissible but entirely necessary in the case of Origen. Why? Because, for Origen, insofar as Christ is a created mind, he is the same as his sibling minds, who eventually become angels, humans, and demons. Origen is clear as day about this in *Peri archōn*, where he insists, "it cannot be doubted that the nature of [Christ's] soul was the same as all others."¹³ In the beginning, we were all as Christ is—in rapt and loving attention of God our creator, wholly receiving the Son into ourselves, and falling into the Son in turn. So, the description of Christ as a lump of iron in the fire of God marks not only *his* beginning, but ours. You could say, then, that before our fall, we were all Christs.

We know what happened to us—we cooled; fire became flesh; we descended into denser states of matter. But what is the good of this descent? How does this cooling serve to help us return to our former fiery selves? If our original sin was some primordial lapse in our attention, some movement within us that broke our rapt contemplation, and if God's punishment must also be a remedy, then our descent into souls and bodies must somehow serve to train our faculty of attention, of contemplation. But how could acquiring souls and bodies help train our minds? The soul is what gives a naked νοῦς the power of sense perception in this world. But what good is sense perception in training the mind for contemplation, when the senses present only a vast array of distractions, of things other than God to attend to? And imagine the challenges of embodiment in the ancient world. Even if you manage to stave off death until a ripe old age, embodiment presents a series of distractions from the life of the mind: childbirth, the burdens of parenting, disease, famine, never mind war and, for Christians such as Origen, state persecution. How could embodiment be imagined as somehow the remedy for wayward minds?

My suspicion is that the answer lay close to what I said earlier about states of matter, namely that the descent from higher to lower states of matter has to

13 *Prin* 2.6.5, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 210 (text), 211 (trans): *Naturam quidem animae illius hanc fuisse, quae est omnium animarum, non potest dubitari.*

do with density. The mind becomes denser, heavier, as it cools into a soul and a body. The density of our current condition is a remedy because it trains our minds to attend to God while burdened with our own new weight. It is as if our minds before the fall were like birds: aloft and fast as lightning; but instead of holding formation around their source of sustenance, they began to flit this way and that, looking for sustenance elsewhere, in vain. When God ordained their descent, God did not strip them of their wings, as happens to the hapless souls in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Instead, their wings acquired more and more weight, and perhaps so much weight they forget that they were made to fly. But learn to fly again they can, and must, even with their newly burdened wings. Perhaps our souls and bodies, then, are for Origen the weights attached to our wings. And wings that take flight even when so burdened are wings that more likely to stay aloft and steady in their formation.

Let me explore this idea a bit more by turning to the question of Christ's own incarnation. We know why we were incarnated: according to Origen, we deserved it, and it serves as a slow therapy for our wayward minds. But the mind of Christ did not deserve incarnation—he is the only one who did not. He descends to our condition not out of any just deserts, but out of sheer love for us, his siblings—what the deutero-Pauline epistle calls *φιλανθρωπία* (Tit 3:4). Christ's sojourn among us serves as a model of how a mind can maintain its unbroken contemplation of its creator, and can do so while being weighted down with a soul and a body. And the very soul and body Christ took on were especially weighted down—oppressed, you might say—as a first-century Jew under Roman occupation, among a long-suffering people waiting for rescue. So, even with these burdened wings, Christ was able to stay aloft.

And yet what of the crucifixion? What further challenge to contemplation could be imagined than dying on a cross? Origen says very little about Christ's crucifixion in *Peri archōn*, but what he does say is quite revealing. In Book 3, Chapter 5, he explains that “the aid of the Author and Creator himself was required, which restores the discipline, which had been corrupted and profaned, of obeying to the one and of ruling to the other.”¹⁴ Those who had been given rule had corrupted that rule. And naturally those who were ruled were not keen to obey those rulers. This doesn't mean, however, that Christ took on flesh so as to teach Romans how to be better rulers, and Jews better subjects. This worldly political conflict was just the latest and lowest instance of a

14 *Prin* 3:5,6, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 434 (text), 435 (trans): *sed auctoris ipsius et creatoris sui opem poposcit, qui et his oboediendi et illis regendi corruptam profanamque restitueret disciplinam.*

cosmic conflict among created minds, who were not able to obey God's command because they were not able to rule over their own unruly passions. Minds were created with free will, but with this freedom they rebelled, that is, they freely chose to obey their own will rather than God's, and in failing to rule over their own wayward will, they disobeyed. Their fall prompted a self-perpetuating miasma of disobedience and misrule—and into this miasma Christ descended in the flesh. How did his death on the cross transform this state of affairs? "And therefore the only-begotten Son of God, who was the Word and the Wisdom of the Father, when he was with the Father in that *glory* which he had *before the world was* (John 17:5), *emptied himself and taking the form of a servant became obedient even unto death* (Phil 2:7–8), that he might teach obedience to those who could not otherwise than by obedience obtain salvation."¹⁵ Our salvation consists in our obedience, and our obedience requires self-rule. But if we could not obey God *before* we had the further burdens of soul and body, what makes us think we can learn to obey God now? According to Origen, Christ on the cross models obedience for us by showing us that a mind can be beset by all the pain and suffering that accompany a soul and a body—psychological fear and physical torment, for example—and still maintain an obedient attention to God. The lesson seems to be: if someone can obey and attend even on the cross, then you know that you can obey and attend to God even amidst the distractions of soul and body. Jesus on the cross taught us that one can be afflicted in the flesh and still be aflame.

Another way to understand Origen's conviction that embodiment is a remedy for wayward minds is to frame the question in terms of time. If different states of matter are defined by their relative density, we might wonder whether we descend into a denser experience of time. If the naked *νοῦς* is like a flitting bird, then perhaps the weight of soul and body is a means of slowing the mind down, forcing it to move in and through thicker time, as it were. Perhaps our rehabilitation must be *longue durée*, not only because our rebellious wills resist the therapy of embodiment, but because the therapy itself must be slow. Origen explores this dimension of our embodied rehabilitation in Book 3 of *Peri archōn*, when he wrestles with the fact that God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart presents Origen with two related dilemmas. First, and most obviously, it appears that in hardening

15 Ibid.: *Vnde unigenitus filius dei, qui erat uerbum et sapentia patris, cum esset in ea gloria apud patrem, quam habuit antequam mundus esset, exinaniuit se ipsum et formam serui accipiens efficitur oboediens usque ad mortem, ut oboedientiam doceret eos, qui non aliter nisi per oboedientiam salutem consequi poterant.*

Pharaoh's heart God violates his free will. Origen dismisses this quickly enough by insisting that God did no such thing: God is like the rain that falls on different soil; rich soil will teem with abundant life, whereas poor soil will bring forth only nestles and weeds. Pharaoh's heart is poor soil, and so God's rain only serves to bring forth the evil that is already latent in it. But this leads to the second, and more interesting, dilemma. Why did God allow, even encourage, Pharaoh to sink further into his own miasma? Why did God abandon Pharaoh to his own vice, and not entice him to virtue sooner, as we would expect God to do?

The answer has to do with time. Origen explains that when it comes to "the immortality of the soul and the limitless age," we should not expect, or even want, that God's help will come quickly.¹⁶ It is better, he says, that we are brought to salvation slowly, and only after many trials and tribulations. Like a fever that must run its course before it breaks, our sinful and wayward ways must be allowed to play themselves out, even if, perhaps especially if, we suffer along the way. If a soul receives succor too quickly, it is likely to lose it again. A more permanent health is reserved for those who "have patience to receive over a long period the cultivation that accords with nature."¹⁷ Why? Because long suffering slowly eats away at our mind's pride. Until that pride is breached, the mind will not recognize its own weakness, and it so will not hear the saving word of God. Like waves on a shore, time will eventually erode our proud resistance to God's grace. If the healing comes too soon, it may serve only to entrench the pride that must be rooted out over successive lifetimes and worlds. As Origen says, "For God deals with souls not with reference, let me say, to the fifty years of the present life, but with reference to the limitless age."¹⁸ If we wish to attain to the eternity of the limitless age, in the ἀποκατάστασις, we must train ourselves in *this* temporality, a denser time in which soul and body serve to slow the mind so that its pride can be breached, and grace can find an opening.

Before I pass from incarnation to deification, I would like to flag what I have just said as needing further elaboration and refinement. As fascinating as Origen's account of incarnation might be, I am left wishing he would have

16 *Prin* 3.1.13, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 326 (text), 327 (trans): ὡς πρὸς τὴν ἀθανασίαν τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὸν ἀπειρον αἰῶνα.

17 *Prin* 3.1.14, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 330 (text), 331 (trans): τὴν κατὰ φύσιν γεωργίαν μακροθυμίῃ ὕστερον πολλῶ χρόνῳ λαβεῖν.

18 *Prin* 3.1.13, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 328 (text), 329 (trans): Θεὸς γὰρ οἰκονομεῖ τὰς ψυχὰς οὐχ ὡς πρὸς τὴν φέρ' εἰπεῖν πενηκονταετίαν τῆς ἐνθάδε ζωῆς, ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸς τὸν ἀπέραντον αἰῶνα.

said more about the mind's experience of soul and body, more about what the descent into soul and body makes possible for the mind, and how it is rehabilitated through these new modes of being, these new "states of matter." And I am also left wishing he would have said more about time and the temporality of rehabilitation.¹⁹ I have tried to flesh these out, very briefly, but I do think that any theological *ressourcement* of Origen for the twenty-first century will need to linger over such questions, and perhaps even bring in the modern and contemporary phenomenological tradition, and its meditations on sense perception, embodiment, and temporality, to help give fuller voice to Origen's insights.²⁰

3 Deification

It's time that I moved on to my third and final theme: deification. I trust it is clear by now that any discussion of deification in Origen must first begin with the mind of Christ: for Christ is the exemplar of deification. He is the mind all aflame with God's fire. But we must keep in mind that for Origen Christ's "deification" does not annul his created status. Christ remains a created mind, one who enjoys a mutual indwelling with God the Son. This mutual indwelling was what was meant for all minds. When, in the end, minds are restored to their beginning, they will be restored *as Christs*—even Satan, which is the name we give to the mind who fell furthest, will be restored to his proper place as a Christ.²¹

But remember that Origen insists that "the end is always like the beginning." *Prima facie*, this is not a difficult point to grasp: in the end, we will be as we were in the beginning, fiery minds whose souls and bodies have once again become absorbed into the original state of mind-matter. The crucial point, of course, is that the end is not exactly the same as the beginning; the end is *like*

19 See, for example, Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*, svc 77 (Leiden; Brill, 2006); idem, *Origen: Philosophy of History & Eschatology*, svc 85 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

20 For an attempt to bring Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment to bear on Origen's understanding of pedagogy and rehabilitation, see S. Levy-Brightman, *Rereading the Body: Origen's Cosmology and the Pedagogy of Human Embodiment* (Masters of Divinity thesis, Harvard Divinity School, 2014).

21 See Lisa R. Holliday, "Will Satan be Saved? Reconsidering Origen's Theory of Volition in *Peri archōn*," vc 63.1 (2009): 1–23; see also Mark S.M. Scott, "Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen's Universalism," *J ECS* 18.3 (2010): 347–368.

the beginning.²² So, if it is like the beginning, what is the same, and what is different? Again, it is easier to answer the former: what is the same? We were naked minds, and we will be again. What makes the end different is that we naked minds will not fall again. And that can only be the case if we are somehow changed by the *longue durée* drama of having souls and bodies across lifetimes and worlds. If minds are not permanently changed, then they will fall again. Whatever happens to minds, then, through their descent into denser states of time and matter, it must fundamentally transform them. The remedy and rehabilitation do not amount to a restoration of the same, but rather to a restoration of the like. And the end that is like the beginning must be an improvement on the beginning, because it will be stable in a way the beginning was not. I cannot be the first to be reminded of these lines from T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding," the fourth and final of his *Four Quartets*:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning.²³

In the ἀποκατάστασις, then, the minds will "know the place for the first time." They will have learned something, something they could not have learned were it not for their sinful rebellion and long, painful rehabilitation. They will pass through that "unknown, unremembered gate," the very gate through which they passed on their way out of the garden, a gate, we are told in Gen 3:24, that is guarded by an angel with a flaming, circling sword. Armed with the knowledge they will have gained along the way, the minds will pass unharmed through this final trial by fire, because they will once again have become all flame and will regard the sword as a sign of welcome. The final lines of Eliot's "Little Gidding" say this better than I can:

22 In the introduction to his edition and translation (pp. lxxx–lxxxix), J. Behr argues convincingly that *Peri archōn* is in fact oriented eschatologically, not protologically. In other words, Origen works out what the beginning was by way of knowing the end will be, namely the *apokatastasis* when God will be all in all.

23 T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems, 1909–1962* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 2014), 208.

And all shall be well and
 All manner of thing shall be well
 When the tongues of flames are in-folded
 Into the crowned knot of fire
 And the fire and the rose are one.²⁴

Eliot may have Julian of Norwich's ἀποκατάστασις more in mind than Origen's when he says that "all shall be well," but his final lines on flames and fire make it seem as if he were reading straight out of *Peri archōn*: in Origen's words, the restored mind "receiv[es] the fire throughout all its pores and veins and becom[es] wholly fire." Collectively, the minds will form, in Eliot's words, a "crowned knot of fire" around the brow of God.

Origen understood the apostle Peter to be the one who clearly announced the ἀποκατάστασις πάντων in Acts 3:21, but it is the fifteenth chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians that serves as the centerpiece of his doctrine of universal salvation. In 15:28 Paul writes, "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all." That final phrase, "that God may be all in all," serves as shorthand for the ἀποκατάστασις in Origen's writings. And in Book 3 of *Peri archōn*, he offers an interpretation of what it might mean:

I reckon that this expression, where *God* is said *to be all in all* (1 Cor 15:28), also means that he is all in each individual person. And he will be *all* in each individual in such a way that everything which the rational mind, when cleansed from all the dregs of the vices and utterly swept clean of every cloud of wickedness, can sense or understand or think will be all God; it will no longer sense anything else apart from God; it will think God, see God, hold God; God will be the mode and measure of its every movement; and thus *God* will be *all* to it.²⁵

God will be all that the deified mind sees, thinks, and holds. And when all the deified minds are so full, God will be all in all.

²⁴ Ibid., 209.

²⁵ *Prin* 3.6.3, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 444 (text), 445 (trans): *Et ergo quidem arbitror quia hoc, quod in omnibus omnia esse dicitur deus, significet etiam in singulis eum omnia esse. Per singulos autem omnia erit hoc modo, ut quidquid rationabilis mens, expurgate omnium uultuum faece atque omni penitus abstersa nube malitiae, uel sentire uel intellegere uel cogitare potest, omnia deus sit, nec ultra iam aliquid aliud nisi deum sentiat, deum cogitate, deum uideat, deum teneat, omnis motus sui deus modus et mensura sit: et ita erit ei omnia deus.*

This description of the deified mind, however, immediately raises for Origen the question of whether this is a condition that can be had in a body. The answer would seem to be “no,” because a deified mind would have reabsorbed its cooler and denser states, that is, its soul and its body, as it returned to its fiery nature. The answer would seem to be “no” because in the ἀποκατάστασις all flesh will have become fire. But of course Origen cannot let it rest there, not least because of the fifteenth chapter of Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians, where the apostle speaks of the σῶμα πνευματικόν, “the spiritual body” (e.g. 1 Cor 15:44).

Could it be then that the deified mind has, not a body like ours, but a spiritual body, a body which could be deified along with the mind? This seems to suggest that the mind, once freed of its body here—call it its flesh—can then acquire its proper body, its spiritual body, in the ἀποκατάστασις. The question of embodiment is one Origen explores throughout *Peri archōn*, and since it touches directly on incarnation and deification, Christology and soteriology, it can justly be regarded as one of, if not *the*, abiding questions of this text. Perhaps it is foolish of me to try to raise this question near the conclusion of this essay. But I have to raise it, because everything I have said so far depends on our answer to the question of the body. I confess that I take as bedrock Origen’s claim in *Peri archōn* Book 2 that “a bodiless life will rightly be considered only of the Trinity.”²⁶ If we take this claim seriously, only the three divine persons are without a body. It means that when God first created, when God first made minds to receive his fiery nature, he made them with bodies. Later, of course, he would form souls and what we have been calling bodies in the second creation. But, nevertheless, there was once a primordial body, a spiritual body. I think we mislead ourselves, though, if we speak of the first minds as having been made along with spiritual bodies, because that suggests that God made two things: minds and spiritual bodies. Whereas I think it is closer to the truth to say that, for Origen, the minds *are* the spiritual bodies.²⁷ In other words, God has only and ever made one thing: call that one thing whatever as you like—mind, spirit, or spiritual body. It is the one primordial matter that God created *ex nihilo*. In its original state, it was capable of receiving God’s fire, of being all flame. But this single mind-matter was also differentiated, individuated, and

26 *Prin* 2.2.2, Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 154 (text), 155 (trans): *solius namque trinitatis incorporea uita existere recte putabitur*.

27 There is a lively debate in the scholarly literature as to whether, for Origen, the primordial minds were without bodies, or they had bodies (or were themselves bodies). Those who favor the former view include G. Bürke, H. Crouzel, G.S. Gasparro, P. Martens, and A.-C. Jacobsen; those who favor the second view include I. Ramelli, B. Blosser, J. Behr, and A. Fürst.

each individual was given free will. And with this free will, the many minds differentiated themselves even further, beyond mere numerical individuation: only one remained as it was made to do; others turned away and their mind-matter was formed into a diverse array of souls and bodies. This diverse array served as the means of their rehabilitation, as we have already discussed.

I promised to return to the question of the resurrection of the body. Origen was often suspected of undermining this doctrine, even though he clearly and unequivocally affirms it in the rule of faith in the preface to *Peri archōn*. One can easily see why he fell under such suspicion: if souls and bodies will eventually be reabsorbed into mind, then how can we confess a final resurrection of the body? But with the help of the apostle Paul, Origen turns this suspicion inside out, or on its head. The thing you are accustomed to calling your body, he suggests, is only a cooler and denser declension of your true body. If you want to imagine what your true body is, your spiritual body, made of the same mind-matter as every other body, then observe the difference between the seed you plant in the ground, and what grows from the soil. Your true body is as different from its current form as the flowering plant is from the humble seed. Origen not only confesses the resurrection of the body, but along the way transforms what we think the body is. The resurrection of the body is the necessary correlate of the restoration of all things; or to put that in Greek, the ἀνάστασις coincides with the ἀποκατάστασις.

I know that Origen's interpretation of the resurrection of the body is controversial, and almost certainly heretical from the perspective of subsequent orthodoxy. With every passing year, however, I care less about controversy, and even less about Origen's orthodoxy. In that spirit, I wish to make one final suggestion. I have attempted to map the Janus-like movements of incarnation and deification in Origen's thought, and to show how a distinctive theological anthropology makes sense of it all. In the end, I suggest, Origen wants us to think of God as having created only one thing, a kind of primordial mind-matter, which was to serve as the receptacle of his fire. In Eliot's words, this was to be a crowning "knot of fire" for the brow of God. In the end that is like the beginning, in the ἀποκατάστασις, these fiery minds, all deified, will once again become spiritual bodies. It is only a half-step further, perhaps less, to imagine Origen saying that God has made for himself a body: us. We are God's body.²⁸ The drama of the minds' fall and restoration, led by their sibling Christ, is also the drama of the descent, dissolution and eventual resurrection of God's body,

28 Evagrius of Pontus takes this exact half-step in his so-called "Great Letter" or "Letter to Melania": "the mind, which is the body of the Spirit and the Word." Evagr. Pont., *Epistula ad Melaniam*, §15, ed. Frankenberg.

of which we are each an essential and inalienable part. According to Origen, God is quite literally enticing us to restore to God God's own body. Until then, God is in some sense unmade, deformed even, not yet "all in all." From flesh to fire: our successive reincarnations are in the service of our eventual collective deification; and our deification is quite literally, and nothing less than, God's final reincarnation.

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St John Chrysostom in the West

Marcus Plested

My acquaintance with Archbishop Alexander Golitzin goes back to the 1990s when we conducted a fairly lengthy correspondence revolving around our mutual interests in early Christian asceticism. I recall being particularly taken with his probing of the then widely accepted dichotomy between Macarius (pseudo-Macarius/Symeon) and Evagrius of Pontus conceived and presented in terms of a stand-off between the intellectual mysticism of Evagrius, centered on the *nous* and the affective mysticism of Macarius, centered on the *kardia*.¹ Looking back, I see the dismantling or at least nuancing of this particular dichotomy as something of a precursor to some of my more recent work probing other dichotomies, most notably that obtaining between Greek East and Latin West. With this in mind, and given that Archbishop Alexander himself has done so much to articulate and interrogate the mystical and ascetic traditions of the Christian East within a Western context, it seemed appropriate to offer him this study of the remarkable odyssey of a Greek Father in the Christian West.²

Before speaking of the legacy of St John Chrysostom in the West, we should first acknowledge the obvious fact that for St John, East and West formed parts of the undivided Church.³ While he never visited the West, his great love for St Paul made him long to visit the tomb of the Apostle in Rome and to kiss the very dust of his body. In a famous passage from his homilies on Romans, Chrysostom heaps praise on Rome—for its greatness, antiquity, beauty, power, wealth, and prowess. “But,” he says, “leaving all this aside I call it blessed on this account, that he [Paul] in his lifetime wrote to them, and loved them so, and conversed

1 See his “Hierarchy versus Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos, and their Common Roots in Ascetical Tradition,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 38 (1994): 131–179. See further my, *The Macarian Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 60–71.

2 This article has its origins in a lecture given in Istanbul in 2007 at a symposium called by His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to mark the 1600th anniversary of the death of his predecessor, St John Chrysostom.

3 First among my acknowledgements, I must mention the indispensable work of Chrysostomus Baur, *Saint Jean Chrysostome et ses oeuvres dans l’histoire littéraire* (Louvain: Bureaux du Recueil/Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1907).

with them while he was with us, and ended his life there. And on this above all other things is the city's importance founded. And like a great and strong body, it has as two brilliant eyes the bodies of these Saints [Peter and Paul]. The sky is not so bright, when the sun sends out its rays, as is the city of the Romans, sending out these two lights throughout all the world."⁴

Chrysostom sought help from Rome in his troubled time as Archbishop of Constantinople and found in Rome an unwavering ally. Between Easter and Pentecost 404 he wrote to Pope Innocent requesting and getting help—albeit too late to prevent his final exile. There is, however, no indication that he recognized any appellate jurisdiction, as witnessed by the fact that he wrote in similar terms to the other patriarchs of the West: Chromatius of Aquileia and Venerius of Milan. The West, including the Western Emperor Honorius, gave her full backing to St John, a show of support that aided his posthumous rehabilitation in the East.

It is a striking fact that it is in the West that St John's stature and authority are first recognized and proclaimed. It is in the West that he is first appealed to as a theological authority and by Western writers that the formal cognomen "Chrysostomus" is first recorded. As early as 392 CE, some years before St John's election to the see of Constantinople, St Jerome includes him in his *De viris illustribus* immediately following the entry on St Gregory of Nyssa: "John, presbyter of the church at Antioch, a follower of Eusebius of Emesa and Diodorus, is said to have written much, but I have read only his *περὶ ἱεροσύνης* [*On the priesthood*]."⁵ The fact that he gives the title in Greek suggests that Jerome read this work in the original Greek—no difficulty for such an accomplished linguist. In 404—the very year of Chrysostom's exile—Jerome draws on Chrysostom to support his polemic against St Augustine concerning Gal 2:11 ("But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face"). Jerome maintains that neither Paul nor Peter have sinned here, contrary to Augustine's assertion that Paul rightly rebuked Peter for his adherence to the Law. In seeing this as a diplomatic and deliberate dissimulation on Peter's part, Jerome appeals in the first instance to Origen (whom he still, at that time, held in high regard). He then adds:

What shall I say also of John, who has long governed the Church of Constantinople, and holding pontifical rank, who has composed a very large book upon this paragraph, and has followed the opinion of Origen and of

⁴ *Homilies on Romans* 32.2 (PG 60 678).

⁵ PL 23 713.

the old expositors? If, therefore, you censure me as in the wrong, suffer me, I pray you, to be mistaken in company with such men.⁶

It is at about this time that Latin translations of John's works began to appear. The first were made in Italy between 415 and 419 by the Pelagian deacon Anianus of Celada.⁷ He translated Chrysostom's seven homilies on St Paul (remarking in so doing that Chrysostom had not so much commented on Paul as brought him back to life). Anianus is also credited with the translation of the *Homilies on Matthew* and many other works.⁸ The Pelagians were quick to claim the support of St John for their understanding of grace, sin, and human freedom. Anianus makes this clear in his prefatory remarks to the seven homilies in which he specifies that his translations had been undertaken to oppose the "Manicheans"—a clear dig at Augustine. Thus from the very earliest witnesses, one sees Chrysostom being manipulated to support a particular theological or ecclesiastical position. This is a pattern we shall see repeated in this survey of his reception in the West.

In 415 Pelagius himself cited St John against St Augustine, implying that John held freedom of will to be a sufficient weapon against sin. Augustine was not convinced that the citation from John in any way supported such a position.⁹ By 418, Augustine had reached the point where he felt it necessary to

6 Augustine, Letter 75 (CSEL 34.2 280f.). Translation taken from the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series. Presumably Jerome is referring to Chrysostom's *Commentary on Galatians*, Chapter 2. Jerome goes on to cite scripture "Lest, however, I should seem to rest my answer to your reasoning wholly on the number of witnesses who are on my side, and to use the names of illustrious men as a means of escaping from the truth, not daring to meet you in argument, I shall briefly bring forward some examples from the Scriptures [...]." In respect of Jerome's claim that wrongness is mitigated by illustrious company, one cannot fail but be reminded of St Vincent of Lérins remark that he "would rather be wrong with Origen, than be right with others" (*Commonitorium* 17.44). The irony here is that the "others" surely include Jerome, who famously turned bitterly against Origen in his later years.

7 The location of Celada is unknown.

8 Sever Voicu warns of the "myth of Anianus"—i.e. the attribution of virtually all early Chrysostom translations to him. See further his, "Le prime traduzioni latine di Crisostomo," in *Cristianesimo Latino e cultura Greca sino al sec. IV* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1993), 397–415. Anianus' authorship of the translations of the homilies on Paul and Matthew (at least of the first twenty-five) is, however, not in doubt.

9 *On nature and grace* 76 (PL 44 285): "He quotes also John, bishop of Constantinople, as saying 'that sin is not a substance, but a wicked act.' Who denies this? 'And because it is not natural, therefore the law was given against it, and because it proceeds from the liberty of our will.' Who, too, denies this? However, the present question concerns our human nature in its corrupted state; it is a further question also concerning that grace of God whereby our nature is healed by the great Physician, Christ, whose remedy it would not need if it were only whole.

claim John not only as an authority who did not support the Pelagians but one who positively refuted their doctrine. He makes this quite explicit in his fierce attack on the Pelagian polemicist Julian of Eclanum. Augustine had, by this time, familiarized himself with as many of John's works as he could lay hands on, including a number of inauthentic works already circulating under John's name—something that provides further to testimony to the power and authority of his name in the West at this time. Augustine was able to correct the mistranslations of his adversaries and throw other citations back at them.¹⁰ He also refutes in detail Julian's claim that John opposed the baptism of infants: "Let no one ever say such a thing of such a great man!" On the contrary, John is to be included among the saints who have taught infant baptism: with Saints Innocent, Cyprian, Basil, Hilary, Ambrose. These Augustine takes as his witnesses against Julian, "or rather as our judges." He ends, having produced copious citations from St John, by exclaiming: "See then to what kind of man, to what great defender of the Christian faith and of this catholic teaching [on the baptism of infants], you have presumed to impute your doctrine!"¹¹

St John Cassian—no stranger to the Pelagian Controversy—was of course one of Chrysostom's foremost ambassadors in the West. After his famous sojourn in the Egyptian desert, he and his companion Germanus joined John in Constantinople. These Latin brothers were entrusted by John with the vital task of managing the cathedral treasury, a task they performed with great efficiency and integrity. Cassian was ordained deacon by John and went with Germanus to Rome to plead John's case shortly after his exile.¹² Cassian kept John's memory and authority alive in his writings against Nestorius, the next denizen of Antioch to occupy the throne of Constantinople. In his *On the Incarnation of Christ* written shortly before the Council of Ephesus, Cassian bids Nestorius to pay heed to what John has written on the person of Christ, John who is "the

And yet your author defends it as capable of not sinning, as if it were sound, or as if its freedom of will were self-sufficient." Translation taken from the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series. Baur remarks laconically that Augustine must have been "sans doute un peu étonné d'un tel adversaire, qu'il ne connaît pas encore très bien." *Saint Jean Chrysostome et ses oeuvres dans l'histoire littéraire*, 68.

- 10 This raises the tricky question of the level of Augustine's Greek—a subject I do not propose to venture into here. It is, of course, perfectly possible that he had some linguistic help with these particular texts. Aurelian of Carthage was a correspondent of St John and may have assisted in the procurement of texts (a point made to me in conversation by Guillaume Bardy in 2007, whom I duly thank).
- 11 *Against Julian* 1.1.6 (PL 44 654–665). Baur remarks (op. cit., 71), "Jamais hommage plus éclatant ne fut rendu à un grand homme par un meilleur panégyriste."
- 12 Palladius, *Dialogue* 3.

honour of the bishops of Constantinople, whose holy life obtained the reward of martyrdom without the persecution of pagans.” He also reminds Nestorius that he owes his election to the enduring love for John of the people of Constantinople and exhorts them to hold fast to:

that John who like John the Evangelist was indeed a disciple of Jesus and an Apostle; and so to speak ever reclined on the breast and heart of the Lord. Remember him, I say. Follow him. Think of his purity, his faith, his doctrine, and holiness. Remember him ever as your teacher and nurse, in whose bosom and embraces you, as it were, grew up. Who was the teacher in common both of you and of me: whose disciples and pupils we are. Read his writings. Hold fast his instruction. Embrace his faith and merits. For though to attain this is a hard and magnificent thing: yet even to follow is beautiful and sublime. For in the highest matters, not merely the attainment, but even the attempt to copy is worthy of praise. He then should ever be in your minds and almost in your sight: he should live in your hearts and in your thoughts.¹³

Perhaps the most important thing to note about all this is that it was quite unparalleled in the East. Chrysostom is a universally acknowledged theological authority in the West long before the same can be said of the East. We have nothing like the same intensity of interest in Chrysostom in the Greek East at this time—doubtless for political reasons. It is also very significant that it is Latin writers who first record the formal cognomen “Chrysostomus.” This had, of course, of course, been one of the many terms applied to John and other great rhetors, but it is Facundus of Hermiane (North Africa) who is the first to use it as a fixed title. Writing in Constantinople shortly before the Ecumenical Council of 553 CE, he speaks of “illud os aureum Constantinopolitani Joannis.”¹⁴ Shortly afterwards, Pope Vigilius, also writing in Constantinople, speaks of “John, Bishop of Constantinople, whom they call Chrysostomus.”¹⁵ The cognomen is also used by Cassiodorus, sometime minister of Theodoric, in Gothic Italy around 563 CE. Cassiodorus, who had spent some twenty years in Constantinople, devoted great energy to attempting to hold together the increasingly divergent Greek and Latin worlds. One sign of this effort is his commis-

13 *On the Incarnation of Christ* 7.30–31 (CSEL 17) (tr. Gibson in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers series).

14 *Pro defensione trium capitulorum* 1.4.2 (PL 67 615) (“os aureum” being, of course, “golden mouth”).

15 *Constitutum de tribus capitulis* 60.217 (CSEL 35 291).

sioning of several translations of Chrysostom's works. A little later (c. 615 CE), St Isidore of Seville refers to "St John of Constantinople, surnamed Chrysostom." The Latins seem to have pre-empted the Greeks in making the cognomen the standard appellation of the saint.

In the troubled centuries that followed, references to Chrysostom diminish somewhat. There are no further translations recorded between those commissioned by Cassiodorus and the Twelfth Century. The vigorous struggle for the legacy of Chrysostom during the Pelagian Controversy had no obvious sequel. But Chrysostom was certainly not forgotten. Manuscripts continued to be kept and copied in the monasteries as Baur's survey of western monastic libraries has indicated. Baur found some 485 manuscripts dating from the seventh to fifteenth centuries in medieval monastic libraries. This is a significantly higher haul than for any other Greek Father. The great Anglo-Saxon theologian Alcuin of York (d. 804) wrote a Commentary on Hebrews almost entirely based on Chrysostom's commentary.¹⁶ Hincmar of Rheims (d. 882) cites John frequently on the subject of free will in his treatise *De Prædestinatione* (857–858).¹⁷ Rathier of Verona (d. 974), for his part, draws on St John's teaching on wealth and poverty.¹⁸

We see here that it is in the Carolingian period that knowledge of and interest in Chrysostom begins to revive. This revival is reflected in the translation work of Burgundio of Pisa. This highly polished and accomplished individual accompanied Anslem of Havelberg to Constantinople in 1136 and took part in the famous dialogue between Anselm and Nicetas of Nicomedeia. A contemporary chronicler tells us that Burgundio had translated many works of St John Chrysostom whom he reported as having exegeted the whole of the Old and New Testaments. The chronicle also records that Burgundio brought with him to the Third Lateran Council (1179) his translations of Chrysostom's commentary on John and that he had also translated part of the commentary on Genesis.¹⁹ These translations were evidently very popular, serving as the basis of many of the medieval Latin manuscripts of Chrysostom.

Thomas Aquinas cited Chrysostom frequently, especially (as one would expect) in his *Catena Aurea* or *Golden Chain* (his collection of patristic commentaries on the Gospels). Thomas is also said to have declared that he would prefer Chrysostom's *Commentary on Matthew* (in Burgundio's translation) to

16 PL 100 1031–1084.

17 PL 125 217 f.

18 Baur, op. cit., 74.

19 Robert of Mons, *Continuation of the Chronicle of Sigebert of Gembloux*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Scriptores (in Folio))*, 6, 531.45–50.

the whole city of Paris.²⁰ For the Franciscans, Bonaventure loses nothing to Thomas in his respect for Chrysostom, citing him, according to Baur, some 326 times in his works.

Thus by the High Middle Ages, Chrysostom is firmly established as a towering authority in the Latin world. Note that he is appealed to primarily as an exegete and as a witness to orthodox doctrine—rather than as an exemplary preacher. Knowledge of Chrysostom was deepened and extended by the influx of Greek scholars into the West following the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, many of whom undertook or inspired further translation work. In this situation, it was inevitable that the legacy of Chrysostom would be disputed between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Protestant reformers lagged very little behind the medieval Latins in their admiration for Chrysostom. What is noticeably different is the way in which they receive Chrysostom—not within the context of a Church tradition but as providing backing for their own interpretations, and guidance for the correct reading of Scripture. Martin Luther certainly valued Chrysostom very highly, and quotes him repeatedly. However, one always gets the impression that Chrysostom is being commended for agreeing with Luther, rather than *vice versa*. Luther was certainly very ready to correct the great doctor when he felt it necessary—where he finds Chrysostom has misunderstood Paul, for example. On the more general question of patristic authority, Luther attacks those who rely on either on their own reasonings or on the Fathers: both of these, he says, can impede our direct access to the word of God in scripture—which contains everything necessary for salvation. Scripture does not tell us we must believe the Fathers²¹ and in any case Luther's enemies, so he claims, do not believe the Fathers but rather seek “to foist their own views onto the words of the Fathers”—a fault Luther is not free from.²² The Fathers, moreover, can often get things wrong, says Luther. In one passage, he goes so far as to speak of Chrysostom as one who (with Jerome and Origen) as one of those “scornful and frivolous saints who are caught up in their own speculations.”²³

John Calvin displays a more profound approach to John's work than does Luther. Calvin gives us some of his most valuable reflections on the way to read

20 Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 140.

21 *Answer to Latomus* 8.98.27.

22 *Answer to Latomus* 8.57.20.

23 *Luther's Works* 29 86. In his *Table Talk*, he is said to have referred to St John as “nur ein Wesscher (only a gossip)”: *Luther's Works* 54 34 [cited Margaret M. Mitchell, “The Archetypal Image: John Chrysostom's Portraits of Paul,” *JR* 75 (1995): 15–43].

Scripture in his *Preface to the Homilies of Chrysostom*.²⁴ Here, Calvin affirms that the reading of the Fathers confers great benefits, especially in indicating the right way to read scripture, providing moral guidance, and offering an insight into the (relatively) pure life of the Early Church. One must not read the Fathers uncritically, but to reject them would be an act of considerable ingratitude. *Sola scriptura* does not, for Calvin, mean divorcing oneself wholly from the patristic tradition. And among the Fathers, Calvin singles out St John above all other exegetes, a mark of favour doubtless due to John's eschewal of the allegorical method of interpretation and preference for the so-called "literal" method of exegesis. Here Calvin is concurring in the judgement of the early reformer Martin Bucer who castigated those who ignored the testimony of learned commentators both past and present and similarly singled out Chrysostom as the most distinguished of biblical commentators of the Early Church.²⁵ Bucer engages with Chrysostom extensively in his own biblical exegesis—sometimes rather critically. Calvin too had his differences with Chrysostom especially on the issue of grace and human freedom. In this domain, Augustine is much preferred.²⁶ But Calvin does draw on Chrysostom to support his understanding of the Eucharist.²⁷ He is also unwilling to see in Chrysostom the erroneous understanding of the Roman Catholics concerning the "real presence" of Christ in consecrated elements of bread and wine. For Calvin, Chrysostom is guilty only of immoderate language when he speaks in very graphic terms of the reality of the sacrifice upon the altar in his *On the Priesthood*.

In the course of the English Reformation the legacy of St John Chrysostom is often appealed to. Thomas Cramner was excited to come across a manuscript of the *Letter to the Monk Caesarius*, ascribed to St John. In this manuscript, the author speaks of the nature of the bread remaining after consecration—a statement Cramner immediately leapt on to support his own non-realist conception of the Eucharist. He uses it in his *Defence*, a work which seeks to demonstrate

24 See Ian Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface to his Proposed French Edition of Chrysostom's Homilies: Translation and Commentary," *Studies in Church History Subsidia* 8 (1991): 129–138.

25 *Metaphrasis et enarratio in Epistolam sancti Pauli ad Romanos* (Basel: Perna, 1562), unpaginated preface.

26 It is Augustine who is, for Calvin, "the one whom we quote most frequently, as being the best and most reliable witness of all antiquity" (*Institutes* 4.14.26). Chrysostom is singled out as most egregious example of the patristic, and especially Greek patristic tendency to exceed "due bounds" in their extolling of the power of the human will (*Institutes* 2.2.4).

27 E.g. *Institutes* 4.17.6 (the cardinal importance of faith in reception of the eucharist) and 4.17.5 (the necessity of frequent communion).

that Cramner's case is grounded on Scripture "and approved by the consent of the most ancient doctors of the Church." Again, it is the Fathers who are to agree with Cramner and not *vice versa*. The *Letter* is, however, spurious, and in any case the sentence that so interested Cramner was absent from versions of the same text possessed by his adversaries. Cramner did, however, perpetuate the memory of Chrysostom in the Church of England by including the "Prayer of St Chrysostom" in the first ever English liturgy (1544). This prayer is included at the end of the Litany and later found its way into the text for Morning Prayer of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. In its 1662 format the prayer runs as follows:

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise, that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests; Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.²⁸

This prayer is, of course, taken from the third antiphon of the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom. It is a quite remarkable testament to John's influence that he should have such pride of place in the Anglican service-books.

For the remainder of my survey of the influence of St John in the West I shall for the purposes of space restrict myself to England. There is some justice to this restriction since it was in England that the complete works of Chrysostom were first edited and published.²⁹ This was the work of Sir Henry Savile, who was, in his time, tutor in Greek to Queen Elisabeth I, Provost of Eton College and Warden of Merton College, Oxford. Sir Henry was a learned, rich, and well-connected man. He made full use of all these qualities in preparing

28 The 1544 version reads as follows: "Almighty God, which haste given us grace at this tyme with one accorde to make our commune supplications unto the, and doost promise, that whan two or thre be gathered in thy name, thou wilt graunt their requestes: fulfil nowe, o Lord, the desires and petytions of thy servauntes, as maye be mooste expedient for them, graunting us in this world knowledge of thy thruthe, and in the wordle to come lyfe everlastynge. Amen." In the Divine Liturgy (tr. Archimandrite Ephrem Lash) the prayer is rendered: "You have given us grace to make these common and united prayers, and have promised that when two or three agree in your name you will grant their requests; fulfil now the petitions of your servants as is expedient, granting us in this present age the knowledge of your truth and in the age to come eternal life."

29 We should not, however, forget that this work was followed by the editions of the Jesuit Fronton Le Duc (Paris: 1636) and the Benedictine Bernard de Montfaucon (Paris: 1718–1738).

his eight-volume edition of Chrysostom's complete works, published at Eton in 1612. Sir Henry scoured Europe for copies of manuscripts and proved himself a fine judge of variant and difficult readings. He spent prodigious sums on the enterprise: the sources speak of between 8 and 25,000 gold pieces—a vast amount. The achievement is magnificent and seems to have had no other object than the advancement of learning in general and of the knowledge of Chrysostom in particular. "There is," says Savile in his preface, "none of the Greek Fathers so devout, none better, none of superior judgement." And, he adds, there is "nothing he need say concerning the splendour of John's oratory, from which golden stream comes his name." Sir Henry's wife was, it seems, less enamoured of John than was her husband. Indeed, we are told that at one point she threatened to burn his manuscripts if he did not pay more attention to her.

Apart from the Greek edition of Savile, many English translations were made and published from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. I shall mention only two, for the sake of illustration. The first is a translation made by the seventeenth-century scholar and diarist John Evelyn and published in London in 1659 (thus during England's brief period as a republic). The book is entitled the *Golden Book of St John Chrysostom Concerning the Education of Children* and is translated from a manuscript discovered by Combefis in 1656. The purpose of the translation appears perfectly innocent, merely to make available a work containing much wisdom on the proper pedagogy of children. More obviously polemical is an eighteenth-century translation of the six books *On the Priesthood* by Henry Hollier in London in 1728. In his prologue, the translator begins by affirming "the unanimous suffrage of the learned, that as [John] was the most eloquent of all the Fathers of the Greek Church, so his treatise of the priesthood is the most eloquent of all his numerous works." Speaking quite frankly, Hollier admits that his purpose in making this translation is to uphold "the excellency of the episcopal commission" against certain "wretches" who would deny it. Fathers such as John demonstrate the antiquity of the episcopal ministry, as maintained in the Church of England. The "primitive church," he argues comes second only to scripture in the guidance it provides for church life and governance. Indeed, it is Hollier's view that, "the more the members of this church are made acquainted with the writings of the Ancients, the higher value they must place on their happiness in their communion [...] I am persuaded that if, at the first, the most valuable monuments of antiquity had been set forth in the vulgar tongue, it [would] had been an ample defence of the Reformation." The Fathers, in other words, expose the novelty of Roman doctrines and the unprecedented nature of the governance of the Reformed Church of Geneva. Chrysostom is thus something of a "proto-Anglican," a forerunner of the Church of England which is, "the envy of Rome, the glory of the Reformation."

It is indeed noteworthy just how far the Church of England adopted Chrysostom as a kind of unofficial patron. The Second Book of Homilies (1562–1563) officially appointed to be read in churches, refers to John as “the great Clerk and godly Preacher”—an unusually warm description of a Church Father in that very sober collection of sermons. For many Anglicans, Chrysostom represented a perfect counterweight to both Rome and the radical reformers, a vindication of the *via media* (middle way) pursued by the Church of England. This was also the case for John Wesley who much valued Chrysostom for his teaching on holiness and perfection and thus as a support against Calvinism.³⁰

The idea of the *via media* was, however, always a difficult line to tread. Many Anglicans found themselves dissatisfied with the “Broad Church,” the church of compromise that was neither fully reformed nor fully catholic. Many left it altogether, for Rome and the Reform, but still more remained within it, pressing it to its limits on both sides, high and low. One notable figure in this respect, with whom I shall end my survey is John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801–1890)—recently declared a Saint by the Roman Catholic Church. For many years, Newman had been a firm advocate of the *via media* and had struggled to affirm the properly catholic character of the Church of England. Like many before him, he looked back to the Fathers as buttresses of his position. Looking back in this way, deeply immersed in the Early Church, he began to realize that it was not the Fathers that should be supporting him, but rather he that should allow himself to be shaped by them. For Newman, this change of direction led him to embrace the Church of Rome—but that is another story. What is most important for our purposes is to note the sheer depth of Newman’s attachment to St John, an attachment that exceeds that which he displays for any other Father. Towards the end of a long piece on Chrysostom, Newman ponders the source of his fervent attachment:³¹

Whence is this devotion to St. John Chrysostom, which leads me to dwell upon the thought of him, and makes me kindle at his name, when so many other great Saints [...] command indeed my veneration, but exert no per-

30 In his *Advice to Clergy* (1756) he asks: “Can any who spend several years in those seats of learning [Oxford and Cambridge], be excused if they do not add to that reading of the Fathers? the most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain, eminently endued with that Spirit by whom all Scripture was given. It will be easily perceived, I speak chiefly of those who wrote before the council of Nicea. But who could not likewise desire to have some acquaintance with those that followed them with St. Chrysostom, Basil, Austin, and above all, the man of a broken heart, Ephraim Syrus.”

31 This account was first published in the *Rambler* (1859–1860) and later in idem, *Historical Sketches 2* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906), 217–302.

sonal claim upon my heart? Many holy men have died in exile, many holy men have been successful preachers; and what more can we write upon St. Chrysostom's monument than this, that he was eloquent and that he suffered persecution? He is not an Athanasius, expounding a sacred dogma with a luminousness which is almost an inspiration [...] Nor is he Gregory or Basil, rich in the literature and philosophy of Greece, and embellishing the Church with the spoils of heathenism. Again, he is not an Augustine, devoting long years to one masterpiece of thought [...] He has not trampled upon heresy, nor smitten emperors, [...] nor knit together the portions of Christendom, nor founded a religious order, nor built up the framework of doctrine, nor expounded the science of the Saints; yet I love him, as I love David or St. Paul.

How am I to account for it? [...] It is not force of words, nor cogency of argument, nor harmony of composition, nor depth or richness of thought, which constitutes his power,—whence, then, has he this influence, so mysterious, yet so strong?

I consider St. Chrysostom's charm to lie in his intimate sympathy and compassionateness for the whole world, not only in its strength, but in its weakness; in the lively regard with which he views every thing that comes before him, taken in the concrete [...] Possessed though he be by the fire of divine charity, he has not lost one fibre, he does not miss one vibration, of the complicated whole of human sentiment and affection [...] It is this observant benevolence which gives to his exposition of Scripture its chief characteristic. He is known in ecclesiastical literature as the expounder, above all others, of its literal sense [...] there have been many literal expositors, but only one Chrysostom. It is St. Chrysostom who is the charm of the method, not the method that is the charm of St. Chrysostom.

The history of St John's influence in the West is a long and varied one. I trust I have given some sense, at least, of the scope and richness of that influence. In the West John was celebrated as a teacher of doctrine, exegete, and preacher (in that order). As we have seen, he had (and has) a remarkable ability to speak directly and freshly across the centuries to many and varied Christian souls. The West has ceded nothing to the East in her admiration of the great John. In this respect he has indeed, as the Troparion appointed for his feast puts it, "illumined the universe"—τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐφώτισεν.

Divine Light and Salvific Illumination in St. Symeon the New Theologian's *Hymns of Divine Eros*

John A. McGuckin

St Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022) is one of the most extraordinary and rhapsodic mystics of the Eastern Church. His *Hymns of Divine Eros*,¹ composed chiefly in exile in the latter part of his life,² stand at the acme of his spiritual writing and, as such, constitute not only an important monument of Orthodox theology, but also one of the most significant texts of the entire Christian mystical tradition: though it is a treasure still largely unknown to the outside world.³ His spiritual school is, in many respects, quite distinctive, though he himself characterized it, especially in his *Catecheses* (or morning lectures delivered to his monastic community at St. Mamas, Constantinople),⁴ as a highly traditional restatement of the ancient monastic charisms of prayer. We might say that in terms of his explicit sources, or literarily speaking, his teaching is highly tra-

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- 1 Generally translated in English to date, as *Hymns of Divine Love*. First translated under that title by George Maloney [George A. Maloney, *Hymns of Divine Love by St. Symeon the New Theologian* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1976; repr. 1999)]; also see Daniel Griggs, *Divine Eros: Hymns of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*, Popular Patristics Series (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011). For the general reader's convenience I will here quote the *Hymns* from Fr. Maloney's translation with reference first to the Hymn number followed by M and the page number of the Denville 1976 edition (the 1999 edition has the same pagination). I myself am currently preparing a new English edition of the *Hymns*, edited with commentary, for publication in 2021.
 - 2 Symeon may have begun aspects of his song-writing in his early monastic years, as some have read Niketas Stethatos to imply in his *Vita Symeonis* 37, lines 11–12; but this is, in fact, merely a generic reference to the saint's forms of asceticism (and illumination) in terms of his writing discipline. In the *Vita* 111, Niketas more accurately places the composition of the *Hymns* at the time "his tongue became a tongue of fire" when he retired to seclusion at St. Marina's Hesychasterion in late exile. The critical edition is: Richard P.H. Greenfield, ed., *The Life of St Symeon the New Theologian: Niketas Stethatos*, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 20 (Cambridge Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2013).
 - 3 Further see: John A. McGuckin, "A Neglected Masterpiece of the Christian Mystical Tradition: The Hymns of Divine Eros by the Byzantine Poet Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022)," *Spiritus* 5 (2005): 182–202.
 - 4 By the Xylokerkos gate of the city's outer wall (Belgrad Kapisi) not far from the Stoudium and St. Diomedes' of Jerusalem.

ditional; but this is not to say much, since those references he makes to the great masters of the past collectively constitute very little. Because of a distinct lack of formal theological preparation before his monastic and priestly career, Symeon was a theologian who predominantly tended to speak from the heart and soul. It is this constant return to a master theme of his (namely that the true theologian must speak out of a fervent heart that has been perceptively (*aisthetos*) enlightened by the Holy Spirit) which makes his body of work truly original, distinctive, and (as many of his contemporaries recognized by first giving him the title of *Neos Theologos*)⁵ radically challenging to many aspects of traditional Orthodox culture. Themes in his work concerning ecstasy, divine illumination⁶ experienced in an intensely subjective manner,⁷ dramatically heartfelt repentance,⁸ and the most profound dependence on the guidance of the spiritual father,⁹ were all elements that he stressed in such a forcible way that he caused controversy throughout his own career as a *Higumen*, resulting in a riot among his community and eventually a sentence of exile delivered against him by the standing synod of Constantinople. The ostensible reason for this was the elaborate festival and cult he had instituted of his own spiritual father, Symeon Eulabes of the Stoudium monastery. This synodical condemnation his later disciple, Niketas Stethatos (at least)¹⁰ says was rescinded soon afterwards: though the saint refused to return to the imperial city.

5 The “New Theologian” was originally meant as a disparagement by his opponents, suggesting that he was an innovator. His later friends and disciples turned the criticism around and suggested it meant he was a new arrival in the company of the two great early theologians, St John and St Gregory.

6 Further see: John A. McGuckin, “The Notion of Luminous Vision in 11th Century Byzantium: Interpreting the Biblical and Theological Paradigms of St. Symeon the New Theologian,” in Margaret Mullett and Anthony Kirby, eds., *Work & Worship at Theotokos Evergetis*, ВВТТ 6.2 (Belfast: Queens University Press, 1997), 90–123; also idem, “St. Symeon the New Theologian (d. 1022): Byzantine Theological Renewal in Search of a Precedent,” in R.W. Swanson, ed., *The Church Retrospective*, SCH 33 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), 75–90.

7 Further see: John A. McGuckin, “Seeing Divine Things in Byzantine Christianity,” in Jeffrey B. Pettis and Jared Calaway, eds., *Seeing the God: Ways of Envisioning the Divine in Ancient Mediterranean Religion*, PPRT 5 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013), 223–238.

8 Further see: John A. McGuckin, “Покаяние как богообщение в Тимнах божественной любви’ преподобного Симеона Нового Богослова (Repentance as Divine Communion in St. Symeon the New Theologian’s Hymns of Divine Eros),” in Hilarion Alfeyev, ed., *Преподобный Симеон Новый Богослов и его духовное наследие (St. Symeon the New Theologian and His Spiritual Legacy)*, Patristic Studies and Translations (Moscow: St. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute, 2017), 128–145 [in Russian].

9 Further see John Turner, *St Symeon the New Theologian and Spiritual Fatherhood* (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

10 Niketas was only 16 when Symeon died, and never formed part of his monastic commu-

The book of *Hymns* dates substantively from the time after Symeon's growing troubles with the imperial court, beginning in 1003, culminated in his deposition as *Higumen* in 1005. The imperial administration of Basil II was intent on his public disgrace, for various reasons, and used the Patriarchal *Synkellos*, bishop Stephen of Nicomedia, as its agent.¹¹ Having manipulated Symeon's trial on canonical grounds, the court ensured that the saint was placed for a time under house arrest, punctuated by police raids on his monastery at St. Mamas.¹² Niketas Stethatos typically describes this as a spiritual season of "longed for hesychia"¹³ after Symeon had willingly passed over the leadership of the monastery. Niketas' *Vita Symeonis*, tries at every turn to reduce all and every suspicion of doctrinal, canonical or political irregularity in the life of the hero he is trying officially to rehabilitate (as a "Stoudite" martyr),¹⁴ so as to facilitate processions to Symeon's relics and shrine at Chrysopolis which many years later

nity. He adopts Symeon retrospectively as his father, has dreams about him, collects his writings, attributes titles to the various sections of the works, and composes his *Vita* (when he himself was the higumen of the Stoudium) as a preparation to bring the saint's *cultus* back to the imperial city. Themes in the *Vita* of how the Patriarch had soon repented of the sentence, and even offered Symeon the position of an Archbishop, should be read with some suspicion.

- 11 Stephen was a confidant of Emperor Basil II (*Bulgaroktonos* 958–1025). The imperial court had already used him (c. 976) as an important negotiator, renowned as he was for what Cedrenos calls his saintly and gracious manner (see Cedrenos, *History*. PG, 122. 153). The imperial family had longstanding differences with the aristocratic clans of Asia Minor, to which Symeon's family belonged, and these broke out openly once Basil entered on his majority. His courtly policy was consistently directed towards reducing the influence of the rural Asiatic aristocracy in the imperial city. He also seems to have had personal scores to settle against Symeon's family, who had surely bankrolled the latter's rapid promotion to be *Higumen* and *Ktitor* (re-founder) of the St. Mamas monastic complex. The letters and treatises passing between Symeon and Stephen are open for all to see, and testify to a certain extent to the clash between charismatic and institutional religion: but they have often been too narrowly interpreted, because commentators have not read between the political lines to understand that a traditional Byzantine way to mock the emperor was to do it by proxy.
- 12 They were looking (unsuccessfully) for the large sums of money that he regularly spent on the annual week long festivals (including gifts of cash to the city poor who attended) that he celebrated to mark the feastday of his departed Elder Symeon Eulabes. This lavish festival was (along with the controversy he caused by painting Eulabes' icon and venerating it) basically a canonization service for his Elder.
- 13 *Vita Symeonis*, 111.
- 14 He makes out all the causes of controversy in St. Symeon's life to be (a) his defence of the holy icons, and (b) his representation of zealous sanctity in the face of a bureaucratic and jealous religious establishment. Claiming Symeon as a true Studite martyr in this respect, he wishes to reinstate the *cultus* of Symeon in Constantinople thirty years after his death. The *Vita* itself is part of the process thus to canonize Symeon.

he himself was organizing from the imperial city. The *Vita* itself is thus part of the process (effectively) to canonize Symeon. Niketas was himself, of course, the *Higumen* of the Stoudite monastery at this stage, and highly favoured at court; but even so it was rhetorically necessary not to be seen casting aspersions on the judgements of past emperors.

On January 3, 1009 the court augmented the synodical deposition from office by ordering a total confiscation of Symeon's goods and imposed an (apparently) lifelong term of exile. He was unceremoniously cast ashore at Paloukiton, a village near Chrysopolis on the opposite bank of the Bosphorus straits facing Constantinople, wearing only the clothes he stood in. This local exile, within sight of the imperial city, was meant to be chiefly a matter of public disgrace. Although he was dropped there penniless, within a very short time Symeon had adopted the abandoned Oratory of St. Marina which was there, rebuilt it, and also purchased another respectable property back in the capital city, the Church of the Theotokos and its *Metochion*¹⁵ at the Constantinopolitan district *Ta Eugeniou*.¹⁶ Stethatos' *Vita Symeonis* names the Senator Christopher Phagouras¹⁷ as having been one of his deep-pocketed benefactors, and notes Symeon's strong support among several other highly placed Senators in the capital.¹⁸ The *Metochion* of the Theotokos church soon became the renewed centre for the cult of St. Symeon Eulabes in the Great City, and the lavish festivities were carried on there over eight days:¹⁹ with numerous clergy from Hagia Sophia in attendance;²⁰ a sign of the Patriarchate's tacit acceptance. We are not told that Symeon himself was in attendance there or whether he remained (in an enduring exile) at his church in Chrysopolis.

These lavish celebrations were occasions, as were the earlier celebrations based at St. Mamas when Symeon led them personally, for many public gifts (*eulogia*) and common meals. All of this meal-giving, and gift-offering was a typical Byzantine social networking pattern of that era. It was how Symeon's circle of disciples (many of them high ranking) continued their mutual allegiances and their support of their monastic teacher. Although Symeon was a *Higumen* with a close following of monks, both he and Symeon Eulabes before

15 A smaller monastic complex that served as a headquarters in town for an outlying monastery. This became St. Marina's base of operations directed by Symeon from afar.

16 This was a high class area in which to have a dependency; near the *Prosporiou* harbour, and close to the Hagia Sophia complex.

17 *Vita Symeonis*, 100.

18 *Vita Symeonis*, 109.

19 Marking it as a claimed "major rank" festival in the calendar.

20 *Vita Symeonis*, 111.

him, had been more noted as spiritual masters for a wider lay society. At the core of these festal celebrations, however, were also church services. In Orthodoxy, the more lavish the liturgical festival, the more was the need to extend the *Typikon* of appointed texts to be read (the script as it were of the liturgical services) throughout the day which was based (like the Holy Week services to this day) on the standard bare skeleton of the Offices of the Hours. I suspect that it was this para-liturgical amplification of the church services during this week of the festival that was the occasion of the composition of some of the *Hymns*. Not all of them would work in a liturgical setting, doubtless, but many of them match the inspirational level of the greatest of the hymnographers of the ancient church. Others represent a later Byzantine remodeling of the old patristic era custom (seen in Gregory the Theologian's circle) of close colleagues attending for a symposium meal (often the festal celebration of a saint) during which elegant compositions would be performed at table. Symeon twice refers to Gregory by name in the hymns²¹ and some of that Father's rhapsodic poems celebrating the divine light of God may well have served as early models for him²² for Gregory's poems and orations were commonly used in Symeon's era as standard examples of rhetorical structuring in the schools. Symeon's own Greek style, however is simpler and much less classical in form. Gregory gives a very famous account of his own vision of divine light (like Symeon's story, this is synonymous with the former's "conversion" to the monastic lifestyle) when he noetically ("in a vision of the night") saw the heavenly realm:

A long while back, I ripped my spirit from this world to wed it with the shining spirits of heaven. The ascentive *Nous* lifted me far from the flesh, to place me above and hide me in the secret places of the heavenly dwellings where the light of the Trinity shone upon my eyes: that light of the high throne, brighter than anything I have ever known, which radiates an ineffable and harmonious brilliance. It is the principle (*arche*) of all those things which the order of time closes off from heaven.²³

As the common substrate to Symeon's and Gregory's claim for ascentive illuminated vision, of course, stand the classic biblical archetypes of radiant epiph-

²¹ *Hymns* 19 and 23. M 87 & 122.

²² Such as St Gregory's, *Poem—On His Own Life*. Text and English translation in Konstantinos Trypanis, *Greek Poetry from Homer to Seferis* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), 410.

²³ St. Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Concerning His Own Affairs*. PG 37.985. vv. 195–201.

any: the Exodus Sinai narrative and the Evangelical Transfiguration stories. The influence of these narratives on the tropes Symeon uses, I have discussed elsewhere.²⁴

Taken collectively, the *Hymns* sum up and crystallize all that Symeon Eulabes (and Symeon himself) stood for in terms of their school's spiritual tradition. An ecstatic and zealous spiritual inspiration deeply permeates them. One key motif of that is that the Spirit of God must be sensed perceptively (*aisthetos*) and powerfully, or the life of the disciple is not spiritually authentic. Another is the heavy stress on the necessary self-abandonment and trust which characterizes true discipleship: the monk or layperson wholly depending on the intercession of the living saintly Elder, and each soul learning from this obedient dependency, the sense of the total abandonment it must have towards, and within, Christ himself, whose spirit-filled agent the Elder is. Much of this presupposes the Grand Narrative Symeon supplies, and Niketas synopsis,²⁵ which recounts how he himself had fled for refuge to the Stoudium monastery in times of political turmoil when his own political career (and life) was threatened as a young courtier²⁶ and how he had a vision in the monastic cell in which he was praying, of his Elder Symeon Eulabes radiating a brilliant and blinding light that slowly revealed an even deeper radiance before which it stood (that of Christ himself). In a very real sense, therefore, the themes of radiant illumination, and the spiritual intercession of the Elder, are mutually and inseparably intertwined. The regular moments in the *Hymns* which depict Symeon's own experience of divine radiance are not only autobiographical, therefore, but are clearly meant to reinforce this call for obedience and devotion to the master from the circle of disciples (the congregation present for the recitation or performance of the hymn). The *Hymns* explain why Symeon has inherited the mantle of the saintly Eulabes. Just as he once initiated the younger Symeon, so now Symeon himself stands as the intercessor and initiator for the circle of friends and disciples who attend for the performance of the hymns. Several of these people, one presumes, would have been original members of the circle of Symeon Eulabes.

24 McGuckin, "The Notion of Luminous Vision in 11th Century Byzantium." For an analysis of this poem see: John A. McGuckin, *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 62–75.

25 Symeon's own conversion story which must have been very familiar to his circle. It is given in Stethatos' *Vita Symeonis*, 5.

26 For a fuller background see John A. McGuckin, "St. Symeon the New Theologian and Byzantine Monasticism," in Anthony Bryer and Mary Cunningham, ed., *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism* (Aldershot: Variorum Press, 1996), 17–35.

Symeon's writings give several other accounts of luminous apparitions or experiences, over the course of his life.²⁷ *Hymn* 55 actually tries to give a taxonomy of them, speaking of their increasing brilliance: what begins as a "glimpse of a ray of light," becomes a "flashing brightness," then a "cloud of fire." Other descriptions of seemingly different occasions of luminous vision are found throughout his *Catecheses*. But in what follows here, I wish only to look at the theme of illumination as it appears within the text of the *Hymns*.

That book is now comprised of fifty eight authentic hymns in a rich variety of metres, numbering ten thousand seven hundred lines of verse. A small part of the collation which Niketas Stethatos himself made of the hymns, is out of place. We should perhaps omit *Hymn* 21, which is really a letter of apologia to Stephen of Nicomedia, and also *Hymn* 5 which is a basic Monk's Alphabet.²⁸ Stethatos has also personally supplied synopsis titles to each one, which are of varying degrees of usefulness. Niketas made his collation of the manuscript hymns sometime between 1035 and 1090, some twenty to seventy years after their original composition. So neither the titles nor the relative placement of hymns in the *corpus* can be expected to yield us much clue to the global intent of St. Symeon himself: and indeed reading the *Hymns* we often find repetitions, circularity, and lack of continuity of development from one piece to the next. It strikes me, at least, as being a body of hymnographic work written sporadically over a number of years, where the author, much like a poet today, envisages each unity separately, but often attacks the same key moments of his experience from slightly different angles of approach. In this they are not so far different form that other great body of ecclesiastical hymnody, absorbed deep into the mind-stream by every observant monastic, the 150 Psalms themselves.

It is also surely Niketas who has also given them the collective title, which gives the translator a puzzle at the outset. He calls them: *The Loves (erotes) of Divine Hymns of our Great and Holy Father Symeon the New Theologian Priest and Higumen of the Monastery of Saint Mamas at the Xerokerkos (Gate)*.²⁹ This has normally been rendered as the *Hymns of Divine Love*, which blandly avoids the striking way the title positions the hymns as Songs of Eros—the love of deep passion and commitment, not just the "kindly" love of *agape*. The title would be better rendered as *The Book of Deep Love Songs to God*. For convenience's sake I will refer to them as the *Hymns of Divine Eros*. By giving them this title of *Erotos* Niketas probably wishes to evoke the Dionysian spiritual

27 Further see McGuckin, "The Notion of Luminous Vision in 11th Century Byzantium."

28 The critical edition is: Johannes Koder, ed. *Hymnes: Syméon le Nouveau Theologien (tomes i, ii)*, SC 156, 174 (Paris: Cerf, 1969–1971). Text in Greek and French.

29 The ms. calls it Xerokerkos but Xylokerkos is surely meant.

tradition where he often places his mentor St. Symeon. And indeed Symeon himself often echoes the mysterious Dionysius: a treatment already elegantly given by His Grace Bishop Dr. Golitzin in 2002.³⁰

Dionysius the Areopagite speaks of a certain Hierotheos who was his teacher in the ways of mystical prayer,³¹ and goes on to give citations³² of this master hymnographer, who is supposed to have composed a *Book of Love Songs* (*Erotikoi Hymnoi*). Like much else in Dionysius, the identity of the secret master is lost in mists, so too his book of mystical hymns which is an allegedly³³ lost treasure. Niketas knows the allusions and certainly takes them seriously. He himself frequently adopts Dionysian mystical terminology. In giving Symeon's hymns this title (*ton theion hymnon oi erotes*) he thus wishes to fix Symeon in the Dionysian tradition, and to suggest that the hymn book composed by the New Theologian stands as a worthy restitution of the lost hymns of Hierotheos.³⁴

Because the *Hymns* mention so regularly the experience of divine light, and because Symeon makes it very clear to the reader that he does not mean this as just a literary trope³⁵ rather as a real and personal experience that changed his life in a dramatic way: then the general reader has always had his or her attention veered towards this aspect of the work. This is quite understandable. It is the most dramatic and "attention-grabbing" part of the narrative. Indeed it is certainly the case that this experience of divine light is meant to be a highpoint of what Symeon is trying to get across. We read the work of great mystics and we want to hear of the ecstasy. But this reader-response pattern often masks or occludes what the text is actually saying. For Symeon presents the divine light not simply as an ecstatic and joy-making sensation; but primarily as a radical abandonment of his life, a deep-seated repentance and reorientation. The

30 Alexander Golitzin, "Il corpo di Cristo: Simeone il Nuovo Teologo sulla vita spirituale e la chiesa gerarchica," in Sabino Chialà et al., eds., *Simeone il Nuovo Teologo e il monachesimo a Costantinopoli* (Qiqajon: Monastero di Bose, 2003), 255–288. English translation: "The Body of Christ: Saint Symeon the New Theologian on Spiritual Life and the Hierarchical Church," in Basil Lourié and Andrei Orlov, eds., *The Theophaneia School: Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism* (St. Petersburg: Byzantinorossica, 2007 [reprint: Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009]), 106–127.

31 Dionysius, *The Divine Names*. 3.2.

32 Dionysius, *The Divine Names*. 4.115–117.

33 Several scholars presume they never existed in the first place: simply part of a *pseudepigraphon* giving itself a deeper imagined context—a back-story.

34 Further on the Dionysian connections see Koder's comments in SC 156 (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 53–64.

35 In places, he also does use the concept as a literary trope of course—to stand for the divine illumination of soul that all Christians hearing of this must aspire to themselves.

first vision of light came to him as a refugee taking shelter with Symeon Eulabes in 969, crouched in a little cupboard next to his mentor's cell (for there was no room for him at the Stoudium). He saw his father standing in light and understood gradually the greater light of Christ behind Eulabes which the latter was mediating to him. All of this he later presents as something of a sorrow since it did not result in his own radical repentance (what he understands to be his monastic profession). A second vision of the light of Christ initiated him into the monastic life proper when his own political career was ruthlessly terminated in 977 when Basil II took over his own political administration. This strongly suggests that the experience of light is most closely linked to the theology of repentance. This theme I have expounded elsewhere at greater length.³⁶ It is something that is a clear motif in the *Hymns*, but rather than say the theology of repentance is more significant than the description of divine illumination, or vice versa, it would be better to understand that Symeon sees the two things as varied aspects of the same economy of divine energy at work in the Cosmos.

What Symeon means by the approach of the divine light to the believer (him in the first instance, as modelling it, and us as potential invitees to the experience) is first and foremost that God radiates his salvation to all the Cosmos, all the time, in the form of the divine energies. This is the economy of Salvation that culminates, for sentient beings, in the Incarnation of the Logos as Man, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church as sanctifying power. This is why Symeon describes several times how the light is that of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit.³⁷ The same light, in a variegated economy reaching us. But it is an economy of divine grace and presence always drawing all life towards itself, since it is the source of all that is. For sentient beings, Symeon presents the enrapturement in light as the highest symbol of how a believer can make the conscious choice to stand within God's economy, noetically and experientially, unlike the rest of the cosmos which receives it unwittingly. God's life-giving energy falls on all created being: just as the sunlight falls on the earth and all it contains. But to believers, God also calls out to turn in consciousness to realize what is happening here: and in realizing the wonderment of it, to commit to turning towards the light personally, electively, and in passionately-felt agreement to God's outreach. For Symeon such is the goal, the end or *telos*, of the human condition.

36 See McGuckin, "Repentance as Divine Communion in St. Symeon the New Theologian's Hymns of Divine Eros."

37 *Hymn* 12. M 39; *Hymn* 21. M 106; *Hymn* 29. M 156; *Hymn* 45. M 233; *Hymn* 55. M 282.

In *Hymn* 53 Symeon begins by lamenting that God has seemingly withdrawn his light from the eyes of his soul, and he begs the Lord to return in mercy, not to “close the door of the wedding hall against me.”³⁸ Christ is then depicted as answering him, and explaining that he has never withdraw the light. The paradox is unravelled by a long and elegant song on the salvation of the world by God’s creative light:

I was light even before I created all the things you see. I am everywhere and was everywhere ... without being united with any thing, still I was with all I was in all without being there, and I was in the midst of all visible things, animate and inanimate.³⁹

Following Gregory the Theologian’s doctrine of Man as a composite being, halfway between angels and animals, Symeon nuances it to conclude that, as far as the animals are concerned, Man is an immaterial being in the quality of the consciousness he possesses; while from the angelic point of view Man’s awareness of God is such that he appears to them almost wholly sensate (like the animals).⁴⁰ This is the peculiar paradox of Humanity’s ontology and the particular problem the Race has in attempting to “see” God; to look upon him (whom even the angels cannot gaze upon easily) through a limited consciousness. It was this limit of being that led Mankind to sin and fall away from the divine glory, which Adam, naturally, was able to gaze upon.⁴¹ But in this fall he immediately “became blind and was covered with the darkness of death.”⁴² This is why Christ answers Symeon’s complaint, in *Hymn* 53, that he cruelly hides himself, by pointing out that it was sin that made Man try to hide himself from God. But since this hiding was a contradiction of the entire purpose of humankind’s being, the material and suffering life still remained motivated by a naturally ascentive soul⁴³ and, therefore, a spiritually blind humanity had entered into an unnatural condition.⁴⁴ For this reason God the Word incarnated to allow the divine light to be seen once more:

38 *Hymn* 53. M 268.

39 *Hymn* 53. M 268.

40 *Hymn* 53. M 269.

41 *Hymn* 53. M 271.

42 *Hymn* 53. M 270.

43 *Hymn* 38. M 201.

44 *Hymn* 53. M 270.

See what desire I had to be seen by men, as to wish to become man, and to be seen visibly I really do shine brilliantly, but you do not see me.⁴⁵

Again following the guideline of Gregory the Theologian's renowned *Oration* 27, Symeon teaches this divine vision can now return only through the purification of the soul.⁴⁶ To make "the soul white as snow" is the prior condition, but it does not produce the vision of God *per se*. The latter is solely a gift of the Holy Spirit who visits the fervent believer whose purity has shown his willing zeal:

Even when you have done all this and well purified yourself ... you will not see the Archetype;⁴⁷ you will not comprehend him, unless he will be revealed to you through the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit teaches everything (John 14:26), shining in an ineffable light, and he will show you in a noetic way all the noetic realities, as much as you can see ... according to the purity of your soul.⁴⁸

But all those who insist on living according to the flesh alone, are those whom the Spirit designates as "deaf, blind and even dead."⁴⁹ If they have not received the Spirit, then:

their eyes have not been opened. They do not see the divine light. Not being able to do this they remain perfectly deaf. But such as these, tell me, how can they even be called Christians?⁵⁰

Since it is the human *telos*: the goal and entire point of human existence on this earth; the experience of the divine light cannot be relegated to being some exotic experience of a few random saints. It has to be posited as the fundamental reason human beings exist. It is, in these intimations from Symeon, tantamount to the possession of the Holy Spirit; that which makes the Christian. We also note that this light is perceived "noetically": which is closest in modern parlance to the word "spiritually." It is not a material light (even though it may emit a radiance seen by material creatures). Symeon is not saying, then, if we do not see the light with our material pupils, we cannot be Christians; what

45 *Hymn* 53. M 271. See also *Hymn* 32. M 84–85.

46 *Hymn* 44. M 227.

47 Whose image we are.

48 *Hymn* 44. M 228.

49 *Hymn* 44. M 229; *Hymn* 45. M 23; *Hymn* 50. M 233–234.

50 *Hymn* 44. M 230; *Hymn* 58. M 283.

he is insisting on, is that the entire Christ-life is a progressive entrance into the divine light that surrounds the peculiar spiritual ontology of a human being. If a person refuses to admit this, and does not spend their existence penetrating further into the experience of the light of God's salvific presence (until such a pitch as it becomes utterly "real" for that person) then the entire point of being alive has been frustrated and such a being is an ontological contradiction: a living being who is dead. The awareness of the divine light is the whole point of being alive. This is why Symeon strongly insists, again and again, that if we did not see the divine light within this earthly condition (namely, understand our divine ontology and the ongoing call from God to enter back into our union with him) we ought not to presume we shall enjoy the vision automatically in some heavenly condition after life is ended.⁵¹

This, one of his most radical "shock statements" for his hearers (if you do not see the light you are dead)⁵² is not only meant to provide the spur to repentance for his hearers, but to underline the equally dramatic statement that the conscious choice of divine light is synonymous with repentance. It is repentant awareness that understands God's call to salvation, lodged in the human heart, as its primary ontological compass-setting. Repentance, for Symeon, begins with desire: the *eros* of the soul. God is the "natural" desire for all souls, and nothing can exceed that love. Sadly, Symeon goes on, very few attain to the state where they can see this true state of affairs. Sinners, whose disordered desires (*pathemata*) have badly obscured the "true north" of the heart's inner moral compass are unable to see the orientating light; the *eros* for God is such a dim flicker it cannot light the spark of a fire. Christ's Spirit only illumines each saint according to the degree of their faith and purification.⁵³ God loves all who love him, Symeon says, not in any generic, shadowy way, but in a concrete reality of possessive love.⁵⁴ This is why so many, out of ignorance of what a fiery thing the love of God is,⁵⁵ accuse those who do see it of talking nonsense,⁵⁶ even to

51 *Hymn* 1. M 12; *Hymn* 12. M 39; *Hymn* 34. M 188; *Hymn* 44. M 232; *Hymn* 45. M 235; *Hymn* 50. M 233–234; *Hymn* 58. M 292.

52 Surely one of the reasons why theologians like Stephen of Alexina decidedly tried to ruin Symeon's reputation. But in this "hard saying" Symeon is merely repeating the generic patristic teaching that mankind was made By God as an being of immortal potential, and without the union with God, that potential attains corruption instead of life. Symeon is here also combining Paul's doctrine of the "earthly man," with the Johannine (Prologue) teaching that the darkness hates the light. Cf. *Hymn* 34. M 190; John 1:4–5.

53 *Hymn* 1. M 14.

54 *Hymn* 53. M 267.

55 *Hymn* 32. M 179; *Hymn* 34. M 190.

56 *Hymn* 32. M 179–180.

the point of blaspheming and asserting that God does not reveal himself any longer to people of this present generation in the direct way he seems to have done to past saints.

On the contrary, even now this light, this fire, is a real thing. It is not just a symbolic way of talking, Symeon insists:

You fill those whom you look upon with a sharing and a communion, not only in the life to come (woe to those who speak thus!) but even now in the body; those who are worthy of you; those who seek to purify themselves by a true repentance. You see them. You give to them the power to see you: distinctly—in no way only in the imagination, or by over-fervid thinking, or merely as a memory, as some think; but in truth, by means of a divine reality and an awesome operation: and this for the real fulfilment of the divine economy of salvation. For it is in such a way that you accomplish the union of that which has been separated. You are God: the salvation of all sinners.⁵⁷

To say that the divine light is noetically perceived does not mean to say it is inferior, less real, than saying it is a concrete material light. The issue is one of perception. What human organ is appropriate to perceive the wholly immaterial, radiant, divine presence? The patristic tradition, as well as Symeon, would have no hesitation to restrict such a vision to the human *Nous*. But what Symeon wishes to stress in his insistence that such a noetic vision is “real” is that God’s Spirit can only activate the *Nous*’ ability to see the divine light, according to the ascetic preparation, and purification of life to which an individual has committed. A beginner in the life of virtue might see the light as “far off,” before it draws nearer.⁵⁸ Symeon offers his own experience of the light-vision as a paradigm;⁵⁹ for him the light was first “above him” before it came to shine “within” him.⁶⁰ But as the life of virtue is embraced more seriously, as a sign of returning the

57 *Hymn* 58. M 279 (with some adjustments to the Maloney translation).

58 *Hymn* 22. M 107, “a distant star,” becoming then a solar disc; *Hymn* 23. M 121; a “descending ray” becoming “a rope of light that can be grasped”; *Hymn* 25. M 135, a light from above becoming a column of light within the heart; *Hymn* 29. M 153, light entering the cell mysteriously, before becoming a full moon’s radiance shining within him; *Hymn* 40. M 205, light opening the heavens and then coming down into the centre of his heart; similarly *Hymn* 50. M 251.

59 He sees himself as a model and guide for others through these hymns, just as he himself had Symeon Eulabes who first mediated the experience of light to him as a young layman *Hymn* 18. M 82–83.

60 *Hymn* 15. M 52.

outreach of God's love for the soul, so too the light comes to radiate the disciple more often and more completely. The taxonomy of how this light appears and is attained (and Symeon speaks about this as happening in several stages) demonstrates that it depends on the wholeheartedness of the love and repentance the disciple shows. Again, his whole mission is to proclaim no doctrine of esoteric mysticism, but a universal invitation to mercy:

You have granted me to see these things, to write about them, and to proclaim your goodness for man to my companions so that now peoples tribes and languages know this mystery: that you have pity on all those who repent with fervour.⁶¹

Hymns 23, 30, 40, 50 and 58 give the clearest "ordered" account(s)⁶² of his different light experiences, for here Symeon tries to put into some kind of chronological (and to an extent in a taxonomic spiritual) order, the different kinds of vision of light that have shaped him over his life. At other times in the *Hymns* and elsewhere in the writings⁶³ he gives a global and generic description of the light-visions (to the effect that they do happen in reality, are meant as a basic paradigm and proof of salvation, and that their effect is spiritually dramatic and sensibly perceived by the disciple) but without necessarily placing them in the series order in which they had occurred for him.⁶⁴ But it is clear enough from these five primary Hymn accounts that Symeon wishes to make clear that these visions unfold in scope from the initial gift, according to the zeal of the response to God's outreach to the sinner. The vision cannot be attained by human effort; for the light is nothing other than the presence of God⁶⁵ and it is beyond grasping and exceeds all human knowledge,⁶⁶ wholly simply in itself,⁶⁷ taking the recipient even out of the body in an ecstatic state.⁶⁸ But while the beginner sees the light "far off," as disciples respond by purifying their lives through asceticism, the light enters more intimately into the soul, becoming gently immanent.

61 *Hymn* 13. M 46.

62 Varying among themselves.

63 Such as: *Hymn* 17. M 67–68; *Hymn* 23. M 119–122; *Hymn* 24. M 131; *Hymn* 25. M 135–136; *Hymn* 29. M 153; *Hymn* 51. M 258–259.

64 Though *Hymn* 25 does appear to give a detailed account of an early vision Symeon experienced while reading in a monastic cell.

65 *Hymn* 45. M 233. "Your light is You my God."

66 *Hymn* 50. M 250; *Hymn* 52. M 263.

67 *Hymn* 33. M 183.

68 *Hymn* 13. M 46; *Hymn* 25. M 135; *Hymn* 49. M 247.

The asceticism does not cause the experience: it is simply the appropriate and serious response to God's loving outreach. The gift of the light, as if it were a flame, is meant to cause the wick of the soul's lamp to catch fire, so that it too can flame into the love of God and enter more deeply into union.⁶⁹ Those who walk in the commandments, Symeon says, will see the light of God's face.⁷⁰ For it is through repentance that the obedient disciples will become the Sons of God.⁷¹ Symeon is certain that it is because he has loved Christ and repented with passion that the Lord has given him this light in order to purify his soul and lead it on further into union.⁷² The light is not a reward for prior stages of repentance and purification (as in some aspects of the western medieval mystical tradition): in Symeon it is intrinsically part of the very fabric of repentance, which is seen as an enduring path to growing intimacy with the Lord who indwells those who love him,⁷³ and purifies them by virtue of this divine light.⁷⁴

In *Hymn* 8 the light appears like a sun before descending gently into Symeon's heart.⁷⁵ In *Hymn* 50, Symeon describes it as being seen as if it were a lamp inside the innermost being: "a spherical light, gentle and divine, with form, with shape, yet in a formless form."⁷⁶ In *Hymn* 40 it descends from on high to enter into his monastic cell, and then moves to be rooted deep "within the mind at the center of my heart."⁷⁷ Many varied images can describe the light across Symeon's writings;⁷⁸ and he explains that the Lord certainly appears in many varied forms⁷⁹ which are mercifully adapted to the state, condition and capacity of each individual: as long as they seek after God in love. Others have closed themselves off. Symeon hears Christ express the key to it all: "I will live only with those I love: only with those who love me."⁸⁰ Those who have not

69 *Hymn* 17. M 67; *Hymn* 13. M 44; *Hymn* 30. M 172; *Hymn* 33. M 186; *Hymn* 47. M 240.

70 *Hymn* 9. M 33.

71 *Hymn* 8. M 30.

72 *Hymn* 22. M 109, 111.

73 *Hymn* 22. M 109; *Hymn* 8. M 30; *Hymn* 48. M 245; *Hymn* 50. M 255; *Hymn* 58. M 279.

74 *Hymn* 19. M 85; *Hymn* 30. M 163.

75 *Hymn* 8. M 31.

76 *Hymn* 50. M 251. The "formless form" is a deliberate evocation of the concept of hyper-essential being which Dionysius Areopagite applies to God's incomprehensible essence.

77 *Hymn* 40. M 205.

78 A glowing sphere: *1st Eucharistic Discourse* 1.180, *Hymn* 50. M 251; a Sun above clouds: *Catechetical Oration* 16.108–110, *1st Eucharistic Discourse* 1.179–180; a shining pearl or a star: *Catechetical Oration* 16.108–122, 127–136; a dazzling ray or beam of light: *2nd Eucharistic Discourse* 132–137, 150–155, *Catechetical Oration* 16.127–136; a radiant glow that contains the face of Christ: *2nd Eucharistic Discourse* 175–177.

79 The *epinoiai* of the Origenian tradition.

80 *Hymn* 22. M 122.

repented cannot see or understand any of this language of light and fire. Their souls have not been conditioned by preparatory purification, and so have not received the light which enables them to see light: for the light alone allows the soul's senses to operate noetically:

I was blind, believe me, I saw nothing, which is why this wonder disturbs me so much more, when Christ opens in some way the eye of my mind; when, so to say, he gives sight and is the one I see. For it is he himself who appears to anyone who contemplates him who is the "light of light,"⁸¹ and for those who contemplate him it is in the light⁸² that they see him.

The vision of the light is the sense of perfect union with the Saviour. When the light receded from his consciousness on several earlier occasions, Symeon articulates the sharp grief of separation; and this grief, though painful, he says, is useful in spurring on the soul to try to attain a more Christ-united life thereafter.⁸³ So, for Symeon, divine illumination is especially about repentance and the ascetic zeal for fulfilling the commandments. God who sees our efforts and responds to our love, sends his light increasingly into our souls in order to purify them and deepen the capacity each one has for that illuminated union with God, which Symeon ultimately calls the pitch of *Theosis*: deification by grace.⁸⁴

God's merciful light shining on the disciple consumes the soul in its fire⁸⁵ and transforms the person into becoming all light, merged in unity with God.⁸⁶ This claim had alarmed some of Symeon's opponents for seeming to imply that God could be held or possessed (that is circumscribed) by a creaturely awareness; when God, as Orthodoxy insists, is wholly transcendent and incomprehensible. It will be an argument that raises itself again in the Hesychastic Controversy of the Fourteenth Century. Symeon anticipates in many ways Gregory Palamas when he dismisses the paradox as being a significant one. God is wholly incomprehensible in himself, he argues, but he also reaches out to his creatures as their Saviour in a wholly intimate and accessible manner. The light, being God's presence, is ineffable, simple and formless,⁸⁷ yet that presence

81 The Nicene Creed's title of the Son proceeding from the Father as "Light from Light, true God from true God."

82 Ps 36:9.

83 *Hymn* 17. M 67.

84 *Hymn* 15. M 53; *Hymn* 26. M 139–140; *Hymn* 29. M 158; *Hymn* 50. M 254.

85 *Hymn* 44. M 231.

86 *Hymn* 2. M 17; *Hymn* 23. M 124; *Hymn* 25. M 136; *Hymn* 30. M 168; *Hymn* 40. M 205.

87 *Hymn* 24. M 126; *Hymn* 28. M 150; *Hymn* 30. M 166; *Hymn* 33. M 183; *Hymn* 50. M 250.

can also be felt directly. In giving the soul his light, God gives his whole person, limited of course to the capacity of the created soul, which is also therein given that capacity to see. Symeon explains the paradox of giving the divine totality to a limited consciousness by the image of the man who tastes a drop of water—and in that single drop has experienced all the vast oceans of the world.⁸⁸ He also notes (as Gregory the Theologian and Dionysius had already well established) that while transcendent illimitability is a true characteristic of the divine light; there are many other titles or names, that can equally characterise it in an “Economic” way.⁸⁹ In short, the gift of divine light changes the perceptions of the soul, in order for it to become dispassionate⁹⁰ and see noetically;⁹¹ for the union with the Creator transfigures, divinizes,⁹² by God’s loving outreach and initiative.

In conclusion, then, we can see that Symeon’s doctrine of the divine light is a complex and rich web, that embraces the patristic doctrine of the salvific economy of the Incarnation, and applies it through certain discrete emphases, to stress the aspect of the Logos seeking out lost souls, and inspiring them so to yearn for loving union with their master that the yearning becomes a fire and a light and stimulates them to live out the virtues gladly, and count all ascetical effort as nothing but gain. This theme of rousing the soul’s deep *Eros* for the Logos is an ancient Christian tradition, initially set out by Origen in his *Commentary on Canticles*, and developed by the Cappadocian Fathers, and then by Dionysius and Maximus. Symeon adds his own special emphases to it which he has learned, so it seems, from a direct experiential basis. Knowing that his spiritual Elder had first initiated him into this experience of divine light, and how it then drove his entire Christian life of repentant fervour after that point, Symeon offers his autobiographical spiritual experiences as a paradigm to teach his own disciples.

After his conflict with the imperial court, in the person of bishop Stephen of Alexina, who objected to the highly personalistic way Symeon shaped the spiritual life, Symeon insisted very strongly that the vision of the divine light was no literary trope, or mental imagination, or symbolic way of speaking; but rather was a true and real experience that was not merely his own, but had to be that of all Christians if they were to be sincere believers. His writings about the experience of divine light, however, do in fact speak of his autobiograph-

88 *Hymn* 23. M 119–120.

89 *Hymn* 18. M 79; *Hymn* 28. M 150; *Hymn* 42. M 218.

90 *Hymn* 15. M 53; *Hymn* 46. M 237.

91 *Hymn* 27. M 143; *Hymn* 47. M 240.

92 *Hymn* 26. M 139–140.

ical experiences (concrete and stunning for his own development), and also about how enlightenment (generically understood) should be the foundational experience for all true Christians. In the latter instance he has started to speak generically about divine illumination in a way somewhat distinct from his own dynamic experiences of the divine light in his soul. He does imply that the fervent believer will be rewarded with the growing experience of this divine light experientially and personally witnessed (*aisthetos*) but, nevertheless, he does, in these instances, treat the divine light in the more abstract form of the manner in which God constantly “enlightens” and “illuminates” the soul through a variety of economic graces (not necessarily by the sensate experience of perceived light). And this latter way of speaking, in the *Hymns*, is something of the “trope” he had earlier rejected in the context of the argument with his opponents. One may explain this lack of resolution in different ways.

In the first instance, Symeon is not a particularly consistent and systematic thinker or writer. He is a rhapsodic poet, and he customarily paints in bright colours. Also, his stark distinction between tropic and realist language about the divine light, is largely meant for the ears of sceptics. At other times he relaxes it; but even when he speaks of the way in which every true believer experiences divine illumination all the time, he does not intend to suggest this is “not real” or is merely “a figure of speech.” On the contrary, he insists that this enlightening energy of God does shine sensibly and perceptively all the time, but for most believers, the fire of the heart’s loving repentance is not sufficient to have prepared the capacity for seeing and feeling it noetically. Without a soul purified by ascesis and virtue, the power of the *Nous* is so weak it cannot truly perceive what is happening at the core of its own being. This is a symptom of the ontological fracturing of Mankind caused by the fall into sin and mortality. Symeon’s clarion call to turn towards the quest for the ever clearer experiencing of the divine light is, at root, a call to his generation to repentance, and through that gateway to seek the true self. For Symeon this is an understanding that Man can only emerge as himself when he wondrously realizes his divine condition. Despite his present weakness he is a transcendent being because of the Logos’ gift of love: and if he cannot see that, he is indeed stumbling and blind, as well as weak. Symeon’s passionate message is no form of élitist mysticism: it is fundamental to the evangelical proclamation, and as urgent today as it was in his own time.

PART 3

Jewish Temple and Christian Liturgy



Leviathan's Knot: The High Priest's Sash as a Cosmological Symbol

Andrei A. Orlov

Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities* 3.154–156 unveils the following description of the high priest's sash:

This robe is a tunic descending to the ankles, enveloping the body and with long sleeves tightly laced round the arms; they gird it at the breast, winding to a little above the armpits the sash, which is of a breadth of about four fingers and has an open texture giving it the appearance of a serpent's skin. Therein are interwoven flowers of divers hues, of crimson and purple, blue and fine linen, but the warp is purely of fine linen. Wound a first time at the breast (καὶ λαβοῦσα τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ἐλίξεως κατὰ στέρνον), after passing round it once again, it is tied and then hangs at length, sweeping to the ankles, that is so long as the priest has no task in hand, for so its beauty is displayed to the beholders' advantage; but when it behoves him to attend to the sacrifices and perform his ministry, in order that the movements of the sash may not impede his actions, he throws it back over his left shoulder. Moses gave it the name of *abaneth*, but we have learnt from the Babylonians to call it *hemian*, for so is it designated among them.¹

Several scholars have drawn attention to unusual features associated with the sacerdotal girdle. Crispin Fletcher-Louis, for example, notices several peculiar details in this description, including the comparison of the sash with the skin of the serpent (ὄφις) and the language of “twisting” (ἔλιξις), further supporting serpentine symbolism.² Analyzing these features, he concludes that “the lan-

1 Henry Thackeray, *Josephus*, LCL. 10 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press/London: Heinemann, 1967), 4.388–389.

2 Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “The High Priest as Divine Mediator in the Hebrew Bible: Dan 7:13 as a Test Case,” *SBLSP* 36 (1997): 161–193 at 191. See also Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “Priests and Priesthood,” in Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 698.

guage is reminiscent of that used of the ‘twisting’ serpent in Isa 27:1–2³ and the parallel passage in the Baal cycle (*CTA* 5.1.1–3) where, as we have seen, there is a reference to an ephod.”⁴ He also draws attention to another description of the sash in *Ant.* 3.185, in which Josephus again offers a novel interpretation of the priestly sash, though this time comparing it to the ocean which encompasses the earth:

The *essen*, again, he set in the midst of this garment, after the manner of the earth, which occupies the midmost place; and by the girdle where-with he encompassed it he signified the ocean (*ὠκεανόν*), which holds the whole in its embrace.⁵

In light of the sash’s associations with the serpent’s skin and with the watery substance, which in some mythological traditions was understood to be the traditional domain of the sea monster, Fletcher-Louis suggests that the sacerdotal sash might represent the defeated Leviathan. He also posits that Josephus in his passage likens the high priest to a divine warrior who defeats the sea monster, the sash here symbolizing victory over chaotic forces. Fletcher-Louis finishes his examination by noting the possibility that “the high priest wears a vanquished Leviathan: the sash hanging at his side evokes the image of a limp and defeated serpent in the hand of its conqueror.”⁶ Several other scholars have found Fletcher-Louis’ proposal plausible, agreeing that “the serpentine cloth from which the sash is made and its identification as the ocean do suggest that it is to be identified with the Leviathan.”⁷ Like Fletcher-Louis’ research, these studies also attempt to interpret Josephus’ description of the sash through the lenses of the divine warrior motif. Margaret Barker extends the use of this inter-

3 Isa 27:1 reads: “On that day the Lord with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.”

4 Fletcher-Louis, “The High Priest as Divine Mediator,” 191.

5 Thackeray, *Josephus*, 4.405.

6 Fletcher-Louis, “The High Priest as Divine Mediator,” 191. Elsewhere he reiterates the same thesis by arguing that “the high priest’s ephod is probably the same kind of garment which Ba’al wears when he slays Leviathan (*CTA* 5.1.1–5). A passage in Josephus (*Ant.* 3.154–156) suggests his sash was worn to evoke the image of a slain Leviathan hanging limp at its conqueror’s side.” Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “Alexander the Great’s Worship of the High Priest,” in Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E. Sproston North, eds., *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 71–102 at 87.

7 Andrew Angel, *Chaos and the Son of Man: The Hebrew Chaoskampf Tradition in the Period 515 BCE to 200 CE*, *LSTS* 60 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 183.

pretive framework to her analysis of Christian developments, such as the motif of the defeated waters found in the Book of Revelation. She notes that

the defeated waters occur, however, in two other places in Revelation: in the vision of the new heaven and the new earth there is “no more sea” (21.1) and in the vision of the risen Lord, when he is described as the heavenly high priest wearing a long robe with a golden girdle around his breast (1.13). Josephus tells us the significance of the high priest’s girdle: “This vestment reaches down to the feet and sits close to the body; ... it is girded to the breast a little above the elbows by a girdle often going round, four fingers broad, but so loosely woven that you would think it the skin of a serpent ... And the girdle which encompassed the high priest round signified the ocean ...” (*Ant.* 3.154, 185). The risen Lord wears the ocean like the skin of a dead snake, the encircler with seven heads!⁸

While the images of the divine warrior and the defeated sea monster are important for interpreting Josephus’ tradition regarding the high priest’s sash, other possibilities, especially ones arising from the sacerdotal dimension of the narrative, have been neglected. For example, there is good reason to think that the enigmatic serpentine sash might be closely related to the traditions of the cosmological temple, which loom large in the third book of Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*. The sash’s association with the ocean suggests such a cosmological significance; in fact, this item may be envisioned as a part of the Temple of Creation. In the remainder of this essay, we will examine this cosmological imagery in more detail.

1 The High Priest as the Microcosmic Temple

In order to better understand a possible cosmological meaning of the priestly sash, we must examine its precise function in the broader context of Josephus’ description of the high priest’s accoutrement found in the third book of his *Jewish Antiquities*. This task is not easy, since this portion of *Jewish Antiquities* contains one of the most detailed descriptions of the high priestly vestments in early Jewish extra-biblical sources. In this lengthy and elaborate account, Josephus goes beyond the traditional biblical descriptions of the sacerdotal gar-

⁸ Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1.1)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 220.

ments by unveiling the cosmological significance of the priestly accessories. It is important for our study to note that in Josephus' narrative, the garments of the high priest are linked both to the imagery of the earthly Temple, and to its cosmological counterpart in the form of the so-called "Temple of Creation." *Ant.* 3.178–187 provides the following interpretation of the sacred vestments:

Such is the apparel of the high priest. But one may well be astonished at the hatred which men have for us and which they have so persistently maintained, from an idea that we slight the divinity whom they themselves profess to venerate. For if one reflects on the construction of the tabernacle and looks at the vestments of the priest and the vessels which we use for the sacred ministry, he will discover that our lawgiver was a man of God and that these blasphemous charges brought against us by the rest of men are idle. In fact, every one of these objects is intended to recall and represent the universe, as he will find if he will but consent to examine them without prejudice and with understanding The high priest's tunic ... signifies the earth, being of linen, and its blue the arch of heaven, while it recalls the lightnings by its pomegranates, the thunder by the sound of its bells. His upper garment, too, denotes universal nature, which it pleased God to make of four elements; being further interwoven with gold in token, I imagine, of the all-pervading sunlight. The *essen*, again, he set in the midst of this garment, after the manner of the earth, which occupies the midmost place; and by the girdle wherewith he encompassed it he signified the ocean, which holds the whole in its embrace. Sun and moon are indicated by the two sardonyxes wherewith he pinned the high priest's robe. As for the twelve stones, whether one would prefer to read in them the months or the constellations of like number, which the Greeks call the circle of the zodiac, he will not mistake the lawgiver's intention. Furthermore, the headdress appears to me to symbolize heaven, being blue; else it would not have borne upon it the name of God, blazoned upon the crown—a crown, moreover, of gold by reason of that sheen in which the Deity most delights.⁹

9 Thackeray, *Josephus*, 4.403–407. In relation to Josephus' interpretation of the Temple imagery, Jon Levenson argues the following: "the affinity of Josephus' method of interpreting the Temple with Hellenistic allegory, Jewish and Gentile, and ultimately with Platonic philosophy, is unmistakable. This granted, however, it would be an error to see this allegory as the aberration of a Jew writing in Greek largely for the benefit of a mixed Hellenistic intelligentsia. For this sort of allegorical reading of the Tabernacle/Temple is also abundant in Rabbinic literature,

In this passage one finds at least three concepts of the sanctuary that are closely intertwined: first, the earthly shrine represented by the Jerusalem Temple; second, the macrocosmic Temple, whose sacred chambers corresponded to heaven, air/earth, and sea; and third, the microcosmic Temple embodied by the high priest and his sacerdotal garments. When compared to the biblical narratives, a distinctive feature of this description is Josephus' attempt to interpret the symbolism of the priestly garb not only through the prism of allusions to the earthly tabernacle or Temple, but also through their connections with cosmological realities. In this novel cosmological framework, each part of the priestly accouterment is linked not only to particular portions of the tripartite structure of the early sanctuary, but also with the respective sacred chambers of the Temple of Creation, which in Josephus' worldview correspond to heaven, air/earth, and sea.

These striking connections between elements of the priestly attire and parts of the earthly and cosmological sanctuaries have not gone unnoticed by scholars. Reflecting on these cultic correspondences, for instance, Gregory Beale says "it is, in fact, discernible that there are broadly three sections of the priest's garment that resemble the three sections of the temple."¹⁰ He further notes that, "given all this symbolism, one can easily understand the assertion in the *Letter of Aristeas* that anyone who saw the fully attired high priest 'would think he had come out of this world into another.'¹¹ Beale has drawn attention to the fact that these striking sacerdotal correspondences were not unique to Josephus, but rather hinted or openly attested in a broad range of the ancient Jewish sources, including the LXX, Philo,¹² and the Wisdom of Solomon, among others.¹³ Since the idea of the Temple of Creation is important for our investi-

written in Hebrew for a Jewish readership." Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil. The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 96.

10 Gregory Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 39.

11 Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 39–40.

12 Philo, *Mos.* 11.117: "Such was the vesture of the high priest. But I must not leave untold its meaning and that of its parts. We have in it as a whole and in its parts a typical representation of the world and its particular parts." Francis Henry Colson and George Herbert Whitaker, eds., *Philo*, LCL. 10 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1929–1964), 5.505; *Spec.* 1.84: "The high priest is bidden to put on a similar dress when he enters the inner shrine to offer incense, because its fine linen is not, like wool, the product of creatures subject to death, and also to wear another, the formation of which is very complicated. In this it would seem to be a likeness and copy of the universe. This is clearly shewn by the design." Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 7.149.

13 Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 39.

gation of the high priest's sash in Josephus, a short excursus into the traditions of the cosmological temple is necessary.

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the idea of the cosmological temple, or the so-called Temple of Creation is attested in a variety of early Jewish and Christian sources.¹⁴ Such a macrocosmic sacred structure reflected the tripartite division of the earthly temple wherein heaven was conceived as the universal holy of holies, earth as the holy place, and the underworld (represented by the sea) as the courtyard. This concept of the cosmological temple, connecting creation and cult, is quite ancient, stemming from early Mesopotamian¹⁵ and Egyptian¹⁶ traditions. In early Jewish materials, this conceptual trend is often associated with a cluster of protological motifs in which the Garden of Eden functions as the celestial Holy of Holies¹⁷ where the first human minis-

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- 14 On this see Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: the History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 104–132; Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 29–79; Aldina A. de Silva, "A Comparison Between the Three-Levelled World of the Old Testament Temple Building Narratives and the Three-Levelled World of the House Building Motif in the Ugaritic Texts KTU 1.3 and 1.4," in George J. Brooke, Adrian H.W. Curtis, and John F. Healy, eds., *Ugarit and the Bible* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994), 11–23; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology*, WUNT 2.94 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 156–162; Richard Hayward, *The Jewish Temple: A Non-Biblical Sourcebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Victor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 335–337; Craig Koester, *The Dwelling of God: the Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament*, CBQMS 22 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1989), 59–63; Jon Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 65 (1984): 283–298; idem, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 111–184; idem, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil. The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 87–88; Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (2nd ed.; New York: KTAV, 1967), 54–139; John Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 148.
- 15 Bernd Janowski, "Der Tempel als Kosmos—Zur kosmologischen Bedeutung des Tempels in der Umwelt Israels," in Sibylle Meyer, ed., *Egypt—Temple of the Whole World—Ägypten—Tempel der Gesamten Welt. Studies in Honour of Jan Assmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 163–186 at 165–175. Jon Levenson notes that "the association of the Temple in Jerusalem with 'heaven and earth' is not without Near Eastern antecedents, nor is it limited in the Hebrew Bible to texts whose subject is creation. At Nippur and elsewhere in ancient Sumer, the temple held the name Duranki, 'bond of heaven and earth,' and we hear of a shrine in Babylon called Etemenanki, 'the house where the foundation of heaven and earth is.'" Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 90.
- 16 Janowski, "Der Tempel als Kosmos—Zur kosmologischen Bedeutung des Tempels in der Umwelt Israels," 175–184.
- 17 Cf. *Jub.* 8:19: "He knew that the Garden of Eden is the holy of holies and is the residence of the Lord." James VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2 vols. CSCO 510–511. Scriptores Aethiopicis 87–88 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 2.53. Regarding this tradition, Jacques van

tered as the high priest.¹⁸ Scholars have noted that a conception of the cosmological temple is already implicit in some biblical materials, including Ezekiel's formative depiction of the eschatological sanctuary which, paradoxically, juxtaposes cosmological and paradisaic imagery.¹⁹

As we have already learned in this study of Jewish lore, the chambers of the macrocosmic temple were respectively associated with heaven, earth, and sea.

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- Ruiten notes that in *Jubilees*, "[T]he Garden of Eden is seen as a Temple, or, more precisely as a part of the Temple: the room which is in the rear of the Temple, where the ark of the covenant of the Lord is placed, and which is often called 'Holy of Holies.'" Jacques van Ruiten, "Eden and the Temple: The Rewriting of Genesis 2:4–3:24 in the Book of Jubilees," in Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, ed., *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, TBN 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 76.
- 18 Understanding Eden as the temple presupposes the protoplast's role as a sacerdotal servant. Van Ruiten suggests that the author of *Jubilees* sees Adam acting as a prototypical priest who burns incense at the gate of the Garden of Eden. Van Ruiten draws a parallel between this description and a tradition found in Exodus: "[T]he incense is burned in front of the Holy of Holies. The burning of incense is a privilege given to the priests, namely the sons of Aaron." Van Ruiten also calls attention to another important detail related to the function of Adam as priest, namely, the covering of nakedness. He reminds us that covering one's nakedness is a condition for offering, since the priests are explicitly bidden to cover their nakedness. The author of *Jubilees* likewise lays emphasis on covering nakedness. Van Ruiten, "Eden and the Temple," 77–78. On sacerdotal Edenic traditions, see also James Davila, "The Hodayot Hymnist and the Four Who Entered Paradise," *RevQ* 17/65–68 (1996): 457–478; Florentino García Martínez, "Man and Woman: Halakhah Based upon Eden in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in Gerard Luttikhuisen, ed., *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, TBN 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 95–115 at 112–113; Ed Noort, "Gan-Eden in the Context of the Mythology of the Hebrew Bible," in Gerard Luttikhuisen, ed., *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, TBN 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 25; Donald Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," in Donald W. Parry, ed., *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* (Provo: Deseret, 1994), 126–151; Jacques van Ruiten, "Visions of the Temple in the Book of Jubilees," in Beato Ego et al., eds., *Gemeinde ohne Tempel/Community without Temple: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, WUNT 118 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 215–228; Gordon Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division A: The Period of the Bible* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 19–25 at 21–22; Michael Wise, "4QFlorilegium and the Temple of Adam," *RevQ* 15 (1991): 103–132.
- 19 Beale notes that "Ezekiel 32 explicitly calls Eden the first sanctuary, which substantiates that Eden is described as a temple because it is the first temple, albeit a 'garden-temple.'" Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 80. Some scholars argue that Solomon's temple was an intentional replication of the Garden of Eden, especially in its arboreal likeness. For this see Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 72; Lawrence Stager, "Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden," in *Festschrift for F.M. Cross*. Eretz Israel 26. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1999), 183–193; idem, "Jerusalem as Eden," *BAR* 26 (2000): 36–34.

An early kabbalistic tradition that circulated in the name of Rabbi Pinhas ben Ya'ir states that "the Tabernacle was made to correspond to the creation of the world The house of the Holy of Holies was made to correspond to the highest heaven. The outer Holy House was made to correspond to the earth. And the courtyard was made to correspond to the sea."²⁰ This arcane cosmological speculation is not a late invention, but rather a tradition with ancient roots. Thus, in *Ant.* 3.121–123, Josephus suggests that the tripartite division of the earthly sanctuary was a reflection of the tripartite structure of the entire creation,²¹ with its sacred chambers corresponding to heaven, earth, and sea:

Internally, dividing its length into three portions, at a measured distance of ten cubits from the farther end he set up four pillars, constructed like the rest and resting upon similar sockets, but placed slightly apart. The area within these pillars was the sanctuary; the rest of the tabernacle was open to the priests. Now this partitionment of the tabernacle was withal an imitation of universal nature; for the third part of it, that within the four pillars, which was inaccessible to the priests, was *like heaven* devoted to God, while the twenty cubits' space, even *as earth and sea* are accessible to men, was in like manner assigned to the priests alone.²²

Likewise, *Ant.* 3.180–181 affirms a similar tradition:

For if one reflects on the construction of the tabernacle and looks at the vestments of the priest and the vessels which we use for the sacred ministry, he will discover that our lawgiver was a man of God and that these blasphemous charges brought against us by the rest of men are idle. In fact, every one of these objects is intended to recall and represent the universe, as he will find if he will but consent to examine them without prejudice and with understanding. Thus, to take the tabernacle, thirty cubits long, by dividing this into three parts and giving up two of them to the priests, as a place approachable and open to all, Moses signifies *the earth and the sea*, since these too are accessible to all; but the third portion he reserved for God alone, because *heaven* also is inaccessible to men.²³

²⁰ Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual*, 108–109.

²¹ Regarding the tripartite structure of the entire creation in the Jewish tradition, see Luis Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World—A Philological and Literary Study* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970), 9.

²² Thackeray, *Josephus*, 4.373–375.

²³ Thackeray, *Josephus*, 4.403.

The idea that cult and creation correspond is also found in another prominent Jewish interpreter, Philo, who says that the holy temple of God represents the whole universe in his *Spec.* 1.66.²⁴ This belief that the earthly temple is a replica of the entire creation is rooted in biblical texts: the creation of the world in Gen 1–2 is set in conspicuous parallel with the building of the tabernacle in Exod 39–40.²⁵ According to Moshe Weinfeld, “Gen 1:1–2:3 and Ex 39:1–40:33 are typologically identical. Both describe the satisfactory completion of the enterprise commanded by God, its inspection and approval, the blessing and the sanctification which are connected with it. Most importantly, the expression of these ideas in both accounts overlaps.”²⁶ In view of these parallels, many

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- 24 *Spec.* 1.66 reads: “The highest, and in the truest sense the holy, temple of God is, as we must believe, the whole universe, having for its sanctuary the most sacred part of all existence, even heaven” Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 7.137. *Zohar* 11.149a conveys a similar tradition: “Said R. Isaac: ‘We are aware that the structure of the Tabernacle corresponds to the structure of heaven and earth.’” Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon, eds., *The Zohar*. 5 vols. (London and New York: Soncino, 1933), 4.22. Cf. also *Zohar* 11.231a: “Now, the Tabernacle below was likewise made after the pattern of the supernal Tabernacle in all its details. For the Tabernacle in all its works embraced all the works and achievements of the upper world and the lower, whereby the Shekinah was made to abide in the world, both in the higher spheres and the lower. Similarly, the Lower Paradise is made after the pattern of the Upper Paradise, and the latter contains all the varieties of forms and images to be found in the former. Hence the work of the Tabernacle, and that of heaven and earth, come under one and the same mystery.” Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 4.289; *Zohar* 11.235b: “Now, the lower and earthly Tabernacle was the counterpart of the upper Tabernacle, whilst the latter in its turn is the counterpart of a higher Tabernacle, the most high of all. All of them, however, are implied within each other and form one complete whole, as it says: ‘that the tabernacle may be one whole.’ The Tabernacle was erected by Moses, he alone being allowed to raise it up, as only a husband may raise up his wife. With the erection of the lower Tabernacle there was erected another Tabernacle on high. This is indicated in the words ‘the tabernacle was reared up (*hukam*),’ reared up, that is, by the hand of no man, but as out of the supernal undisclosed mystery in response to the mystical force indwelling in Moses that it might be perfected with him.” Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 4.303.
- 25 Levenson notes that “collectively, the function of these correspondences is to underscore the depiction of the sanctuary as a world, that is, an ordered, supportive, and obedient environment, and the depiction of the world as a sanctuary, that is, a place in which the reign of God is visible and unchallenged, and his holiness is palpable, unthreatened, and pervasive. Our examination of the two sets of Priestly texts, one at the beginning of Genesis and the other at the end of Exodus, has developed powerful evidence that, as in many cultures, the Temple was conceived as a microcosm, a miniature world.” Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 86.
- 26 Moshe Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord—The Problem of the Sitz im Leben of Genesis 1:1–2:3,” in André Caquot and Mathias Delcor, eds., *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, AOAT 212 (Kevelaer: Butzer & Bercker, 1981), 501–12.503. See Samuel Balentine, *The Torah’s Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis-

scholars suggest that the earthly sanctuary is envisioned as a microcosm of the world, imitating the sacerdotal structure of the entire creation.²⁷

2 The Sea as the Cosmological Courtyard

Especially important for this study is that the tripartite structure of the cosmological temple includes the sea, which corresponds in these traditions to the courtyard of the Temple of Creation. *Numbers Rabbah* 13.19 mentions the court encompassing the sanctuary just as the sea surrounds the world.²⁸ Likewise, *B. Sukkah* 51b tells how the white and blue marble of the temple walls were reminiscent of the waves of the sea.²⁹ The association between the sacred chamber and the sea may also be suggested by the symbolism of the bronze tank in the courtyard of Israel's temple, designated in some texts as the "molten sea."³⁰ It

lis: Fortress Press, 1999), 67–68; Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 60–61; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," *CBQ* 38 (1976): 283–286; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 12; Victor Hurowitz, "The Priestly Account of Building the Tabernacle," *JAOS* 105 (1985): 21–30; Peter Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25–40," *ZAW* 89.3 (1977): 375–387 at 375; Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 143; idem, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 85–86; Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus*, *FAT* 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 54–58; Walton, *Genesis*, 149; Peter Weimar, "Sinai und Schöpfung: Komposition und Theologie der priesterschriftlichen Sinaigeschichte," *RB* 95 (1988): 337–385; Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," 19–25.

27 Jon Levenson suggests that "World building and Temple building seem to be homologous activities. In fact, some of the same language can be found in the description of 'the establishment of the sanctuary in the land and the distribution of the land among the tribes' in Joshua 18–19." Jon Levenson, "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience," in Arthur Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality. Vol. 1: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 32–61 at 52.

28 "... His offering was one silver dish, etc. The dish was in allusion to the court which encompassed the Tabernacle as the sea encompasses the world." Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 6.546. Concerning a similar tradition in *Midrash Tadshe*, see George MacRae, *Some Elements of Jewish Apocalyptic and Mystical Tradition and Their Relation to Gnostic Literature*. 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss.; University of Cambridge, 1966), 55.

29 "... The reference is to the building of Herod. Of what did he build it?—Rabbah replied, Of yellow and white marble. Some there are who say, with yellow, blue and white marble. The building rose in tiers in order to provide a hold for the plaster. He intended at first to overlay it with gold, but the Rabbis told him, Leave it alone for it is more beautiful as it is, since it has the appearance of the waves of the sea." Isidor Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino, 1935–1952), *Sukkah*, 51b.

30 1 Kgs 7:23–25 reads: "Then he made the molten sea; it was round, ten cubits from brim to

has been thought that “the great size of the tank ... in conjunction with the fact that no practical application is offered for the ‘sea’ during the time of Solomon, supports the supposition that the tank served a symbolic purpose.³¹ Either the ‘cosmic waters,’ or the ‘waters of life,’ which emanated from below the garden of Eden, or the ‘great deep’ of chaos is most often cited as the underlying symbolism of the molten sea.”³²

The depiction of the eschatological temple in the Book of Ezekiel also contains similar imagery insofar as it connects the sacred courtyard to living water. Viktor Hurowitz highlights the significance of this: “Ezekiel’s temple of the future has a river flowing from under the threshold (Ezek 47:1) ... The river envisioned by Ezekiel seems to replace the basins in Solomon’s temple—basins that may have symbolized the rivers of a divine garden.”³³ Ezek 47:1–8 offers the following description of the sacred waters:

Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. Then he brought

brim, and five cubits high, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference. Under its brim were gourds, for thirty cubits, compassing the sea round about; the gourds were in two rows, cast with it when it was cast. It stood upon twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; the sea was set upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward.” (NRSV). See also 2 Kgs 16:17; 2 Kgs 25:13; 1 Chr 18:8; 2 Chr 4:2; Jer 52:17.

- 31 Elizabeth Bloch-Smith observes that “the exaggerated size of the structures of the Solomonic Temple courtyard would suggest that they were not intended for human use, but belonged to the realm of the divine.” Elizabeth Bloch-Smith “‘Who is the King of Glory?’ Solomon’s Temple and Its Symbolism,” in Michael David Coogan et al., eds., *Scripture and Other Artifacts. Essays on the Bible and Archeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 19–31 at 21.
- 32 Bloch-Smith “‘Who is the King of Glory?’ Solomon’s Temple and Its Symbolism,” 20. See also Carol Meyers, “Sea, Molten,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:1061–1062.
- 33 Victor Hurowitz, “Inside Solomon’s Temple,” *Bible Review* 10.2 (1994): 24–36. Jon Levenson also draws attention to the creational symbolism of the molten sea by arguing that “the metal ‘Sea’ (*yam*) in its courtyard (1Kgs 7:23–26) suggests the Mesopotamian *apsu*, employed both as the name of the subterranean fresh-water ocean ... and as the name of a basin of holy water erected in the Temple. As the god of the subterranean freshwater ocean, *apsu* played an important role in some Mesopotamian cosmogonies, just as the Sea (*yam*) did in some Israelite creation stories (e.g., Ps 74:12–17; Isa 51:9–11). This suggests that the metal Sea in the Temple courtyard served as a continual testimony to the act of creation.” Levenson, “The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience,” 51.

me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east; and the water was coming out on the south side. Going on eastward with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep. Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep. Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the waist. Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed. He said to me, "Mortal, have you seen this?" Then he led me back along the bank of the river. As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh."

NRSV

The flowing rivers of this passage echo another account of the cosmological temple found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* in which the sea is depicted alongside rivers and their circles.³⁴ Like the great prophetic account, the *Apocalypse* is familiar with the paradisaical provenance of the sacred waters, connecting the Edenic tree to "the spring, the river flowing from it." In both passages, the waters of Paradise are portrayed as "flowing."³⁵ The origin of the paradisaical imagery of the circulating waters appears already in Gen 2:10,³⁶ where a river flows from Eden to water the garden.³⁷ In Ezekiel, however, the image of flowing Edenic waters receives a further cultic meaning. Yet, such an emphasis is not unique to Ezekiel. Gregory Beale points out³⁸ that similar sacerdotal imagery involving "rivers" can be found in the description of Israel's Temple

34 On the Temple of Creation in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* see Andrei A. Orlov, "The Cosmological Temple in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," in idem, *Divine Scapegoats: Demonic Mimesis in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Albany: SUNY, 2016), 37–54.

35 *Apoc. Ab.* 21:5; "I saw there the rivers and their overflows, and their circles;" Ezek 47:1: "water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple."

36 Regarding this biblical passage, Wenham observes that "the brief account of the geography of the garden in 2:10–14 also makes many links with later sanctuary design. 'A river flows out of Eden to water the garden.' ... Ps 46:5 speaks of 'a river whose streams make glad the city of God' and Ezekiel 47 describes a great river flowing out of the new Jerusalem temple to sweeten the Dead Sea." Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," 22.

37 "A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches." (NRSV). Regarding the rivers of paradise, see also 2 *En.* 8, 1QH 14 and 16.

38 Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 72.

in Psalm 36:8–9.³⁹ Scholars have additionally discerned⁴⁰ a similar sacerdotal motif of sacred waters associated with the temple settings in various Jewish extra-biblical accounts, including the *Let. Aris.* 89–91⁴¹ and *Jos. Asen.* 2.⁴² Christian sources also display acquaintance with the sacerdotal tradition of flowing waters. Rev 22:1–2, for example, portrays a river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God.⁴³

All these testimonies demonstrate that in early biblical and extra-biblical Jewish accounts, rivers, seas, and oceans have often received a cosmological significance being envisioned as a watery courtyard of the Temple of Creation which encompasses other, more sacred chambers of the cosmological sanctuary. It is in light of these traditions that the passage from *Ant.* 3.185, in which the high priest's girdle encompassed the priest as "the ocean, which holds the whole in its embrace,"⁴⁴ should be understood. Earlier we had noted how various parts of the high priest's accoutrement symbolically corresponded to various chambers in both the earthly and cosmological temples. The middle part of his multilayered attire, composed of several garments and undergarments, represented the Holy Place; this, in turn symbolized in cosmological lan-

39 "They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light." (NRSV).

40 Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 74.

41 "There is an uninterrupted supply not only of water, just as if there were a plentiful spring rising naturally from within, but also of indescribably wonderful underground reservoirs, which within a radius of five stades from the foundation of the Temple revealed innumerable channels for each of them, the streams joining together on each side. All these were covered with lead down to the foundation of the wall; on top of them a thick layer of pitch, all done very effectively. There were many mouths at the base, which were completely invisible except for those responsible for the ministry, so that the large amounts of blood which collected from the sacrifices were all cleansed by the downward pressure and momentum. Being personally convinced, I will describe the building plan of the reservoirs just as I understood it. They conducted me more than four stades outside the city, and told me to bend down at a certain spot and listen to the noise at the meeting of the waters. The result was that the size of the conduits became clear to me, as has been demonstrated." Robert Shutt, "Letter of Aristes," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols (New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985), 2.7–34 at 18–19.

42 An image of overflowing water surrounding the Temple courtyard is found also in *Jos. Asen.* 2:17–20: "And there was in the court, on the right hand, a spring of abundant living water" Scholars have noted that "detailed description of [Aseneth's] garden clearly echoes Ezekiel's account of what he saw in his celebrated temple-vision (Ezek. 40–48)." Gideon Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 68.

43 "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city." (NRSV).

44 Thackeray, *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities*, 4.405.

guage of the Temple of Creation as the “earth.” Here we should recall Josephus’ description of the priestly vestments:

The high priest’s tunic ... signifies the earth, being of linen, and its blue the arch of heaven, while it recalls the lightnings by its pomegranates, the thunder by the sound of its bells The *essen*, again, he set in the midst of this garment, after the manner of the earth, which occupies the mid-most place; and by the girdle wherewith he encompassed it he signified the ocean, which holds the whole in its embrace.⁴⁵

Akin to the earthly and cosmological sanctuaries, where the watery courtyards (represented respectively by the molten sea or the actual sea) surrounded the Holy Place (represented in the Temple of Creation by earth), in Josephus’ description, the belt-ocean encompasses the part of the high priest’s attire designated as the “earth.” How, though, does the Leviathan imagery fit into this set of sacerdotal traditions?

3 Leviathan as the *Circuitus Mundi*

As we noted at the beginning of this study, scholars are aware of the peculiar parallelism in which Josephus associated the priestly sash first with serpentine imagery and then with the ocean. This juxtaposition led scholars to believe that the serpent is in fact the sea monster—the Leviathan.⁴⁶ Both entities are said to encompass the part of the high priest’s accoutrement which, in Josephus’ description, was associated with the earth. Our study already demonstrated that the ocean, symbolized by the sash, encompasses here the microcosmic temple embodied by the high priest’s figure. But could the Leviathan imagery also be part of this sacerdotal symbolic framework? In this respect it is important that in Jewish lore not only the sea or ocean, but also its enigmatic inhabitant, Leviathan himself, was envisioned as the sacred courtyard that encompasses the Temple of Creation. In these traditions, the Leviathan is depicted as the one who encompasses the earth, acting as “*Circuitus Mundi*.”⁴⁷

William Whitney’s exhaustive research on the Leviathan legends demonstrates that in later Jewish materials, this idea is most clearly represented by

45 Ibid.

46 Fletcher-Louis, “The High Priest as Divine Mediator,” 698.

47 William Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism*, HSM 63 (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 118.

Rashbam in his commentary on *b. Bava Batra* 74b. In his interpretation of the famous talmudic passage dealing with the monsters, Rashbam reveals knowledge of a tradition about a female Leviathan who surrounds the earth.⁴⁸ Whitney draws attention to another specimen of this motif, found in *Midrash 'Aseret Had-dibberot* (ca. tenth century CE), which transmits the following portrayal of the Leviathan:

The Holy One (Blessed be He) wished to create the world. Immediately its length was a journey of five hundred years and its breadth a journey of five hundred years. And the great sea surrounded the whole world like an arch of a great pillar. And the whole world was encircled by the fins of Leviathan, who dwells in the lower waters. In them he was like a little fish in the sea.⁴⁹

The presence of this idea in relatively late Jewish materials does not necessarily mean that the tradition of the Leviathan as the *Circuitus Mundi* represents merely a rabbinic invention. Whitney notes that “the image of a serpent which encircles the cosmos, the *ouroboros* (tail-devourer), so named because it is usually represented with its tail in its mouth, is an ancient iconographic motif in the Mediterranean world occurring frequently in magical amulets and certain texts of the Greco-Roman period.”⁵⁰

Alexander Kulik's research on the Leviathan tradition in *3 Baruch* demonstrates that the idea of the primordial reptile as the *Circuitus Mundi* has ancient roots.⁵¹ A passage from Philo of Byblos' work *On Snakes*, preserved in Eusebius's *Pr. Ev.* 1.10.45–53, contains such a concept:

Moreover the Egyptians, describing the world from the same idea, engrave the circumference of a circle of the color of the sky and of fire, and a hawk-shaped serpent stretched across the middle of it, and the whole shape like our Theta, representing the circle as the world, and signifying by the serpent which connects it in the middle the good daemon.⁵²

48 Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 118.

49 Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 117; *BHM* 1:63.

50 Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 119. Whitney points out that an early example of the *ouroboros* motif appears in a silver Phoenician bowl found in an Etruscan warrior burial of ca. ninth-eighth century BCE at Praeneste in Italy. Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 119.

51 Alexander Kulik, “The Mysteries of Behemoth and Leviathan and the Celestial Bestiary of *3 Baruch*,” *Le Muséon* 122 (2009): 291–329 at 299.

52 Edwin Hamilton Gifford, ed., *Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelica (Preparation for the Gospel)*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903; repr.: 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 1.43.

Pistis Sophia 3.126 also attests to this motif of the cosmic serpent that encompass the entire world: “The outer darkness is a great dragon whose tail is in its mouth, and it is outside the whole world and it surrounds the whole world.”⁵³

Kulik identifies yet another reference to a cosmic reptile who encompasses the world and is associated with the ocean, found in the *Acts of Thomas* 32:⁵⁴

The snake says to him: I am a reptile, the son of reptile, and harmer, the son of harmer: I am the son of him, to whom power was given over (all) creatures, and he troubled them. I am the son of him, who makes himself like to God to those who obey him, that they may do his will. I am the son of him, who is ruler over everything that is created under heaven. I am the son of him, who is outside of the ocean, and whose mouth is closed.⁵⁵

A crucial early testimony to the Leviathan as the *Circuitus Mundi* is found in Origen's work, *Contra Celsum* VI.25:

It contained a drawing of ten circles, which were separated from one another and *held together by a single circle, which was said to be the soul of the universe and was called Leviathan*. The Jewish scriptures, with a hidden meaning in mind, said that this Leviathan was formed by God as a plaything. For in the Psalms we find: “Thou hast made all things in wisdom; the earth is filled with thy creation. This is the sea great and wide; there go the ships, small animals and great, this serpent which thou didst form to play with him.” Instead of the word “serpent” the Hebrew text read “Leviathan.” The impious diagram said that the Leviathan, which was clearly so objectionable to the prophet, is the soul that has permeated the universe. We also found that Behemoth is mentioned in it as if it were some being fixed below the lowest circle. The inventor of this horrible diagram depicted Leviathan upon the circumference of the circle and at its centre, putting in the name twice.⁵⁶

53 Carl Schmidt and Violet MacDermot, eds., *Pistis Sophia*, NHS 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 317.

54 Kulik, “The Mysteries of Behemoth and Leviathan,” 299.

55 Albertus Frederik Johannes Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 92–93.

56 Henry Chadwick, *Origen, Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 340.

Whitney's research underscores the complexity of the Leviathan imagery in this presentation of the Ophite diagram. In his judgment, the "circled" serpent (*ouroboros*) is portrayed as surrounding another "axial" serpent.⁵⁷

Finally, the most important passage suggesting the Leviathan's role as *Cir-cuitus Mundi* can be found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a text usually dated to the second century C.E.⁵⁸ In this text Abraham is given a vision of the lower regions of creation where he is able to behold the domain of the Leviathan. *Апoc. Аб.* 21:1–5 reads:

And he said to me, "Look now beneath your feet at the expanse and contemplate the creation which was previously covered over. On this level there is the creation and those who inhabit it and the age that has been prepared to follow it." And I looked beneath the expanse at my feet and I saw the likeness of heaven and what was therein. And I saw there the earth and its fruits, and its moving ones, and its spiritual ones, and its host of men and their spiritual impieties, and their justifications, and the pursuits of their works, and the abyss and its torment, and its lower depths, and the perdition which is in it. And I saw there the sea and its islands, and its animals and its fishes, and Leviathan and his domain, and his lair, and his dens, and the world which lies upon him, and his motions and the destruction of the world because of him. I saw there the rivers and their overflows, and their circles (круги ихъ).⁵⁹

Two details of this description are important for our study. First is the association of the Leviathan's domain with the water symbolism, including the sea

57 Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 122.

58 On the date of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, see George Herbert Box and Joseph Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham. Edited, with a Translation from the Slavonic Text and Notes*, TED 1.10 (London, New York: Macmillan, 1918), xv–xix; Belkis Philonenko-Sayar and Marc Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham. Introduction, texte slave, traduction et notes*, Semitica 31 (Paris: Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1981), 34–35; Ryszard Rubinkiewicz and Horace Lunt, "Apocalypse of Abraham," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985), 1.681–705 at 683; Ryszard Rubinkiewicz, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en vieux slave. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire*, ŻM 129 (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1987), 70–73; Alexander Kulik, "К датировке 'Откровения Авраама,'" in N.M. Botvinnik and Je. I. Vaneeva, eds., *In Memoriam of Ja. S. Lur'e* (St. Petersburg: Fenix, 1997), 189–195; idem, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, TCS 3 (Atlanta: Scholars, 2004), 2–3.

59 Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*, 26; Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 82–84.

and the rivers. Connecting the Leviathan to the rivers will become a prominent motif in later Jewish mysticism.⁶⁰ The second feature is the reference to the rivers' *circles* (Slav. круги),⁶¹ Such a reference might indicate the monster's role as the *Circuitus Mundi* in view of his association with these watery streams.

4 The High Priest as the Eschatological Adam

It is interesting that Josephus describes the high priest's sash as being somewhat different from the belts of ordinary priests, since it had a mixture of gold interwoven into it. In *Ant.* 3.159 he says:

The high priest is arrayed in like manner, omitting none of the things already mentioned, but over and above these he puts on a tunic of blue material. This too reaches to the feet, and is called in our tongue *meeir*; it is girt about him with a sash decked with the same gay hues as adorned the first, *with gold* (χρυσῶν) *interwoven into its texture*.⁶²

This description represents a departure from the biblical patterns, where the sash is not associated with gold.⁶³ However, the golden sash appears in the portrayal of Christ in Rev 1:13,⁶⁴ where some argue he is being depicted as the heavenly high priest.⁶⁵

If for Josephus the sash is associated with the symbolism of the protological monster, the golden nature of this priestly item brings to mind some Jewish traditions about the luminosity of the Leviathan's skin. *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, for example, describes the Leviathan's skin with the symbolism of shining gold that surpasses the splendor of the sun:

60 See, for example, *Zohar* 1.52a.

61 Philonenko-Sayar and Philonenko, *L'Apocalypse d'Abraham*, 84.

62 Thackeray, *Josephus. Jewish Antiquities*, 4.390–391.

63 Ex 39:29: “and the sash of fine twisted linen, and of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, embroidered with needlework; as the Lord had commanded Moses.”

64 Rev 1:13: “and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash (ζώνην χρυσᾶν) across his chest.”

65 See Ross Winkle, “You Are What You Wear: The Dress and Identity of Jesus as High Priest in John's Apocalypse,” in Henrietta L. Wiley and Christian A. Eberhart, eds., *Sacrifice, Cult, and Atonement in Early Judaism and Christianity: Constituents and Critique* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 344–345.

Lest you suppose that the skin of the Leviathan is not something extraordinary, consider what R. Phinehas the Priest ben Hama and R. Jeremiah citing R. Samuel bar R. Isaac said of it: The reflection of the Leviathan's fins makes the disk of the sun dim by comparison, so that it is said of each of the fins "It telleth the sun that it shines weakly" (Job 9:7). For *The [Leviathan's] underparts, the reflections thereof, [surpass] the sun: where it lieth upon the mire, there is a shining of yellow gold* (Job 41:22). It is said, moreover, that the words *Where it lieth upon the mire, there is a shining of yellow gold* (*harus*) mean [not only that the Leviathan's underparts shine, but] that the very place it lies upon is *harus*—that is, golden. Hence *Where it lieth upon the mire, there is a shining of yellow gold*. Still further it is said: Ordinarily, there is no place more filthy than the one where a fish lies. But the place where the Leviathan lies is purer even than yellow gold. Hence *Where it lieth upon the mire, there is a shining of yellow gold* (Job 41:22).⁶⁶

This depiction of the Leviathan's skin with the imagery of "shining of yellow gold" is important for our study, since the high priest's sash in Josephus and Rev 1 is also described with gold symbolism.

Furthermore, *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana* speaks more specifically about the "glory" of the Leviathan:

On account of its glory, he [God] brings forth his defenders. (Job 41:7). Because he possesses a celestial glory, the Holy One (Blessed be He) says to the ministering angels, "Go down and wage war with it."⁶⁷

Reflecting on this striking narrative about the glory of the primordial reptile, Irving Jacobs notes that

the imagery and language employed in the opening lines of this passage require further evaluation, particularly the phrase "celestial glory." This

66 William Braude and Israel Kapstein, eds., *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana. R. Kahana's Compilation of Discourses for Sabbaths and Festal Days* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975), 467.

67 While Irving and Whitney render this passage with the formulae of "glory," Braude and Kapstein prefer use the term "pride" by rendering the passage in the following way: "The rows of his shields are his pride (Job 41:7). The Leviathan has the pride which is proper only to Him who is on high, and so the Holy One says to the ministering angels: Go down and wage war against him." Braude and Kapstein, *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, 468.

unusual formulation occurs, apparently, only in the above context, from which it is difficult to determine its precise significance. We may assume, however, that our unknown aggadist is alluding to an ancient tradition—possibly biblical in origin—that Leviathan is endowed with a supernatural splendour. According to an early tannaitic source, Leviathan's eyes are great orbs of light illuminating the depths of the sea. *Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana*, from which the quotation is taken, also records the tradition that Leviathan's fins alone could dim the light of the sun with their brilliance. In this respect, the splendour of Leviathan is comparable with that of the primordial light, which, according to rabbinic tradition, emanated from the mantle donned by God at the time of creation. Thus Leviathan radiates a heavenly splendour.⁶⁸

68 Irving Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process: Tradition and Interpretation in Rabbinic Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 160–162. Jacobs traces this attribute of glory to some Mesopotamian traditions, noting that the “interpretation of this obscure phrase is supported by a much older source, which may preserve the prototype for the awesome, luminous monster of Jewish tradition. The Babylonian creation epic contains a description of the dreadful dragons provided for Tiamat's army by Mother Hubur. These monsters are garbed with a *pulhu*, the awesome, fiery garment of the gods, and are crowned with a *melammu*, a dazzling, divine aureole, so that when they rear up—like Leviathan—none can withstand them.” Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process*, 162. Cf. *Enuma Elish* 1, lines 136–139; 11, lines 23–26; 111, lines 27–30, also lines 85–88 (J.B. Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 62): “Roaring dragons she has clothed with terror, Has crowned them with haloes, making them like gods, So that he who beholds them shall perish abjectly, (And) that, with their bodies reared up, none might turn them back.” Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process*, 160–162. In a recent study, Shawn Zelig Aster defines *melammu* as “a quality of overwhelming and overpowering strength, and it can be defined as ‘the covering, outer layer, or outward appearance of a person, being, or object, or rays emanating from a person or being, that demonstrate the irresistible or supreme power of that person, being, or object.’ A god who possesses *melammu* is sovereign, a person who possesses *melammu* is unbeatable, and a force which possesses *melammu* cannot successfully be stopped. In second-millennium mythic texts the *melammu* is portrayed as a cloak or covering, which is often radiant. But many texts ascribe *melammu* to objects that are not radiant, and radiance is not an intrinsic element of *melammu* in most periods. Beginning in the Sargonic period (late eight century BCE), *melammu* can be used as a synonym for terms meaning ‘radiance,’ but it can also be used in its more traditional meaning. When used with this traditional meaning (the standard definition of which is given above), *melammu* does not necessarily indicate a radiant phenomenon.” Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Phenomenon of Divine and Human Radiance in the Hebrew Bible and in Northwest Semitic and Mesopotamian Literature: A Philological and Comparative Study* (Ph.D. diss.; University of Pennsylvania, 2006), 512–513. On the terminology of *melammu* and its application to the monsters and other antagonists, see Leo Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pul(u)h(t)u* and *melammu*,” *JAOS* 63 (1943): 31–34; Elena Cassin, *La splendeur divine: Introduction à l'étude de la mentalité mésopotamienne*, Civilisations

The legends about the glory of the Leviathan in rabbinic literature are not confined solely to these excerpts from *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, but also can be found in the talmudic passages. *B. Baba Batra* 74a, when describing the Leviathan's skin, also portrays it as a luminous entity: "The Holy One, blessed be He, will in time to come make a tabernacle for the righteous from the skin of Leviathan ... The rest [of Leviathan] will be spread by the Holy One, blessed be He, upon the walls of Jerusalem, and *its splendour will shine* from one end of the world to the other; as it is said: And nations shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising."⁶⁹ A reference to the Leviathan's "glory" also appears in Qalliri's description of this primordial reptile: "Great fish dance about beneath him. Angels sing above him. They proclaim his splendor and his glory."⁷⁰ Scholars often equate "Leviathan's glory to the celestial splendor of the *pulhu*, the divine garment, and the *melammu*, the divine aureole, in which the dragons of Tiamat's army are garbed in *Enuma Elish*."⁷¹

One interesting detail which emerges from the aforementioned testimonies about the Leviathan's glory is the comparison of its radiance to the sun. Recall that *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana* informs us how "the reflection of the Leviathan's fins makes the disk of the sun dim by comparison." Irving Jacobs noted that the same association is frequently present in rabbinic descriptions of Adam's glory.⁷² Indeed, from *b. Baba Batra* 58a we learn that "his [Adam's] two heels ... were like two orbs of the sun." Midrashim are also familiar with such comparisons. According to *Leviticus Rabbah* 20.2, "the apple of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun; how much more so the brightness of his face!"⁷³ Something similar is found in *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 8:1: "the ball of Adam's heel outshone the sun ... so was it not right that the ball of his heel should outshine the sun, and how much more so the beauty of his face!"⁷⁴

et Sociétés 8 (Paris and La Haye: Mouton, 1968); Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Phenomenon of Divine and Human Radiance*, 80–82; idem, *The Unbeatable Light: Melammu and Its Biblical Parallels*, AOAT 384 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012).

69 Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Baba Bathra*, 75a.

70 Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 134–135.

71 Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 137. *Enuma Elish* (ANET, 62–65) 1. 136–139; 2.23–26; 3.27–30, 85–88.

72 Irving, *The Midrashic Process*, 162.

73 Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 10 vols. (London: Soncino, 1961), 4.252.

74 Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 8.213–214. See also *Zohar* 1.142b: "Said R. Jose: 'Can it really be so, that Jacob's beauty equaled that of Adam, seeing that, according to tradition, the fleshy part of Adam's heel outshone the orb of the sun? Would you, then, say the same of Jacob?'" Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 2.57.

Such a juxtaposition of the motifs of the luminosity of the Leviathan and the protoplast is relevant for our study of the high priest's sash. In Jewish sacerdotal traditions, the high priest was often envisioned as the eschatological Adam who restores the cultic role of the protoplast, he who once was the high priest of the Garden of Eden. Interestingly, some Jewish traditions suggest the garments of the high priest were literally the protoplast's garments transmitted through successive generations until they reached Aaron.⁷⁵

The link between the high priestly attire and Adam's clothes is significant for our study of the cultic servant wearing the Leviathan's luminous skin, since it echoes some Jewish traditions in which the first humans were portrayed as God's creatures endowed with the glorious garments of demoted antagonists.⁷⁶ The transference of the glory of the demoted antagonist can be found, for example, in the *Primary Adam Books*, where Satan's lament about his lost glory is juxtaposed with the traditions about the glorious garments of the first humans. Of even greater importance for our study, however, is that some of these narratives convey how God made the luminous garments for his beloved protoplasts from the skin of the serpent. This is depicted, for instance, in the

75 *Numbers Rabbah* 4.8: "... Adam was the world's firstborn. When he offered his sacrifice, as it says: And it pleased the Lord better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs (Ps. LXIX, 32)—he donned high priestly garments; as it says: And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them (Gen. III, 21). They were robes of honor which subsequent firstborn used. When Adam died he transmitted them to Seth. Seth transmitted them to Methusaleh. When Methusaleh died he transmitted them to Noah." Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 5.101. A similar tradition is also found in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 24: "Rabbi Jehudah said: The coats which the Holy One, blessed be He, made for Adam and his wife, were with Noah in the ark." Gerald Friedlander, ed., *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (London: Bloch, 1916), 175.

76 For discussions about the luminous garments of the protoplasts, see David Aaron, "Shedding Light on God's Body in Rabbinic Midrashim: Reflections on the Theory of a Luminous Adam," *HTR* 90 (1997): 299–314; Sebastian Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," in Margot Schmidt, ed., *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, EB 4 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1982), 11–40; April D. DeConick and Jarl Fossum, "Stripped before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas," *VC* 45 (1991): 123–150 at 141; Nils Alstrup Dahl and David Hellholm, "Garment-Metaphors: The Old and the New Human Being," in Adela Yarbro Collins and Margaret M. Mitchell, eds., *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy: Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on his 70th Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 139–158; Alon Goshen-Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *HTR* 87 (1994): 171–195; Benjamin Marmorstein, "Adam, ein Beitrag zur Messiaslehre," *WZKM* 35 (1928): 242–275 at 255; Nissan Rubin and Admiel Kosman, "The Clothing of the Primordial Adam as a Symbol of Apocalyptic Time in the Midrashic Sources," *HTR* 90 (1997): 155–174; Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Garments of Shame," *HTR* 5 (1965/1966): 217–238.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen 3:21, a passage which treats the etiology of the first humans' glorious attire. According to this text, the original humans were endowed with luminous garments that had been stripped from the serpent:

And the Lord God made garments of glory for Adam and for his wife from the skin which the serpent had cast off (to be worn) on the skin of their (garments of) fingernails of which they had been stripped, and he clothed them.⁷⁷

Later midrashim are also cognizant of the enigmatic provenance of the proto-plasts' luminous garments. Thus, for example, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 20 reads:

Rabbi Eliezer said: From skins which the serpent sloughed off, the Holy One, blessed be He, took and made coats of glory for Adam and his wife, as it is said, "And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife coats of skin, and clothed them."⁷⁸

Still, other interpretive lines postulate that the clothing was made from the skin of the Leviathan.⁷⁹ In relation to this interpretive trajectory, William Whitney notes that "two late texts (*Minhat Yehuda* and *Sefer Hadar-Zeqenim*, both on

77 Michael Maher, ed., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, ArBib 1B (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 29. Later rabbinic traditions also hold that the glorious garments of Adam and Eve were made from the skin of the female Leviathan.

78 Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 144.

79 In relation to this tradition, Lambden notes that "in his *Legends of the Jews*, v, p. 103, n. 93 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955) Ginzberg drew attention to a probably early and 'unknown Midrash' recorded in mediaeval Jewish sources to the effect that the first couple's garments were made from the skin of Leviathan, a creature which figures in a rich variety of myths and traditions recorded in ancient Near Eastern and biblical texts as well as in certain rabbinic, Christian, Gnostic, magical and other ancient literatures. This tradition is of considerable interest in the light of Leviathan's being pictured in rabbinic sources as a creature of great glory (see for example *Pes. K.* [1876 on Job 41.7]; *b. B. Bat.* 74b) and the possibility that there existed an early (tannaicic [?]) branch of Jewish mysticism surrounding Behemoth and Leviathan (reflected in such Gnostic texts as the cosmological Diagram of the Ophians mentioned in Origen's *Contra Celsum* [6.25] [?]) There appears to be some connection between rabbinic Adam speculation and the traditions about Leviathan. Garment imagery and eschatological themes are connected with this complex of traditions." Stephen Lambden, "From Fig Leaves to Fingernails: Some Notes on the Garments of Adam and Eve in the Hebrew Bible and Select Early Postbiblical Jewish Writings," in Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer, eds., *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, JSOTSS 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 74–90 at 87–88.

Gen 3:21) also record a tradition in which the skin of the female Leviathan (preserved for the righteous in the world to come) was used to clothe Adam and Eve.”⁸⁰

In light of these traditions, the luminous skin of the Leviathan on the high priest may have additional eschatological and anthropological significance—namely, the re-clothing of the eschatological Adam in the form of the sacerdotal servant with the garment of light stripped from the Leviathan.

5 Conclusion

Finally, we need to draw attention to the eschatological significance of Leviathan’s skin, which again, is curiously linked to its function as the cosmological shell of the Temple. Thus, from the Babylonian Talmud, we learn that in the last times the luminous skin of the Leviathan will be used in the building material for the eschatological tabernacle:

Rabbah in the name of R. Johanan further stated: The Holy One, blessed be He, will in time to come make a tabernacle for the righteous from the skin of Leviathan; for it is said: Canst thou fill tabernacles with his skin. If a man is worthy, a tabernacle is made for him; if he is not worthy [of this] a [mere] covering is made for him, for it is said: And his head with a fish covering. If a man is [sufficiently] worthy a covering is made for him; if he is not worthy [even of this], a necklace is made for him, for it is said: And necklaces about thy neck. If he is worthy [of it] a necklace is made for him; if he is not worthy [even of this] an amulet is made for him; as it is said: And thou wilt bind him for thy maidens. The rest [of Leviathan] will be spread by the Holy One, blessed be He, upon the walls of Jerusalem, and its splendor will shine from one end of the world to the other; as it is said: And nations shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising.⁸¹

Here, the already familiar motif of Leviathan’s skin is used as the outer shell of the tabernacle of the righteous in the time to come. And not only the tabernacle, but even the wall of the Holy City itself will be covered with the skin of the cosmological reptile.

⁸⁰ Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 137. On this see also Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909–1938), 5:42, note 123.

⁸¹ Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Baba Bathra*, 75a.

What is particularly curious in this talmudic excerpt, and something not often noticed by students of the Leviathan tradition, is the comparison between the covering for the worthy and the necklace around the neck for the unworthy. This difference might hint at two functions of the Leviathan's skin: one that surrounds the sacred structure akin to the necklace during the normal time, and one that will become its covering in the messianic time.

This eschatological tradition is important, because it reveals how the sacerdotal role of the Leviathan—which was a threatening force that surrounded and constantly jeopardized the Temple during the course of history—is finally affirmed positively in messianic times.

Moses as the First Priest-Gnostikos in the Works of Evagrius of Pontus

Robin Darling Young

“Their priests fell by the sword. (Ps 77:64a)

*The Logos is speaking against us, if we are not vigilant,
for we believers are the priesthood.”¹*

First- and second-century Christian texts, following the views of certain Second-Temple Jewish authors, use the term “priesthood” to refer to the entire group of the devoted—in the case of the Christian version, to mean the totality of the observant and baptized.² By the mid-third century, however, the second-ranked Christian minister, the presbyter, was beginning to be called *sacerdos* or, in Greek, ἱερεὺς. In the fourth century, such a usage was increasingly common, fortified by such authors as Eusebius of Caesarea and the later church orders, as well as by the incorporation of the church into the Roman imperial state.³

Yet the earlier tradition, held and developed by the teacher Clement of Alexandria and the presbyter Origen, continued to appear prominently in certain late-fourth-century writers. Both Alexandrian thinkers connected their understanding of Christian priesthood with the highest stage of Christian ethical pedagogy and philosophical insight.⁴ One of their intellectual heirs was Eva-

1 Origen, Homily 8 on Ps 77; p. 462 in Lorenzo Perrone, with Marina Molin Pradel, Emanuela Prinzivalli, and Antonio Cacciari, eds., *Origenes Werke Dreizehnter Band: Die neuen Psalmenhomilien. Eine kritische Edition des Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*, GCS NF 19 (Berlin: Walther de Gruyter, 2015). This translation derives from the English translation to be published by Joseph W. Trigg in *Fathers of the Church* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming). Trigg has translated νήφωμεν as “sober,” but it can also mean “vigilant,” as I have translated it here.

2 Cf. 1 Pet 2:5, 2:9, and Rev 1:6, 5:2 for NT examples.

3 See, for a locus classicus, Eusebius’ “Panegyric on the Church at Tyre,” in *Ecclesiastical History* 10.3. For a recent discussion, Jeremy M. Schott, “Eusebius’ Panegyric on the Building of Churches,” in Sabrina Inowlocki and Claudio Zamagni, eds., *Reconsidering Eusebius: Collected Papers on Literary, Historical and Theological Issues* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 177–198.

4 For Clement of Alexandria, see primarily Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Other Clement of Alexandria: Cosmic Hierarchy and Interiorized Apocalypticism,” *VC* 60.3 (2006): 251–267; idem, *Angelo-morphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (Leiden,

grius of Pontus, ordained both as a reader and a deacon according to his earliest hagiographer Palladius, and later a celebrated ascetic living in Kellia, Egypt.⁵ Writer of exegetical scholia, letters, and treatises, Evagrius is best known for giving directions in conduct and contemplation to male and female ascetics, especially regarding the battle against “thoughts,” and for more advanced ascetics, the preparation to understand in a noetic way the self, the cosmos, and the divine being.

At the same time, other fourth-century thinkers—Evagrius’ fellow-authors of Pontus and Cappadocia as well as his future acquaintance Didymus the Blind—considered Moses a prototype of Christian leadership and particularly of contemplative insight. For them, Moses was both a gnostikos (whether or not they used the precise term) and priest.

Moses—prophet, lawgiver, philosopher and intimate of God—was an alluring subject in Christian writings of the late fourth century. Writers of the period were engaged in the vast and communal task of creating a body of knowledge needed for a church now characterized by its interconnected instruction, officials, ritual and intellectual ambitions. By the end of the century, some were articulating genuine philosophy, which in the period forced it into generating and rapidly accumulating a comprehensive explanation of the world and its history. Their scriptural basis was primarily the Old Testament, in which, for this purpose, Moses’ was the most salient voice.⁶

But how did Moses become the predecessor of the contemplative priesthood? As the ascetic movement grew in that same period, many of its writers explained it within this same philosophical framework, accounting for its way of life and its goals within the broader parameters of Christian intellectuals’ self-explanation. Among ascetic writers, Evagrius of Pontus was one of these—the first to provide a clear curriculum for the ascetic life, he also turned his earlier education toward the creation of a comprehensive and specialized account of that life, in which he like others claimed and reorganized older knowledge. And like others, Evagrius took as predecessor and guide the figure of Moses—

Boston: Brill, 2009); for Origen, John McGuckin, “Origen of Alexandria on the Mystery of the Pre-Existent Church,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 6:3 (2006): 207–222 and Theo Hermans, *Origène: Théologie sacrificielle du sacerdoce des chrétiens*, *Théologie Historique* 102 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), and generally, Laurence Ryan, “Patristic Teaching on the Priesthood of the Faithful,” *ITQ* 19 (1962) 25–51.

5 The best guide to the life and thought of Evagrius remains Antoine Guillaumont, *Un philosophe au désert Evagre le Pontique* (Paris: Vrin, 2004).

6 For a recent discussion, see Anthony Grafton and Megan Hale Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

both as a model, and as a source, certifying the deep antiquity of a monastic community whose origins were, actually, recent.

Likewise, Christ also increasingly came to be portrayed as a priest, following the description of him in the Epistle to the Hebrews as the great high priest. Now he would also come to be compared in this way with Moses. Although the early Christian understanding of Jesus' actions, person and teachings dominated controversial writing from Constantine through Justinian, Jesus had remained elusive—his career was short, he left no writings, and he had refused to definitively identify himself. From the writings of Paul forward he was implicitly or explicitly compared with Moses—perhaps not only because of Jesus' own comparisons of himself to the lawgiver, but also because Jesus' scriptural career was brief and recent, while Moses dominated the first five books of the Septuagint, framing and forming the story of Israel, frequently encountering God, and leading the elect people—a story imposing in itself, but also casting a long shadow over Jesus as Moses' successor—yet also providing a guide to the priestly aspect of Jesus' work.⁷

Furthermore, Moses already had a wide reputation outside the communities claiming him as their lawgiver. Earlier Jewish authors had made Moses into a Hellenistic figure, but better, older and wiser—and as the real source of Greek philosophy, one whom their non-Jewish readers could admire and envy.⁸ When Philo of Alexandria inherited this interpretation, it was already almost two hundred years old, and in conversation with the pagan literary scholars of Alexandria he deepened and expanded it.⁹ When Christian scholars of the second century included Philo's works in their libraries, his thought could be put to use in a tradition that already claimed Moses as Jesus' forerunner.¹⁰ Once they had adopted Philo into their own libraries, they gained a much deeper account of Moses as the originator of all the written knowledge valuable for humanity in its reformation and adherence to the one God, the God of Israel.¹¹

7 The earliest Christian claims are discussed recently in John Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion*, WUNT 173 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

8 For instance, in the works of Aristobulus: see Erich Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 222–224; or for the more general interest in Moses, John Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1972).

9 Now see Maren R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

10 Arthur Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 49–167.

11 David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 87–153.

Christian authors of the second and later centuries grasped, preserved and expanded Philo's view of Moses. The Alexandrian Christian tradition, primarily of Clement and Origen, and the comprehensive account of Moses as divinely-guided philosopher it adopted, became diffused in the fourth century—through the medium of Origen's library preserved in Caesarea and Eusebius' work based on it, and by means of teachers in Alexandria and the Christian schools of Egypt. Thanks at least in part to the third-century mission of Origen's student Gregory Thaumaturgus, the works of Origen formed an important part of the library of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. Each man knew and adapted the works of the prior Alexandrian tradition—and each one wrote of Moses as a model of virtue and illumination.¹²

But these interpretations by Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, indebted as they were to the prior tradition of Christian interpretation, now circled specifically around the person and role of the holy bishop. In the late fourth century, those bishops needed a precedent for leadership that derived from the canon of scripture they were authorized to interpret. The first bishop to attempt this had been Eusebius of Caesarea, who in the first decades of the century turned to Moses as a forerunner not only for Jesus, as earlier exegetes had done, but for the bishop and even for Constantine, the great liberator and defender of Christianity.¹³ Now, at the end of the century, Moses' role in the political organization of Israel's civic and cultic life came to seem especially appealing as a model and a justification for their exercise of authority in the church.

Most scholars have focused primarily upon the ascetic works of Evagrius, and, following the lead of his biographers, understood him primarily within a monastic world of the late fourth century. But Evagrius' interests were much broader than this customary interpretation suggests.¹⁴ Where others have defended Evagrius' orthodox intent or pastoral practice, Antoine Guillaumont

12 Most recently for these bishops as authors and their image of Moses, see Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 126–127, 132–133.

13 Now see Michael J. Hollerich, "Eusebius' Moses: Hebrew, Jew, and Christian," (forthcoming).

14 Most scholars of Evagrius have given little attention to his scholia on Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, published (or in the case of the Psalms scholia, forthcoming) in critical editions by Paul Géhin. These scholia, however, seem to be directed not toward ascetics, but toward educated readers of scripture who are receptive to an allegorical interpretation. An English translation of these collections of scholia is being prepared by Carl Vernerstrom and Ian Gerdon. In the meantime, see Paul Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique, Scholies aux Proverbes*, SC 340 (Paris: Cerf, 1987); idem, *Scholies à L'Éclésiaste* (Paris: Cerf, 1993) and Marie-Josèphe Rondeau, "Le Commentaire sur les Psaumes d'Évagre le Pontique," *OCP* 26 (1960): 307–348.

described Evagrius as an Origenist and a *philosophe*. Guillaumont was certainly correct to connect Evagrius with the broad stream of Origenism in the fourth century—stretching, among Greek writers, from Eusebius through John Chrysostom and the fifth-century church historians and among Latin writers from Ambrose through John Cassian and Gennadius.

Less well-discussed are the reasons for Evagrius' particular brand of "Origenism." Though those reasons cannot be described adequately within the compass of an essay, it is possible to show how Evagrius extended Origen's understanding of the priesthood in his own work and in his primary intellectual circle, and how he preserved Clement's understanding of the Christian *gnostikos*—the teacher of advanced students—as the sage who brings students to the level of the priesthood to which all believers should belong.

Although themes of priesthood appear frequently in Evagrius' works, several of his works discuss the priest or the priesthood. Moses appears as the type of the priesthood in the four opening verses of the treatise *On Prayer*:

1. If someone should wish to prepare fragrant incense, he will combine, according to the Law, pure frankincense, cassia, onycha and myrrh in equal amounts (Ex 30:34–35). These refer to the four primary virtues [prudence, justice, temperance, courage (*Protagoras* 330B)], for if they are fully and equally present, the mind will not be betrayed.

2. When the soul has been purified by the full complement of the virtues, it stabilizes the attitude of the mind and prepares it to receive the desired state (*κατάστασις*).

3. Prayer is a communion of the mind with God. What sort of state does the mind need so that it can reach out to its Lord without turning back and commune with him without intermediary? (see Clement, *Stromateis* 7.7.39, Maximus of Tyre, *Lectures* 4.7).

4. If Moses, when he tried to approach the earthly burning bush, was held back until he removed the sandals from his feet (Ex 3:5), how can you, who wish to see and commune with the one who is beyond all representation and sense perception, not free yourself from every mental representation tied to the passions?

But Evagrius' most well-known works—the Gnostic Trilogy of *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos* and *Kephalaia Gnostika*—also repeatedly refer to priesthood. In *Praktikos*, for instance, Evagrius begins with an allegorical reading of the monastic garment that anticipate his allegorical reading of the priest's garment, later in *Kephalaia Gnostika*. Here, ambition for the priesthood appears as a demonic temptation:

The thought of vainglory is a most subtle one and readily insinuates itself within the virtuous person with the intention of publishing his struggles and hunting after the esteem that comes from people (cf. 1 Thess 2:6). It invents *demons crying out, women being healed and a crowd touching his garments* (cf. Matt 9:20–21, Mark 5:27); it even predicts to him that he will eventually *attain the priesthood*. It has people come to seek him at his door, and if he should be unwilling he will be taken away in bonds. When this thought has thus raised him aloft on empty hopes, it flies off, abandoning him to be tempted either by the demon of pride or by that of sadness, who brings upon him further thoughts opposed to his hopes. Sometimes it delivers him over to the demon of fornication, *he who a little earlier was a holy priest carried off in bonds!*

Priests themselves, as distinguished from the priesthood as an object of ambition, Evagrius places in a kind of hierarchy between “all the brothers” and “the [ascetic] elders.” Here, priests are beloved, because they perform the liturgy and pray for the monks, seemingly as ascetics’ assistants:

It is not possible to love all the brothers equally, but it is possible to meet all without passion when we are free from hatred and resentment. [102] [We are] to love priests after our Lord, those who by means of the holy mysteries purify us and pray on our behalf. [103] [We are] to revere the elders (γέροντας) as angels, for they are those who ready us for the contest and heal our bites from wild beasts.

Yet in the second book of the trilogy, Evagrius views priests from a different angle. The *Gnostikos* is a manual for those who teach ascetics, and Evagrius considers the gnostikos to be a sage who educates priests as carefully, and with as much discretion and accommodation as he educates younger monks:

Give an answer to the priests only when they ask you—and [only] to those who are diligent in the fear of God—about the mysteries that are accomplished by them and purify our inner person, and about the receptacle and crucible that are in us. It is a demonstration of the impassioned and the rational parts of the soul—and what is their inseparable mingling and when one part overcomes another part. And every one of the actions is the accomplishment of one type. Then tell them: the mystery of the one doing these things, and of those [doing] them along with him, chasing off those who prevent us from living in purity; and who among the living beings have memory, and who do not.

But not until the ascetic philosopher is prepared to read the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, however, would he or she be prepared to understand the genuine priesthood. Here Evagrius lets readers know that the gnostikos actually performs a priestly service for others. Where the ascetic formerly had to combat thoughts, the priesthood—the goal of the Christian life—now appears as a state of contemplative development, not an office in a local church or monastic establishment. Evagrius here has replaced the symbolic meaning of the monastic robe, i.e. to protect the ascetic in combat with demonic “thoughts,” with a priestly robe, albeit invisible, that signifies his ability to act as a priest for other Christians. Here Evagrius interprets Exodus, a book of Moses who is, for him, the authority on the true priesthood:

- 4.48 The intelligible “turban” (Exod 28:4) is faith, unwavering and incapable of fear.
- 4.52 The intelligible “rosette” (Exod 28:36) is the knowledge of the Holy Trinity.
- 4.56 The intelligible ephod (Exod 28:4) is the state of the rational soul in which a person customarily serves its virtues.
- 4.63 The “mercy seat” (Exod 25:17) is spiritual knowledge that leads the souls of those who serve.
- 4.66 The breastplate (Exod 28:4) is the hidden knowledge of God’s mysteries.
- 4.69 The intelligible robe (Exod 28:4) is the spiritual teaching that gathers those who have gone astray.
- 4.72 The intelligible undergarment (Ex 28:42) is the mortification of the concupiscible part, which comes about for the sake of the knowledge of God.
- 4.75 The intelligible ephod (Exod 28:4) is the soul’s righteousness by which a person is customarily made illustrious by deeds and by blameless teachings.
- 4.79 The girdle of the high priest is his humility of zeal that girds the mind.
- 4.88 Of the three altars of knowledge two have a circle, and the third appears without a circle.
- 4.89 The knowledge of God requires, not a chattering (dialectical?) soul, but a seeing one. The chattering in fact, is customarily found among souls which are not pure; but sight is only among pure souls.
- 5.44 If “the anger of dragons is wine” (Deut 32:33) and the Nazirites abstain from wine (Num 6:3) it follows that the Nazirites are commanded to be without anger.

- 5.45 The mind is named the head of the soul and the virtues are the sign of the hair. When he is deprived of this, the Nazirite will be separated from knowledge and led away bound by his enemies.
- 5.46 The High Priest is the one who supplicates God on behalf of the entire rational nature, and he separates some from wickedness and others from ignorance.
- 5.53 The spiritual sacrifice is the pure conscience, which is placed on the state of the mind as on an altar.
- 5.84 The intelligible Temple is the pure mind, which now has in it "God's wisdom filled with rich variety" (Eph 3:10). The Temple of God is the one who is a visionary of the holy unity, and the altar of God is the contemplation of the Holy Trinity.
- 5.88 Zion is a sign of the first knowledge and Egypt the indication of all wickedness, but the symbol of natural contemplation is Jerusalem, where Mount Zion is, the citadel of the city.
- 6.90 Whoever is made worthy of spiritual knowledge will assist the holy angels, and will bring back the rational beings from vice to virtue and from ignorance to knowledge. Examine our words, our brothers, and explain with diligence the symbols of the centuries in the number of the six days of creation.¹⁵

Evagrius of Pontus had in turn been a student of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, and since his thinking resembles Gregory of Nyssa's, he might well be expected to have imitated the mild Origenism of his older contemporaries. Yet the interruption in 382 of his career in Constantinople led him in a different direction. His interpretation of Moses follows more closely the works of Origen and Clement, almost two centuries earlier than his own career. For this change in direction Melania and Rufinus were indirectly and possibly directly responsible.¹⁶ They had Origen's works available in Jerusalem, and Evagrius may have read Origen, and Origen's interpretation of Moses, there. Melania had clothed Evagrius as a monk and sent him to Egypt, to study with her monastic friends

15 *Kephalaia Gnostika*, S2, translation by Robin Darling Young, Joel Kalvesmaki, Columba Stewart, Luke Dysinger, and Charles Stang (New York: Oxford University Press), forthcoming.

16 See the discussions of Rufinus, Melania and their associates, including Evagrius, in Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Jon Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1988); and Michael W. O'Laughlin, *Origenism in the Desert: Anthropology and Integration in Evagrius Ponticus* (Ph.D. diss.; Harvard University, 1987).

and collaborators, and in Nitria he may have encountered Origen's works and those of Clement, interpreted by his teachers Macarius the Great and Macarius of Egypt either orally or in writings that are now lost. He may well have known the letters of Anthony, which mention Moses in the monastic context; but he most likely began there, in Nitria and Kellia, the work of adapting Clement and Origen's thought, and thus also their thought on Moses, to the needs of the monastic life, as he saw them.¹⁷

Evagrius applied to that situation the three-level moral and contemplative curriculum—the paidetic mystagogy¹⁸—that gave form to the aim of Origen's entire body of work. Evagrius also revived Clement of Alexandria's description of the Christian philosopher as a *Gnōstikos*;¹⁹ and with these elements he also adopted their earlier writings concerning Moses, bending them to the new, monastic moment in Christian philosophical discourse.

The following essay shows how Moses is the exemplar and living guide for the gnostic monk, according to Evagrius. Moses' teachings inform the *πρακτικὴ*, the part of the monk's life when through constant struggle the virtues supplant the vicious and demonic reasonings and missteps; he shows how this effort makes Moses one of the first friends of God; and he exemplifies the gnostic who both teaches others and provides the pattern by which the monastic specifically as a gnostic priest gains the contemplation of nature and of the Trinity that is the proper end of human life. Because Evagrius usually wrote his works as collections of kephalaia, he writes few extended discussions of biblical texts in which Moses is the main subject; exegetical approaches of the Alexandrian

17 Antoine Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Evagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les grecs et chez les syriens* (Paris: Seuil, 1962), and idem, *Un philosophe au désert: Evagre le Pontique* (Paris: Vrin, 2004).

18 Among numerous discussions of the pedagogical structure of Origen's thought, see Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du verbe incarné* (Paris: Seuil, 1958) and more recently, and responding to contemporary intellectual currents, Vlad Niculescu, *The Spell of the Logos: Origen's Exegetic Pedagogy in the Continuing Debate Regarding Logocentrism* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009). For Evagrius' continuation of Origen's "paidetic mystagogy" see the same author's perceptive treatment of Evagrius' adaptation of the Alexandrian tradition in Vlad Niculescu, "Coping with the Grief of Ignorance. Evagrius Ponticus's Hermeneutics of the Distance between God and Humanity," *Arches: Revue Internationale des Sciences Humaines* 7 (2004).

19 Antoine Guillaumont, "Le gnostique chez Clément d'Alexandrie et chez Evagre le Pontique," in *Alexandrina: Hellénisme, judaïsme et christianisme à Alexandrie. Mélanges offerts au P. Claude Mondésert* (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 195–201. Also see the current author's discussion of Evagrius' adaptation of passages of Clement's *Stromateis*: Robin Darling Young, "Xeniteia According to Evagrius of Pontus," in Blake Leyerle and Robin Darling Young, eds., *Ascetic Culture: Essays in Honor of Philip Rousseau* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 229–252.

tradition are presupposed. Nonetheless, Moses emerges across Evagrius' ascetic and philosophical works as a mind who has learned, from the world he observes and from his own, now peaceable, body and soul, how to return to himself.

1 Evagrius' Turn to Origenian Exegesis

Perhaps when Evagrius had assisted bishops as, first, a reader for Basil, bishop of Caesarea, and then a deacon for Gregory of Nazianzus, he had understood Moses as a pattern for the ascetic bishop. According to their understanding of Moses, the monk-turned-bishop was like Moses in that he had been tempered by an encounter with God in solitude, and was now made ready, like Moses, to emerge into public life and lead the people in his charge.

It is possible that Evagrius had heard Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaëmeron* at their delivery in 370; it is likely that the future monk had helped write Gregory's orations against the Arians, traditionally called the *Theological Orations*. The first and second of those orations picture the theologian as one who, like Moses, ascends Sinai alone after preparation and purification, to bring back divine knowledge while others must remain lower on the slopes of the mountain.²⁰ The similarities between Evagrius' thought and that of Gregory of Nyssa, thoroughly demonstrated by Kevin Corrigan, make it plausible that he knew the latter's *Life of Moses*, or at least knew of Gregory's interpretation of the patriarch.²¹

Yet although Evagrius knew the interpretation of Moses put forward by his teachers, he did not reproduce it once he began his own literary work, after 383, in the monastic settlements of Egypt. For Evagrius, Moses was not primarily a leader or a lawgiver, though he certainly did foreshadow Christ. Evagrius evidently had to incorporate Moses into his interpretation of the monastic life pursued in exurban Nitria and Kellia, where monks were virtually autonomous, and where Moses did not prefigure the Christian bishop. Furthermore, all the remaining works of Evagrius date from after his tutelage in Cappadocia and in Constantinople; Evagrius developed his philosophy and his biblical interpretation under the influence of the Alexandrian tradition. He may have gained direct knowledge of that tradition only when he departed from Constantinople.

20 See, most recently, the discussion in Susanna Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 411–412.

21 Kevin Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the Fourth Century* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 185–186.

His first exposure to the thought of Origen, and probably of Clement of Alexandria as well, came from the community of Melania and Rufinus on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Evagrius became associated with this community under circumstances left unclear by Palladius, whose biographical note on Evagrius concentrated upon his flight from Constantinople;²² but he must have joined their project of appreciating the works of Origen; even when he had departed Jerusalem for Egypt, he continued to correspond with both teachers. As translators of Origen, Rufinus and Melania intended to introduce the Alexandrian's works to the Latin-speaking West of the fourth century; but when Evagrius settled in Nitria, he met teachers who evidently had continued to develop the thought of Origen in its Greek, Egyptian setting, as a basis for monastic contemplative practice. Both Evagrius' letters back to Rufinus and Melania, preserved in the Syriac letters collection, and his collections of treatises, pedagogical kephalaia, and scholia on biblical works, show that he had both joined their effort to develop the thought of Origen, and had learned from those ascetics in Egypt who knew Origen's and Clement's works, and adapted them to their own, specifically monastic, efforts.

Rather, Moses was for Evagrius a model of the practical life, in which thoughts prompted by demons are fought and virtues cultivated; an example of gentleness; a friend of the savior; a contemplative observer of nature visible and hidden; and, finally, a *Gnōstikos* and priest of a spiritual temple he had foreseen. The following essay discusses in turn these aspects of Moses in the interpretation of Evagrius.

These are the seeds with which Evagrius of Pontus, possibly drawing from the work of Gregory of Nazianzus, and somewhat more remotely, perhaps drawing upon Gregory of Nyssa's retelling of Philo's *Life of Moses*, sowed Moses into his teaching and made him a *gnostikos* and ascetic. It will be seen that there are several moments in the creation of this monastic Moses—moments that show how Evagrius takes Moses and inserts him into his own program of ascetic development. Evagrius retrieves the approach of Clement of Alexandria and elaborates several stages in the life of Moses—stages that also exemplify the progress of the monastic *Gnōstikos* and that, by implication, can be soon to turn Evagrius himself into an exemplary Moses.

22 Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 8. Cuthbert Butler, *The Lausiaca History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898–1904).

2 Moses and the *πρακτική*

As lawgiver, Moses made an inviting subject for a monastic author like Evagrius, who himself created or transmitted regulations: among other works, he assembled collections of short statements as guides for those just beginning the monastic life. Since Evagrius had read and followed Clement and Origen's treatments, he understood the Pentateuch as upholding and illuminating the *πρακτική*.

So, for example, Evagrius writes two letters to rebuke the ascetic deacon Severa, who had proposed to travel (possibly from Jerusalem where she may have lived in Melania's community) to visit and seek counsel from him. His *Letter Seven* explains to Severa his reluctance to have a visit from a woman; *Letter Eight*, confirming his judgment, is probably to Melania.²³ In the latter, he accounts for his refusal, and his rebuke of Severa:

Paul it is who "will conquer with the weapons of the right and of the left." (2 Cor 6:7) But of me, then, this is [right] to say: "my wounds grow stagnant and fester in the presence of my follies," (Ps 37:6) and, further, "pardon my sin, for it is great." (Ps 24:11) These things are being said to me by your holy letters. Teach your sisters and your (female ascetic?) children not to undertake a lengthy journey, and not to go into desert places without testing, for this is alien to every soul that has withdrawn far from the world.

For it is right for everyone who wishes to pursue the path of virtue to guard not only against the sin which is in an action, but also not to offend by means of a reasoning (*λογισμός*). *For the warning that is about sin that is in action belongs to Moses, but that which is about the λογισμός is a warning which comes from Our Savior* (Matt 5:28f., Mk 7:21) [emphasis mine]. And I am astounded if there is a woman who, going around and meeting with many persons, is able to perfect this way of life.

23 The Syriac version of the lost Greek text of Evagrius' letters exists in a diplomatic edition of one manuscript, BL Add. 14578, printed in Wilhelm Frankenberg, ed., *Evagrius Ponticus*, Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse NF 13,2 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1912). It has been introduced, translated, annotated and the probable recipients identified by Gabriel Bunge, ed., *Evagrius Pontikos: Briefe aus der Wüste* (Trier: Paulinus, 1986) with subsequent Polish and Italian translations; various letters have been translated into English; for current bibliography see <http://evagriusponticus.net/corpus.htm>. An English translation will be published in the *Fathers of the Church* series, by the author of this essay.

But although Moses appears as an example of avoiding a “sin in action” (where the Syriac probably translates *πράγμα*) in the above letter to Melania, he can also be an example of the battle with thoughts. In the only letter to be preserved nearly whole in Greek, Evagrius writes to a correspondent, evidently dwelling in Jerusalem, who had been a high imperial official before becoming a monk:

2. But in regard to the other [tempting-] thoughts you fail to understand that they proceed from the heart and soil the mind; and if it mentally consents to them, it draws near to sin. And there is a contradiction [*ἀντίρροησις*] against them, in regard to both intention and action. For consenting to sin, even in thought, is accounted as sin. *And see how Moses teaches you, saying “Do not agree [or, perhaps, “make a pact”] with them!” (Deut 7:22).²⁴ And in the Gospel the Lord condemns the *νοῦς* as adulterer that only looks passionately on a woman (Matt 5:28), as well as one that mentally angers a brother [emphasis mine].*

3. These commandments uproot from the heart [any] consent to lawlessness, and prepare in the *νοῦς* the way for the Lord. But the ignorant regard it as foolish to undertake this path, and imagine they fulfill the apostolic path in a single moment, as if keeping the commandments were hindered only through physical suffering: for the [tempting-] thoughts that arise from these are transitory, while envy and resentment endure into old age.

4. Perhaps the [tempting-] thoughts of the praetorium do not afflict you; but is it not possible that you are afflicted by [tempting-] thoughts of vainglory? Take care that although physically in “Jerusalem” your spirit is distant from “Bethany” through which your tempting thoughts of avarice and its associated failings incline towards shopping, buying and selling salt, vinegar, and bread, while there are starving thousands deserving of daily bread!

24 The Syriac translation possibly reflects Deut 7:1–2, a portion of the specification of 6:4. This passage lists the nations occupying the land of promise, and forbids cooperation between the Israelites and the occupants of the land: “When the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy.” Evagrius believes that the author, Moses, understands the text as allegorical, and referring to the demons with whom the monk must not agree in action; Jesus agrees, and specifies that agreeing with the thoughts them prompt is also forbidden.

Evagrius has here directed his letter toward a correspondent whom he fears may be tempted to think that his presence in the city of Jerusalem, in a land that had rapidly become a pilgrimage site, ensures his progress in the ascetic life; Moses, with Jesus, then become teachers who reinforce each other's specific commands to renounce sinful actions and their accompanying thoughts. In accordance with his role here as ascetic teacher, Evagrius habitually interprets biblical texts as if they address the ascetic life directly, and even primarily.

Several extracts from Evagrius' early works can demonstrate how Moses figures as an exemplar. Several of Evagrius' works in effect function as rules that Evagrius writes to friends, rules about the monastic life. In the period in which he wrote, there were few set rules of life; exemplars and stories circulated, along with letters. Evagrius eventually settled on collections of kephalaia for meditation, but some of his earlier works, like *Foundations of the Monastic Life*, and *To Eulogius*, are clearly meant to function as rules though they are ostensibly addressed to only one person.

The latter deals extensively with the wealthy young man who has taken up the monastic life. For instance, in his new company, his luxuries must go: "As for one who has been recently admitted to the radiant assembly of monks, let him drive away the thoughts coming to him from his family that hold out praise as bait, in order that he might not seek people's praise but the beatitude that comes from the commandments."²⁵

Like his love of praise is the beginning monk's tendency to need the admiration that comes from a display of wardrobe. It is interesting to consider a case in which monastics would have arrived in Nitria with trunks of clothing, but nonetheless Evagrius writes:

Do not dress yourself in the finest clothes, lest you quite blatantly put on the demon of vainglory, for the virtues are not born in the beauty of one's clothes, but in the beauty of the soul ascetic works are worn as golden embroideries.

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As in *Foundations*, Evagrius here joins this rule to a rare warning of hell: "fear of the inextinguishable worm", an idea he dropped in later works. But his point here is to recommend that a new monk obtain an experienced teacher. The new monk, beginning the life of the *praktikos*, needs to labor at the virtues, but

25 Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 49.

only with the guidance of a teacher: “He who through his experience makes known the error of the thoughts will not be recognized by all, except for those with experience, for experience constitutes the path towards the gnostic life at this stage. The ground for both of them is the practical life; and if we lay hold of this with greater ascetic effort, we will come to know ourselves, we will pass judgment on thoughts and we will come to know god.”

3 Moses as Example of a Monk Guided with a Rule of Life

For Evagrius Moses can also stand, not just as an example of one who pursues virtuous action and repels λογισμοί ([tempting-] thoughts), but as one who himself requires a guide, and in whose relationship with Jethro Evagrius finds an example of a beginning monk advised by a senior. Perhaps he also is thinking here of Moses as the recipient of advice from a learned teacher not within the church—just as Evagrius like earlier Alexandrians had incorporated Graeco-Roman ethics and philosophy into his teaching, or occasionally indicated his opinion that pagan wisdom concurred with Christian. As a Midianite, Zipporah’s father Jethro was a priest who anticipated the priesthood established by Moses and Aaron, and was brought to bless Moses’ God (Exod 18:10).

In *Eulogius* 23, Evagrius is setting out instructions for one whom he expects to be part of a monastic community. It is not obvious from the treatise itself, but here and in a related passage in the *Gnōstikos*, Evagrius intertwines his own text with Exodus 18, the story of Jethro’s instruction of Moses in the wilderness before Moses’ ascent of Mt. Sinai. In turn, Evagrius’ interpretation rests upon the interpretation of Moses established by Origen in his *Homilies on Exodus*, and on the portrait of Moses in Clement’s *Stromateis*, book 1 (itself mediating Philo’s *Life of Moses*). Four sentences in the middle of the paragraph establish these connections, and their logical sequence makes clear that Evagrius considers both Jethro the pagan and Moses the prophet to be models for the *Gnōstikos*.

He who through his experience (πειρα) makes known the error (πλανή) of the thoughts (λογισμοί) will not be recognized (εὔγνωστος) by all, except for those with experience, for experience constitutes the path towards the gnostic life at this stage. The cause (αίτια) of both of them is the practical life; and if we lay hold of greater toil, we will more fully know ourselves, we will resist the thoughts, and we will more fully know God. As for the person experienced in the emigration of the practical life and the homecoming of the gnostic life, who anoints the simple with the skill (τεχνή) of the thoughts—let him watch, let him not boast about the gnostic life

to make a show for his own glory. But if a thought steals in, extolling him [i.e. the gnostic teacher], let him take for his assistance the novice Jethro who gave to Moses, the great prophet, as a result of grace, a wise counsel and discernment (σοφὴ συμβουλίαν καὶ διάκρισιν).

Evagrius has taken the story of Jethro's visit to Moses in Exodus 18 as a prototype of the instruction that one teacher can give to another. The appearance, in the Septuagint translation of the chapter, of the various forms of the verb γιγνώσκω made it an appealing text for a thinker who was reviving and extending the attempt to claim *gnōsis* for orthodox Christian teaching in the monastic context; but as we shall see, Origen's interpretation of the text—without reference to *gnōsis*, a term he tended to avoid—strongly influenced Evagrius' interpretation as well.

Apparently Evagrius saw in this story an instance of pedagogy, for which reason he called Jethro a μεγαλόνυμος—a word signifying novice, freshman, or even a catechumen. In Exod 18:10–12 (LXX), Jethro is presented as having blessed the Lord, confessing that he knows (ἔγνω) the Lord to be “greater than all the gods,” and finally acting as a priest bringing “an entirely-burnt offering and sacrifices to God.” Here Jethro has shown in summary fashion the steps of initiation or mystagogy appealing to a monastic teacher in Egypt—he has come into the desert, bringing to Moses a wife and two sons who promptly disappear from the story, and going “into the tabernacle,” a word with a range of meanings including, of course, a symbol both of the church and of heaven.

Moses had, in Exod 3:1 and 4:18, already taken refuge with Jethro both before and after his encounter with God in the burning bush. But here Moses has begun to lead the journey of the Israelites to the land of promise—a narrative that also signified, in the Alexandrian tradition, the departure from sin and a journey into an increasing knowledge of God. *Eulogius* 23, though, centers around Exod 3:18–27. There Jethro observes Moses' daily judging of the people of Israel; Jethro advises Moses to take their cases before God, and to “teach them the statutes and instructions” they will need, and in addition setting over them subordinate judges. Jethro is, in short, advising Moses as both a teacher and a judge, proposing a form of community regulation—and also, in the order of the Exodus story, a catalyst for Moses' receiving the commandments on Mt. Sinai after following Jethro's instructions.

In this passage from *Eulogius*, Evagrius has been guided by Origen's *Homily 11 on Exodus* of some 140 years earlier.²⁶ In his Caesarean years, when Origen

26 I use here the translation by Ronald E. Heine, *Origen, Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, Fathers of the Church 71 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982).

preached these homilies, he may have been asked about the apparently odd situation in which a pagan has instructed the great prophet and lawgiver; Origen's opinion was this:

As I see it, Jethro did not come to Moses in vain, nor was it in vain that he ate bread with the elders of the people in the presence of the Lord. For he gives counsel to Moses that is commendable enough, and useful.²⁷

Later Origen favorably contrasts Moses, who accepts counsel from a pagan, with "those who preside over the people"—surely, bishops—and do not even listen to "lower priests," much less laymen or gentiles. And this is true even if the bishop has not "already received revelations from God, but if he has some merit of knowledge of the Law." Moses, on the other hand, "who was 'meek above all men,' accepted the counsel of a lower man [Jethro] both that he might give a model of humility to the leaders of the people and represent an image of the future mystery."²⁸

Moses, writes Origen, knew that in the future the gentiles would offer a spiritual understanding of the law to God, whereby Jethro's sacrifice stands for that future spiritual understanding. Yet Jethro serves a second purpose in Origen's interpretation, representing the gentiles who will join Israel in service to God. In another homily on Exodus, Origen remarked that "philosophy is neither opposed to everything in the Law of God, nor in harmony with everything."²⁹ Moses' acceptance of Jethro's counsel, for Origen, accords with his own regard for pagan moral philosophy. For Evagrius, the relationship between Jethro and Moses seems to recall not only the acceptance of pagan learning and moral philosophy, valuable and necessary for Christian scriptural interpretation and moral practice. Jethro seems to be Moses' elder, one who advises him in the desert, and therefore his role in the story is similar to the role of a gnostic teacher in Evagrius' own ascetic circle in the "desert" of Nitria and Kellia.

4 Moses as Author of a Treatise on Nature

In addition to his position as both teacher and student in Evagrius' thought, Moses precisely as a gnostic teacher and one who by definition had attained ἀπαθεία, or stillness, was able to gain knowledge of the workings of the created

²⁷ Homily 11, p. 362.

²⁸ Homily 11, p. 364.

²⁹ Homily 9 on Exodus, p. 199.

world by means of the λόγοι of things—to see their inner architecture. In his *Praktikos*, Evagrius examines how the passions are stimulated, in order to prescribe remedies for them; he cites Moses as the original authority on the matter:

The passions are naturally moved by sensations, and, if love and abstinence are present they will not be moved; but in their absence, they will be moved. Therefore, the irascible needs more remedies than the concupiscible. And therefore love is called “great” (1 Cor 13:13) because it is the bridle of the irascible; it is this also that that saint Moses, in the treatise *On Nature*, symbolically named “enemy of serpents [mongoose]” (Lev 11:22).³⁰

Moses is the source of Evagrius’ own teaching—or at least the teaching that he (in the final florilegium of the *Praktikos*) claims to have derived from his teachers concerning the role of *agapē* in controlling or harnessing the irascible (θυμικός) portion of the soul. So much has already been stated in Philo, as the Guillaumonts note in their commentary; but more interesting is the portrayal of Moses as now, not just a great prophet, but also a saint and an author of a treatise on nature. What also that Moses, the holy one, saw in the natural things he named symbolically a snake-killer (ὄφιομάχην). Evagrius perhaps has derived his allegorical exegesis of Leviticus 11:22 (LXX) from Philo, where the text reads ὄφιομάχος for *hagab* (probably originally a mongoose), and translates it as “serpent-killer” for locust or ichneumon-fly. Following Philo, then, Evagrius understands the snake-killer as an insect. It is notable that Evagrius has made Moses in effect the author of a treatise on the natural world. But how did Moses come to be like Aristotle? First, he had a disposition that made him a good natural scientist—*praotēs*, a quality identical to that ascribed by Christ to himself in Matt 11:29.

A passage from Letter 56 helps to amplify Evagrius’ views of Moses:

Moses was the gentlest of men (Num 12:3) where LXX reads “And the man Moses was very gentle, beyond all the men who were existing on the earth,” and with reason the Holy Spirit has said that he has shown

30 *Praktikos* 38, in Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*. Sinkewicz compares this kephalaion with *Kephalaia Gnostica* 3.35, which says “Spiritual knowledge purifies the mind, love heals the irascible part and abstinence halts the flowing of desire,” where the irascible part (τὸ θυμικὸν μέρος) appears in Ps 57:5, “Their anger bears the likeness of a serpent.” If the serpent is anger, then the *ophiomachēs* stands for the love that destroys it.

his ways to Moses (Ps 102:7). This gentleness, transmit to your brothers, that they not fall back easily into wrath. For no vice is more effective than wrath, to make the intellect become demonic, thanks to the troubling of the irascible part [of the soul]. It is said, in fact, in the Psalm, “their wrath resembles a serpent (Ps 57:5).” ... Thus let none of the brothers resemble a serpent, and do not approve for them any abstinence excluding gentleness Tell me, in fact, why Scripture, when it wishes to make a praise of Moses, leaves on the side all the miracles that he has done and recalls only his gentleness?³¹

Evagrius seems to have had in mind as well Num 12:6–8: “When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams. Not so with my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face—clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the glory of the Lord.”

In this passage, Evagrius makes it clear that Moses has become at the same time the remedy for the serpent who stands for wrath, and the paragon of all the gentle humans on the earth. Evagrius also joins the contemporary discussion on the problem of anger as a disruptive force in late ancient society. According to William Harris, the fourth century saw Christians enter as philosophers into the late-ancient discussion about rage as a social problem. No less than six thinkers, four of them connected directly or indirectly to Evagrius, dealt with the topic as a disease to be diagnosed and cured. Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus along with John Chrysostom considered the public aspects of anger, as had John’s teacher Libanius.³² In ascetic circles, as Richard Layton has shown, Didymus the Blind, teaching in Alexandria at roughly the same time as Evagrius, also advocated ἀπάθεια as the cure for anger and after Evagrius, and taught by him, John Cassian introduced a discussion of anger into his Conferences.³³

31 Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 604, ll. 12–14.

32 William V. Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 391–420.

33 Richard Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 116; Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (New York: Oxford University Press), 33–34.

5 Moses as Friend of Christ

If the cure for wrath is gentleness acquired through following the *πρακτική*, gentleness—the opposite of wrath and envy—is also the foundation for friendship, and here Moses also becomes an exemplar of the friendship that marks proximity to Christ. Two of Evagrius' scholia on Proverbs, 69 and 304, point out how Moses is Christ's friend:

Everyone carrying a pledge of the friend of the apostles, Christ, that he is righteousness and truth, "betrays" his soul to "enemies" who have the habit of fighting human beings because of their friendship for the Savior. Spiritual friendship is in fact the knowledge of God in which the holy ones receive the title of "friends of God." It is thus that John the Baptist was a friend of the spouse, just like Moses and the apostles. [Christ] indeed has said, "I no longer call you servants, but friends." "Aggravate" by prayers and supplications "your friend as well to whom you are pledged," in saying "Guard me, Lord, from the hand of the sinner, deliver me from the unjust man and my enemies," because "it is because of you that we are put to death the whole day and are numbered as sheep for the slaughter."

Evagrius here comments on Prov 6:1: "Son, if you carry a pledge of your friend, you will betray your hand to the enemy." Appropriately for his general purpose, he understands "the enemy" as demons who fight the friends of Christ by prompting one of the thoughts that disturb and tempt the monk.

The next mention of Moses comes in Evagrius' comment on Prov 25:10a: "Grace and friendship make free; which ones you should guard for yourself, in order that you not become blamed." Here Evagrius expands the meaning of the word "free" by associating it with other scriptural instances to show that Moses was like Solomon and John the Baptist in being free and a friend of Christ because he had "the knowledge of Christ":

Solomon often recalls the friend and friendship. Therefore one does well now to call attention to that which the word of "friendship" seems to mean to him. He says in fact that "grace and friendship make free," just as the savior in the gospels said to the Jews who were persuaded by him, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my students, and the truth will free you." And further, Paul wrote "Christ has freed us from the curse of the law." Therefore, if "friendship frees," if "the truth frees," if the savior frees, "truth" and "friendship" are Christ. Therefore also all those hav-

ing the knowledge of Christ are friends of each other. It is thus that the savior has called his disciples friends, and John was a friend of the bridegroom, and Moses also and all the holy ones. And it is only in this kind of friendship that the friends of the same person are also friends of each other.

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It is interesting that Evagrius has dispersed his teaching on Moses into disparate treatises, but perhaps Moses is mainly an exemplar for a curriculum that Evagrius wants to convey to his readers. Moses listened to the wise counsel of Jethro; he defeated anger; he practiced gentleness, and because he was gentle, he became a friend of Christ. To become a friend of Christ is, in turn, to be party to the knowledge of God, which throughout the work of Evagrius is said to depend upon stilling anger, gaining gentleness, and being receptive to natural knowledge in a state that can lead to contemplation and knowledge. So Evagrius summarizes this in *Thoughts* 13, in a passage in which he arranges scriptural texts attesting the quality in Moses, David and Christ:

If someone has mastered irascibility, he has mastered the demons, but if someone is a slave to this passion, he is a complete foreigner to the monastic life and a stranger to the ways of our Saviour, since the Lord himself is said to teach the gentle his ways (cf. Ps 24:9). Thus, the mind of anchorites becomes difficult to capture when it flees to the plain of gentleness. For hardly any of the virtues do the demons fear as they fear gentleness. The great Moses possessed this virtue, for he was called “gentle beyond all men” (Num 12:3) and the holy David claimed that it is worthy of the memory of God, saying, “Remember David and all his gentleness,” (Ps 131:1); moreover the Saviour himself commanded us to be imitators of his gentleness, saying, “Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matt 11:29).” And if someone abstains from food and drink but rouses his irascible part to anger by means of evil thoughts, he is like a ship sailing the high seas with a demon for a pilot. So as far as possible, it is necessary to keep watch over this dog of ours and teach him to destroy only the wolves and not to devour the sheep, while showing every gentleness to all people.³⁴

34 (Thoughts 13, Sinkiewicz) In Letter 4, to John of Jerusalem, Evagrius had described himself as one who was such a ship, steered by a demon-pilot.

To move from anger and enmity toward gentleness and friendship was to follow Moses' example, and Gregory of Nyssa had also described such a passage, in his *On the Inscriptions of the Psalms*, making David one who had ascended from wrath and sexual license toward gentleness. Such was not just a communal virtue—it was also a prerequisite for seeing the natural world clearly, and understanding it.

6 Moses as Gnostic Priest

Evagrius did not follow the pattern of his teachers' interpretation of Moses as the model for a holy bishop, and that the obvious reason for this was his departure from the service of bishops when he became a monk. Yet like Clement, Evagrius regarded the genuine priest as a sage who could teach and guide the church, and he adds yet another layer of interpretation in his discussion of the role of Moses as the architect of a priesthood preceding by far the institution of the Christian priesthood detailed by Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom, or the Aaronic priesthood they held to be the type supplanted by the Christian hierarchy. If Moses was a gentle scientist, for Evagrius he was also a noetic priest, having provided the pattern for the Temple priesthood as well as for its spiritual appropriation by monks. And if Evagrius had begun *On Prayer* with the observation that the elements of the incense-offering are actually the cardinal virtues, he also portrayed Moses as the prototype of priestly approach to the noetic altar. To recall the passage cited above:

4. If Moses, when he tried to approach the earthly burning bush, was held back until he removed the sandals from his feet (Exod 3:5), how can you, who wish to see and commune with the one who is beyond all representation and sense perception, not free yourself from every mental representation tied to the passions?

Thus Evagrius was proposing that Moses—the teacher of the outward law of the *πρακτική*—was also the guide to its penultimate goal, namely the knowledge of the *logoi*, the creative principles, of the cosmos. As we have seen, Evagrius described Moses' gnostic leadership in at least two ways. The first way he scattered in various chapters of the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, where he decodes the meaning of the garments of the high priest, as recorded by Moses. Eighteen kephalaia state, for instance, the meaning of the robe, the ephod, and the undergarment of the high priest, transposing them into moral qualities. Kephalaion 5.84 proposes that “the intelligible temple” described by Moses “is

the pure mind, which now has in it ‘God’s wisdom filled with rich variety (Eph 3:10).’” At the same time it is “the one who is a visionary of the holy unity; and the altar of God is the contemplation of the Holy Trinity.”

Moses in the *Kephalaia Gnōstika*, then, was the author of both the path to, and the state of, contemplation. Yet another text, this one preserved in Greek, connects Moses with the problem of the mental representations (νοήματα) “of this age” that arise in the human being and require watchful care, “like sheep with a good shepherd (John 10:1–18).” *Thoughts 17* elaborately constructs an equivalence between Jesus, Jacob, David, and, finally, Moses. If the shepherd becomes weary after a long night of guarding these representations as the wolves of the (demon-agitated) passions encircle them, first David, and finally Moses, have already pointed toward a respite:

If as a result of weariness a certain ἀκηδία comes over us, let us take refuge for a while upon the rock of knowledge, let us take our harp and strike the notes of knowledge by means of the virtues. Then, let us once again graze our sheep at the foot of Mount Sinai, that the God of our Fathers may call to us too from out of the bush (cf. Exod 3:1–6) and grant us to know the reasons of “the signs and wonders” (cf. Exod 7:9; 11:9–10).

It may look as if Evagrius has made Moses into primarily a type, of which Christ, or Christian teaching, is the fulfillment. Yet in several sentences of the *Kephalaia Gnōstika*, an esoteric work meant for reading by the *gnōstikoi*, Evagrius makes it clear that Moses was aware of the first creation of the world and the original minds before they fell and became embodied humans with souls. Two *kephalaia* will show this:

Among the beings, some have come into being before the judgment [of fallen ones], and others after the judgment. And on the subject of the first, no one has made [any knowledge] known, but on the subject of the second, he who was on Horeb (Exod 3:1) has made such an account.³⁵

For Evagrius, the term “judgment” refers to the distribution of fallen minds in bodies that are angelic, human or demonic. He does not explicitly tell his readers how Moses attained his knowledge of the judgment and the second creation that resulted from it, but the prophet’s ability in contemplation of nature and of the divinity would have made him able to write down what he knew, in obscure

35 *Kephalaia Gnōstika* 2.64 (p. 87).

language, to let other *gnōstikoi* become aware of the origin of the world; as Evagrius writes in *Kephalaia Gnōstika* 6.45,

Not one of the worlds has been greater than the first world; for one says that that one has been made from the first principle; and that in it will be accomplished all the worlds, an athlete and *Gnōstikos* has handed down to us.³⁶

Just as Moses' instruction was both plain and symbolic, it is for the monastic *Gnōstikos* to manifest the inner knowledge of the priest, and to understand that Moses' instructions were not meant to specify only visible ceremonies, but to guide the *Gnōstikos* in acquiring the dispositions and knowledge that would furnish the means of ascent, through the acquisition of virtue, natural knowledge, friendship with God and finally, knowledge and union. Evagrius' understanding of Moses shows that he is not primarily a model for episcopal leadership, but for the establishment of rules of life, the study of nature, and the gnostic instruction that still, for Evagrius, expressed the deepest purpose of *Christianismos*.³⁷

36 See the discussion in Vlad Niculescu, "Coping With the Grief of Ignorance," 12.

37 See *Praktikos* 1: "Christianity (*Christianismos*) is the teaching of Christ our Savior. It is composed of the practical, the natural and the theological." See Antoine and Claire Guillaumont, *Evagre le Pontique: Traité pratique, ou Le Moine*, 2 vols., SC 17–171 (Paris: Cerf, 1971), 2.498–499.

Holy Sound: Preaching as Divine Song in Late Antique Syriac Tradition

Susan Ashbrook Harvey

Late antique Syriac Christianity is known for the extraordinary flourishing of its liturgical poetry. Over the course of this era (roughly 4th–7th cent. CE), poetry came to characterize every aspect of Syriac liturgy: its hymns, prayers, supplications, and indeed, its preaching. Syriac scholars have long contrasted the two basic categories of Syriac poetry that provided the types and sub-genres for these different purposes: the *madrasha* (pl. *madrashe*) and *memra* (pl. *memre*). *Madrashe* were characterized by a great variety of meters and melodies; manuscripts often include the melody titles, although the music from this period is unknown to us. These were arranged in strophes sung by chanters and female and male choirs, with refrains contributed by the congregation. By contrast, *memre* took the form of isosyllabic couplets, simply metered according to several preferred patterns: 5 + 5, 7 + 7, or 12 + 12. *Memre* are generally referred to (by scholars and, as will be indicated below, in primary sources) as verse homilies or metrical sermons, performed by a male liturgical agent, usually a priest or bishop. Scholars have suggested that *memre* were recited rather than sung. Perhaps, when performed liturgically, recitation was heightened by intonation or the form of chanting known as cantillation. Both *madrashe* and *memre* during late antiquity provided strikingly eloquent vehicles for religious pedagogy. For both, content focused on biblical story telling and exegesis, basic doctrinal instruction, and guidance for Christian life.¹

However, it is a further feature of late antique Syriac liturgies that the contrasts between these two broad poetic forms seem to have diminished, or at least became elided, in the context of liturgical performance. *Madrashe*, with their stanzaic arrangements, yet sometimes did not include refrains. *Memre*, intoned in cadenced couplets, sometimes did, implying congregational participation during homiletic instruction. After the dazzling splendor of Ephrem the Syrian's fourth-century hymnography, *madrashe* grew simpler in metered

1 For an important introduction, see Sebastian P. Brock, "Poetry and Hymnography (3): Syriac," in Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 657–671.

strophes and more straightforward in content. Memre assumed increasing popularity as a form of liturgical teaching, and flowered especially in the fifth and sixth centuries with the lyrical skill of poets such as Jacob of Sarug and Narsai of Nisibis. A major shift in liturgical usage, from contrast between the two genre to greater commonality in performative aspects, is clear, even if the reasons are not evident.² What continued to be indisputable, however, was a profound devotion of Syriac Christians during late antiquity to sung poetry as the primary vehicle for worship, devotional piety, and religious instruction.

Late antique Syriac sources raise the issue of shared performative expression for *madrashe* and *memre* by the occasional use of shared imagery or shared description in reference to both. This shared imagery might be broadly described as twofold: first, references to both hymns and sermons as melodically sung; and second, characterizations of both as potent, effective weapons of pedagogy. This imagery attributed musicality to preaching, and also attributed deep affect and effective impact for the singing of hymns as for melodic preaching. Such imagery appeared in hagiography exalting the great poet preachers of late antiquity: for example, the figures of Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373), Rabbula of Edessa (d. 435), Narsai of Nisibis (d. 502), and Jacob of Sarug (d. 521). It occurs somewhat differently also in the ostensibly personal invocational prayers that introduce, and occasionally punctuate the content of, Jacob of Sarug's *memre*. My essay will examine this shared imagery about *madrashe* and *memre* to address two principal questions: What did the notion of music add to the understanding of preaching? What aspects of late antique Syriac liturgy are illumined by this imagery and its associations?

1 Singing as Weaponry

There is a well-known tradition that Ephrem the Syrian began to compose his *madrashe* as a means to fight heresy. The story was indelibly incised into hagiographical memory by both Greek and Syriac authors. Over the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, Sozomen, Theodoret of Cyrhus, Jacob of Sarug, and the anonymous author of the Syriac *Life of Ephrem* all presented such an account.³ In this hagiographical trope, Ephrem sought to fight heresy by

2 See now the magisterial study of Sidney H. Griffith, "The Poetics of Scriptural Reasoning: Syriac *Memre* at Work," in Jeffrey Wickes, Kristian S. Heal, and Markus Vinzent, eds., *Literature, Rhetoric, and Exegesis in Syriac Verse*, *Studia Patristica* 78.4 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 5–23.

3 For the hagiographical record on Ephrem, see Sebastian P. Brock, "St. Ephrem in the Eyes of Later Syriac Liturgical Tradition," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 2. 1 (1999 [2010]): 5–

presenting truth in a hymnographic form that was beautiful, penetrating, and pleasing to ear and memory alike. For example, from the *Life of Ephrem*: “When [Ephrem] saw how false teaching was drawn to these melodies [of the heretics], he then took arrangements of melodies (*qale*) and songs (*qinyatha*) and mixed [true doctrine] [lit: fear of God] in them and offered to hearers an antidote at once agreeable and wholesome.”⁴

To the image of mixing true words with pleasing melodies, Syriac hagiographers added martial imagery for the effect of Ephrem’s hymns. The anonymous *Life of Ephrem* described Ephrem’s heated fervor as he composed his *madrashé*, and described the Daughters of the Covenant whom Ephrem organized into choirs to sing his hymns as the troops he prepared for battle.⁵ In Jacob of Sarug’s *memra* on Ephrem, this martial imagery is specifically sharpened to that of archery:

This man [Ephrem]’s mouth was a bow, and his words were arrows;
He forged songs like spearheads for the weapon which he fashioned.
This man hurled wonderful melodies against the evil;
With his instruction, he eliminated stumbling blocks which had multiplied.
... When heresies, like wild animals, were encircling him;
whenever he shot his swift arrows he scattered them.⁶

The same imagery reappeared in the seventh century, in the East Syriac author Barhadbeshabba’s account of why Narsai of Nisibis turned to *memre* for preaching truth. Where the hagiographical accounts of Ephrem described *madrashé* as vehicles for contesting heresy and instructing truth, in Barhadbe-

25; Bernard Outtier, “Saint Éphrem d’après ses biographies et ses œuvres,” *Parole de l’Orient* 4.1–2 (1973): 11–33; Joseph P. Amar, *The Syriac “Vita” Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian*, CSCO 629–630/Scr. Syr. 242–243 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011). For Ephrem’s own dismayed testimony on the hymns of Bardaisan, see, e.g., his *Hymns on Heresy*, 53.6, ed. and trans. Edmund Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers hymnen contra haereses*, CSCO 169–170/Scr. Syr. 76–77 (Louvain: Durbecq, 1955).

4 Anon., *Life of Ephrem*, ch. 31 (P), ed. and trans. in Joseph P. Amar, *The Syriac “Vita” Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian*, CSCO 629/Scr. Syr. 242 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011) 73 (Syr.) and CSCO 630/Scr. Syr. 243 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011) 78 (Eng.).

5 Anon., *Life of Ephrem*, ch. 31, ed. and trans. in Amar, *The Syriac “Vita” Tradition*, CSCO 629/Scr. Syr. 242, at pp. 71–73 (Syr.) and CSCO 630/Scr. Syr. 243, at 77–80 (Eng.). Cf. Ps. 10 (11): 2 and Ps. 63 (64): 34.

6 Jacob of Sarug, “Homily on Mar Ephrem,” ed. and trans. Joseph P. Amar in *A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Mar Jacob of Sarug*, PO 47.1 (1995) here vv. 153–154, pp. 64–65; v. 182, pp. 70–71.

shabba's presentation, it was memre that were the tool of choice. In this instance, the dangers of 'heresy' were roused by the powerful and melodic preaching of the miaphysite Jacob of Sarug, to which the dyophysite Narsai responded in kind.

[Jacob of Sarug,] eloquent for evil and joined closely to heresy, began to compose his heresy and error hypocritically by the way of the memre, which he composed, since through the pleasant composition of enticing sounds he drew the bulk of the people from the glorious one. What then did [Narsai] the elect of God do? ... he set down the true opinion of orthodoxy in the manner of memre, filled upon sweet tones (*qinyatha*). He combined the meaning of the scriptures according to the opinion of the holy fathers in pleasant antiphons (*hphakatha*) in the likeness of the blessed David [in the Psalms].⁷

As Sidney Griffith has pointed out, the irony here is great. Not only did Jacob and Narsai as historical persons contest each other's theological loyalties through the same poetic form—the memra—but they did so, furthermore, in the same isosyllabic meter of 12 + 12.⁸ But what I wish to stress is the significant elision of preaching and song, for Barhadbeshabba has here presented the genre of memre in terms normally encountered for madrashe. Indeed, the passage is a virtual borrowing from the anonymous Syriac *Life of Ephrem*, ch. 31 and even—again, ironically—from Jacob of Sarug's memra on the Holy Mar Ephrem.⁹

I suggest that this conflation, or elision, of madrashe and memre meant something purposeful to late antique Syriac writers. For them, teaching, preaching, and song were deeply interwoven. Consider the traditions associated with the fifth century bishop Rabbula of Edessa, for whom neither madrashe nor memre are attested.¹⁰ According to his anonymous hagiographer,

7 Barhadbeshabba, *Ecclesiastical History*, ch. 31 ("Life of Narsai"), trans. Adam H. Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis*, TTH 50 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 69. See Becker's comment, *ibid.*, n. 160, noting the application of hymnographic terms to the genre of the memre.

8 Griffith, "Poetics of Scriptural Reasoning."

9 *Life of Ephrem*, Ch. 31; Jacob of Sarug, "Homily on Mar Ephrem," vv. 114–125, 151–154, 169–184.

10 I follow the translation in Robert Doran, *Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth-Century Edessa* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2006). The *Life of Rabbula*, in addition to the collected corpus of works preserved under Rabbula's name, both authentic and attributed, are now conveniently available in Syriac edition with English

Rabbula was converted to Christianity when he heard and saw wondrous healings performed by Christian saints. But the miracle on his own person was of a different sort. For,

[Rabbula] was especially amazed at the marvel God worked in his very own person, for the Lord opened his lips and Rabbula offered a new song (*teshbuhtha hadtha*) (Ps 40:3, 51:15; Rev 5:9), a song to God, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit Then Rabbula went to [the bishop] Acacius and revealed to him how, as he stood and prayed, God made a song (*teshbuhtha*) spring forth in his mouth.¹¹

Now, no liturgical poetry is found in Rabbula's authentic extant corpus, nor mentioned in his long and rich hagiography. Yet, beyond the hagiographical record, a large quantity of liturgical poetry was attributed to Rabbula, in the form of poetic prayers and supplications that continue to adorn Syriac Orthodox liturgical books to the present day.¹² It is as if a bishop whose preaching was of such profound effect could not be remembered without sung poetry as part of the tradition.

The *Life of Rabbula* nonetheless placed great stress on Rabbula's voice. By the power of his voice, according to the hagiography, Rabbula reformed the church infrastructure, brought justice to the city, and admonished, guided, instructed, and inspired the faithful.¹³ In the midst of an extended celebration of Rabbula's preaching on these various matters, the hagiographer turned to the matter of fighting heresy, and Edessa's particular battles with religious diversity. Beginning with followers of "the accursed Bardaisan," whose "artifice" and "sweetness of melodies (*qinyatha*)" had long captured the city, Rabbula "with a gentle and loving voice (*qala*)" drew the stragglers back to God's truth.¹⁴ Jews

translation in Robert R. Phenix, Jr. and Cornelia B. Horn, eds., *The Rabbula Corpus* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2017).

- 11 Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 69/Phenix and Horn, *Rabbula Corpus*, sec. 6–7, 14–15.
- 12 The large body of so-called "Supplications of Rabbula" are helpfully collected in Phenix and Horn, *Rabbula Corpus*, 286–409, and the Appendix, 411–417. For the manuscript witness, see Ignatius Aphrem I Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls: A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, 2nd rev. ed. by Matti Moosa (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 94.
- 13 See the *Life of Rabbula*, Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 81–97/Phenix and Horn, *Rabbula Corpus*, sec. 22–48, 36–71. The capacity of liturgical poetry for ethical formation is a constant theme and practice in the madrashe and memre of Ephrem the Syrian and Jacob of Sarug, both. See Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26.3 (2013): 300–316.
- 14 Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 91–92/Phenix and Horn, *Rabbula Corpus*, 58–61, sec. 40–41.

and other heretics soon followed: Arians, Marcionites, Manichees, and more. To each and all, Rabbula turned the power of his voice and the weapon of his words:

Thus our blessed father [Rabbula] was stretching out and shooting these spiritual arrows from the bow of his faith by the vigorous string of his true speech. Although they passed through the ears of the people harmlessly and encouraged [them], yet they struck the heart of any opponent to cause him pain and to move him to regret.¹⁵

Just so did Rabbula then endeavor to preach in Constantinople itself, refuting Nestorius's nefarious teachings in person: "with a lofty unashamed voice (*qala*), Rabbula proclaimed straightforwardly the word of truth."¹⁶

While the *Life of Rabbula* does not refer to Rabbula's sermons as *memre*, the important imagery of powerful voice (remembering that *qala* might also mean "melody") and "new song," the martial resonances for combatting heresy, and the subsequent attribution of liturgical poetry to his name, all tie Rabbula's memory to the complex of rhetorical imagery we have noted for Ephrem, Narsai, and Jacob of Sarug. What mattered to Syriac authors about the elision of song and preaching, of hymn and sermon, of *madrasha* and *memra*?

2 Combat Therapies

On the one hand, these accounts of Ephrem, Rabbula, Jacob of Sarug and Narsai, drew upon a broader religious trope that affirmed sacred song as therapeutic: the mixing of true words with sweet melodies could be an effective and powerful tool for the pursuit of virtue. This rhetorical trope appears not only in traditions about Ephrem and other Syriac poets, but also, for example, in late antique Greek commentaries on the Psalms. Basil of Caesarea, for one, attributed this strategy to the Holy Spirit's inspiration for the biblical Psalms:

For when the Holy Spirit saw that mankind was ill-inclined toward virtue and that we were heedless of the righteous life because of our inclination to pleasure, what did he do? He blended the delight of melody with doctrine in order that through the pleasantness and softness of the sound we

15 Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 97/Phenix and Horn, *Rabbula Corpus*, 66–69, sec. 45–46. Again, cf. Ps 10 (11):2 and Ps 63 (64):34.

16 Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 97/Phenix and Horn, *Rabbula Corpus*, 68–69.

might unawares receive what was useful in the words, according to the practice of wise physicians, who, when they give the more bitter draughts to the sick, often smear the rim of the cup with honey.¹⁷

In similar vein, John Chrysostom declared: “When God saw that most men were slothful ... he blended melody with prophecy in order that, delighted by the modulation of the chant, all might raise sacred hymns to him with great eagerness.”¹⁸ The notion of music as therapy resonated with the therapeutic agenda of Hellenistic philosophy broadly speaking, where different therapies, mixed and mingled, some gentle, some harsh, were prescribed for the disciplining of the passions, the cultivation of virtues, and the ethical formation of character.¹⁹ Moreover, it was these ideas that rendered music fundamental to Greek traditions of *paideia*: the appreciation that music was attractive and effective pedagogically, enabling memorization as well as ethical discipline.²⁰ While this was an ancient tradition, several significant works theorizing the therapeutic capacity of music for ethical formation appeared during roughly the same era as the texts here discussed. Porphyry’s *Life of Iamblichus*, Iamblichus’ *The Pythagorean Way of Life*, and Aristides Quintilianus’ *de musica*, all devoted extensive discussion to these themes.²¹ A shared rhetoric about music, pedagogy, and ethical formation appears in these texts as in our Syriac hagiographies of preachers and poet theologians.

Were Syriac hagiographers, or their Greek counterparts, simply drawing on a convenient philosophical trope when they wished to emphasize the efficacy of religious truth presented in the form of poetry, melodically performed? Certainly this was one available rhetorical strategy for their encomiastic agen-

17 Basil of Caesarea, “On Psalm 1,” sec. 1, trans. in Oliver Strunk and Leo Treitler, and James McKinnon, eds., *Source Readings in Music History: The Early Christian Period and the Latin Middle Ages*, rev. ed., vol. 2 (New York: Norton, 1998), 11.

18 John Chrysostom, “Exposition of Psalm 41,” trans. Strunk, Treitler, and McKinnon, *The Early Christian Period and the Latin Middle Ages*, 13.

19 For example, Martha Nussbaum, *Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Philosophy*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

20 The different traditions that contributed to early Christian music, of which Greek was a prominent one but not the only, are helpfully laid out in John Arthur Smith, “Music,” in Philip Esler, ed. *The Early Christian World*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 745–761.

21 Antonietta Provenza, “Correcting Ethos and Purifying the Body. Musical Therapy in Iamblichus’ *De vita pythagorica*,” *GRMS* 3 (2015): 94–115; Andreas Kramatz, “Is the Idea of ‘Musical Emotion’ Present in Classical Antiquity?,” *GRMS* 5 (2017): 1–17. As these studies note, the notion of music as therapy has important foundations in Plato: Elizabeth Lucia Lyon, “Ethical Aspects of Listening in Plato’s *Timaeus*: Pleasure and Delight in 80b5–8,” *GRMS* 4 (2016): 253–272.

das, to praise the saint (or the Trinity!) for exceptionally effective teaching, whether through sermons or hymns. What the Syriac texts add to the philosophical trope, however, is the further imagery of weaponry, combat, and warfare. This further agonistic resonance fully accords with the prevailing religious atmosphere in late antiquity, a time of heated religious competition and contestation, in which polemics across and within religions colored all modes of discourse. The polemical use of hymnography was one of the general characteristics of late antique Christian hymns.²² What we see in the Syriac rhetoric here is a trenchant self-awareness of this practice, emphasizing its functionality. As the hagiographies emphasized, songs worked well pedagogically both for the inculcation of truth and for the fighting of falsehood.

To be sure, the liturgical poetry of late antiquity needed to guide towards ethical formation—as in philosophical tradition—and also to instruct in right teaching or truth over and against heresy. Such twofold need placed a premium on the musical aspects of poetry, and apparently for practical reasons. The saintly liturgical figures of Ephrem, Rabbula, Narsai, or Jacob of Sarug were glorified for their artistry as craftsmen of language. But the point of their celebration—the reason the power of their words mattered—was their efficacy as teachers of “orthodoxy.” Their words, in sermons or hymns, chanted or sung, were effective conveyors of truth. And words offered in liturgical context required impact in different directions. They needed to be powerful in their affect and effect upon the congregation, to guide them rightly. But they needed also to be compelling in their offering towards the divine, as vehicles of fitting praise and worship, supplication, repentance, and devotion. Ordinary speech would not do for such tasks.

Late antique Syriac theologians built a profound tradition of poetry as the most fitting form of discourse for the pursuit and expression of theology. This understanding of the work of the “poet theologian” is one that Syriac scholars have long appreciated.²³ What I wish to underscore here is that it was not simply poetry as metered, crafted speech, but musical poetry—poetry that was

22 For the general observation, see Smith, “Music,” 758. Bardaisan, Mani, Arius, and the Donatists were frequently attested in late antique authors Syriac, Greek, and Latin for the popularity of their hymns. For an example, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, “Patristic Worlds,” Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony et al., eds., *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-first Century: Proceedings of an International Conference to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the International Association of Patristic Studies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 25–53.

23 Classic examples would be Sebastian P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992); Sidney H. Griffith, *Faith Adoring the Mystery: Reading the Bible with St. Ephraem the Syrian* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1997).

heard as, and experienced as, musically melodic—that Syriac writers exalted in these hagiographical texts as also in their liturgical traditions. Syriac hagiographers employed the discourse of musical therapy and weaponry as a rhetoric to acknowledge the great saints of their theological and liturgical history. At the same time, they used it to glorify the formation of Syriac liturgy and its poetic forms as a technical, literary process that happened in historical reality.

3 Pedagogical Singing

Our Syriac hagiographers were not, perhaps, entirely distant from the real work of the saints they celebrated. For singing was a basic part of Syriac liturgical training and religious instruction starting at least from the time of Ephrem, just as singing was also the primary mode of liturgical celebration for the gathered church community. The vast body of Ephrem the Syrian's extant corpus, for example, shows him to have been a devoted teacher for those who served the church in different capacities.²⁴ Ephrem wrote biblical commentaries and polemical prose treatises that served as instructional guides for long centuries after his own death.²⁵ But the bulk of Ephrem's surviving corpus is poetry, both *madrashé* and *memre*, and some were intended for his classroom rather than liturgical performance.²⁶ The sung performance of this poetry was part of its pedagogical presentation. Strophes and isosyllabic couplets were effective vehicles for the teacher; responses and recitation were effective strategies for the student. In Ephrem's extant corpus, sung poetry is present as both a *method* of education for those who would be liturgical leaders and agents, and also, in the form of liturgical hymns, a *means* to disseminate that education to the congregation in a public liturgical context.²⁷

24 Jeffrey Wickes, "Between Liturgy and School: Reassessing the Performative Context of Ephrem's *Madrāšê*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 26.1 (2018): 25–51.

25 E.g., Christian Lange, *The Portrayal of Christ in the Syriac Commentary on the Diatessaron*, CSCO 616/Sub. 118 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005).

26 Wickes, "Between Liturgy and School." See also Griffith, "Poetics of Scriptural Reasoning"; idem, *Faith Adoring the Mystery*."

27 Clearly intended for liturgical use, for example, were Ephrem's Hymns on Nativity and Hymns on the Resurrection. These were sung during the vigil service prior to the liturgy of the feast, and the verses occasionally refer to the service and the occasion. By contrast, Ephrem's Hymns on Faith appear to indicate a non-liturgical, study-oriented setting: Wickes, "Between Liturgy and School"; and idem, *St. Ephrem the Syrian, The Hymns on Faith*, Fathers of the Church, 130 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015).

Our evidence on this point is especially full in the case of the (East Syriac) School of Nisibis.²⁸ Statutes of the School identify liturgical music as a core part of the curriculum throughout a student's tenure, but also indicate that musical instruction was the standard practice at every level. As was apparently the case for Ephrem's students, singing here served as a vehicle for teaching, a mode of academic study, and a skill to be mastered for liturgical performance. Lessons were recited and sung with the students in formation as a choir: knowledge was conveyed in dialogic fashion through the singing or recitation of verses and responses. Faculty associated with the School over different centuries produced important scholarly works on the liturgy, including its different musical expressions.²⁹ It was here that Narsai offered his *memre*, masterpieces of lyrical homiletic teaching performed in the classroom no less than in liturgical events. Teaching and learning were a musical exchange at the School of Nisibis, a methodology attested across the centuries of evidence for the School. Learning with music, students learned the music of liturgy in addition to mastering the different services, their rubrics and correct celebration. Music was also the medium for learning correct ("orthodox") biblical interpretation and doctrinal instruction that would be imparted to congregations through various forms of sung liturgical poetry, *madrashe* and *memre*.

In the classroom context of Ephrem's school or the School of Nisibis, we see both *memre* and *madrashe* employed for pedagogical purposes. Hence we see the functionality of music: an effective vehicle for teaching and learning theological ideas, biblical stories and exegesis, moral formation, and the specialized knowledge of the liturgical agent, whether for members of the covenant, deacons, deaconesses, clergy, or other office. Much of this functionality also carried over to liturgical celebration properly speaking. Liturgical poetry of all forms was an effective tool for instructing the congregation, and also for the effective offering of worship, for the contributions of all participants, clerical or lay.

How these different needs, functions, and tools found voice in the Syriac *memre* and *madrashe* of liturgy is what the hagiographical rhetoric of musical preaching sought to convey. That is, the imagery of hagiography engaged the

28 Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); idem, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis*; Arthur Vööbus, *The Statutes of the School of Nisibis*. Papers of the Estonian School of Theology in Exile, 12 (Stockholm: ETSE, 1961). Becker's groundbreaking work is now significantly supplemented by Ute Possek, "Selbstverständnis und Bildungsauftrag der Schule von Nisibis," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 19.1 (2015): 104–136.

29 Becker, *Fear of God*, 89–94.

pedagogical use of sung poetry as a liturgical medium. But to grasp the deeper significance of this imagery as it represented the work of the late antique Syriac preacher, we must turn to the invocational prayers that adorn the memre of Jacob of Sarug.

4 Jacob of Sarug on the Preacher's Song

One of the characteristics of Jacob's extensive corpus of memre is the frequent presence of invocational prayers.³⁰ Such prayers often filled the opening couplets of his memre, sometimes for a page or even several pages. They offered praise and worship to God while also invoking divine presence and beseeching help for the task at hand: that is, the preaching of a memra on a given topic. Such prayers sometimes punctuated the body of a memra, when Jacob approached a particularly difficult matter and prayed for assistance to address it adequately.³¹ Apparently distinctive to Jacob's memre, these prayers provide some of his finest poetry. They also served to define all elements of Jacob's preaching as a liturgical event: the nature of the preacher's office, the task of preaching, God as source for the truth to be preached and God as subject of the preaching, the memra as a voiced teaching, and the congregation as recipients of the memra.³² It was here, in these prayers, that Jacob provided reflection on what he thought his task was and should be.

A notable feature of these prayers is Jacob's vocabulary. In these invocational verses, Jacob spoke of preaching, offering praise, worship, and teaching. Yet he frequently employed vocabulary that denoted singing, song, hymns, psalms, and loud or exalted voice (should *qala* be translated as "voice" or "melody"?). For example, consider the opening passage of Jacob's homily on Simon Peter:

30 Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "The Poet's Prayer: Invocational Prayers in the Mémrê of Jacob of Sarug," in Jeffrey Wickes, Kristian S. Heal, and Markus Vinzent, eds., *Literature, Rhetoric, and Exegesis in Syriac Verse, Studia Patristica 78.4* (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 51–60; Andrew Hilkins, "Beautiful Little Gems in Their Own Right': Seventeenth-century Armenian Collections of Prayers of Jacob of Serugh," (forthcoming).

31 For example, to describe the moment when Jephthah slew his own daughter, Jacob of Sarug, "Homily on Jephthah's Daughter," vv. 422–460, trans. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and Ophir Münz Manor, *MHMJS*, 16 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 52–57.

32 As analyzed in Harvey, "Poet's Prayer." See now also Robert Kitchen, "I, Memra: This is the Story Talking.' Personification of Literary Genre in Jacob of Sarug," (forthcoming).

[O Christ,] In all my homilies (*memre*) I call to you, True Son!
 May all my words be given in you as praise (*shubha*) to your Father.
 May a voice of confession (*qal tawditha*) ascend to you in psalms (*ba-
 zmiratha*),
 As I recite a homily in praise (*memra d-shubhak*) of you among your
 congregations.

...

O Son, who was pleased to be a sacrifice for sinners,
 May my mouth sing (*nezmar*) to you sincere praise (*shubha*) with a loud
 voice/melody (*b-qala rama*).
 Your word is higher than the eloquent.
 May praise (*shubha*) be roused within me, that it may produce my
 hymns (*qalai*) to your glory (*ʿal teshbuhtha*).

...

... unless faith sings (His praise) (*zmartheh*)
 With simple voices/melodies (*b-qale pshite*), there is no mouth to repeat
 his story.³³

Occasionally, Jacob prayed to become God's harp or flute; he prayed for his voice to sing as a musical instrument. Here, from his first homily on the Nativity:

I am giving the harp of my words to You [O Lord] and let me borrow
 Your finger;
 And in Your hymns (*b-qinyathak*) let the sound/melody (*qala*) whisper
 to Your glory (*teshbuhthak*).

...

I am the flute, when Your word is breath and Your story is the voice/
 melody (*qala*).
 Please take control of it, and by Your means may we sing to You using
 what is Your own.³⁴

Ezmar, *zmirtha/zmiratha*, *qale*, *shubha/teshbuhtha*—these are the lexical terms that recur through these prayers, as Jacob mustered the strength to preach. They are interspersed with phrases such as “with loud voice” or “with

33 Jacob of Sarug, “Homily on Simon Peter,” vv. 1–4, 15–18, 59–60, trans. Adam Carter McCol-
 lum, *MHMJS*, 26 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 8–11, 14–15.

34 Jacob of Sarug, “Homily 1, On the Nativity of our Redeemer According to the Flesh,” ll. 57–
 62, trans. Thomas Kollampampil, *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on the Nativity*, *MHMJS*, 23
 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 16.

exalted voice” or “raising the voice” (all using *qala*: again, voice or melody?) or terms denoting speech, words, or speaking (*meltha/mlal, ’mar*) and with the term *memra* itself. Was this a confusion of terminology, or deliberate elision? Here, in its most exalted form, is the elision of word and melody as expressed in the introductory passage from Jacob’s Homily on Ezekiel:

Exalted One, seated on the unsearchable chariot:
 give me Your word, that on earth I may proclaim Your infinity.
 Hidden One, exalted above the heavenly beings who bear You aloft,
 grant that I may sing (*e’zmar*) to You here in the regions below which
 you have redeemed.
 Essence alone with knowledge of itself, how it exists,
 speak distinctly in me that I may speak of You.
 O! You, served by the legions of flame,
 let my tongue serve You with the beauty of its singing (lit: with its beautiful songs, *ba-zmiratheh shaphiratha*).
 Awesome One, by whom the sun is dazzled if it gazes upon You,
 let my intellect gaze on You and be greatly moved to Your praise (*teshbuhthak*).
 Hidden One, who are far from the assemblies of the sons of light,
 reveal Your mysteries to me, that with its song (*ba-zmiratheh*) my
 tongue may reveal You.
 ...
 Lord most high, my mouth is insufficient for Your praise (*teshbuhthak*):
 make a new mouth for me that it may proclaim Your songs (*la-zmirathak*).³⁵

Clearly in Jacob’s view, singing was the appropriate mode of articulation for speech offered to the divine, and the appropriate mode of expression for speech about the divine. As we have seen, singing was also a fundamental pedagogical tool by which to instruct the faithful, and an effective and powerful tool for battling heresy or falsehood. How fitting that sung words should be used by a preacher to address his Lord and to instruct his people; how fitting that the teaching of truth should be a ministry of song.

For this appears to have been Jacob’s understanding of the work of preaching: to instruct his congregation with words that would reveal and articulate

35 Jacob of Sarug, “Homily on the Chariot that Prophet Ezekiel Saw,” vv. 1–12, 27–28, trans. Alexander Golitzin, MHMJS, 14 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2016), 16–19.

true knowledge of God, in terms that would effectively impact their lives.³⁶ What words, as Jacob asks time and again, could possibly fulfill such work? They could not be the words of normal speech. Could meter and melody enhance the capacity of language, to exceed its ordinary limits? Could music adorn language with beauty appropriate for speech about the divine?

Jacob's prayers express certainty that no human speech could rise to the task. Even poetry was not sufficient, even song, unless its power and force were divinely provided. Hence Jacob prayed for God to provide his words. He did not think himself to be a prophet: he did not ask God's voice to replace his own. Rather, he prayed for God to provide his voice sufficiently. Sung words, melodic verses, musical sound: in the poetry of his *memre*, Jacob sought to perform his ministry. Like Ephrem and bishop Rabbula before him, like his adversarial contemporary Narsai, Jacob sought to perform a ministry of preaching—of teaching—that would reveal the wonders of divine presence and action, the teaching of truth over falsehood, and the effective cultivation of virtue towards a fitting life of devotion.

This essay began with a consideration of the rhetorical imagery used in hagiography about the great poet theologians of Syriac tradition. With the invocational prayers of Jacob of Sarug, we glimpse something of the work of those theologians on the ground. We do not know the melodies or forms of chant or cantillation employed for the Syriac *madrashé* and *memre* that were performed in late antiquity. What we do know is the testimony of those who remembered their greatest poet theologians to be saints who employed a musical ministry of teaching. Moreover, we have the testimony by prayer of one of their most effective exemplars. These hagiographical and invocational testimonies present Syriac liturgical poetry in its varied forms as an offering of song, a musical expression of teaching and worship. We might well understand its memory to be fittingly preserved in the music and melodies that have characterized and adorned the Syriac churches ever since, and into our own time.

Acknowledgments

This essay is dedicated to His Eminence Archbishop Alexander Golitzin, himself a preacher of rare power, with deepest gratitude.

36 As prescribed in the *Testament of Our Lord*, Bk. 1, preserved in the West Syriac Synodicon. See Arthur Vööbus, ed. and trans., *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, vol. 1, CSCO 367–368, Scr. Syr. 161–162 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1975).

The Lord Himself, One Lord, One Power: Jewish and Christian Perspectives on Isaiah 63:9 and Daniel 7:13

Bogdan G. Bucur

Alexander Golitzin impressed upon his students the need to recover the wealth of the Christian theological tradition by paying special attention to continuities with Second Temple Judaism and parallels with rabbinic Judaism. In the opening paragraphs of the theological manifesto of the *Theophaneia School*, he argued that, since an “enormous library of pseudepigraphical and apocryphal materials from post-biblical Israel and Christian antiquity ... was continuously copied and presumably valued—though seldom quoted—by Eastern Christians, and especially by their monks,” the study of early Christian and Byzantine theology must take into account Second Temple apocalyptic literature, the Qumran Scrolls, and later rabbinic traditions, as each of these “throws new and welcome light on the sources and continuities of Orthodox theology, liturgy, and spirituality.”¹

The pages to follow heed this call for a new, and yet so traditional, approach to Christian texts. I suggest that a synoptic approach to the Church's advocacy of the full divinity of Christ *and* to the rabbinic polemics against “two powers” theologies reveals a certain unexpected convergence, and that this convergence may help Christians discover the richness and complexity of their own tradition and, perhaps, understand a bit more about their estranged brothers in the rabbinic tradition.

1 Golitzin, “Theophaneia: Forum on the Jewish Roots of Orthodox Spirituality,” xvii–xx.

1 “The Lord Himself”?: Textual Problems in Isaiah 63:9

The Masoretic and Septuagint versions of Isaiah 63:9 present significant differences. Moreover, the Hebrew can be read and understood in different ways—and anyone can appreciate the change from the RSV to the NRSV English translations of this verse.

וַיְהִי לָהֶם לְמוֹשִׁיעַ: 8

9 בְּכָל־צָרָתָם לֹא [לוֹ] צָר [צִיר] וּמְלַאֲךָ פָּנָיו הוֹשִׁיעֵם בְּאֶהְבֵּתוֹ וּבְחַמְלָתוֹ הוֹאֵלָם וַיִּנְטְלֵם וַיִּנְשָׂאֵם כְּלִימֵי עוֹלָם:

(RSV: 8 [...] and he became their savior. 9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

NRSV: 8 [...] and he became their savior 9 in all their affliction. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.)

(8.) [...] καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτοῖς εἰς σωτηρίαν (9.) ἐκ πάσης θλίψεως οὐ πρέσβυς οὐδὲ ἄγγελος ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς κύριος ἔσωσεν αὐτοὺς διὰ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτοὺς καὶ φείδεσθαι αὐτῶν αὐτὸς ἐλυτρώσατο αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀνέλαβεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ὑψωσεν αὐτοὺς πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ αἰῶνος.

([...] And he became to them salvation out of all affliction. No ambassador, no angel, but the Lord himself saved them, because he loved them and had compassion on them; he himself ransomed them and took them up and lifted them up all the days of old.)

The culprits for these variations are two words in 63:9, לֹא and צָר. In the former case, the question is whether to choose the *ketiv* לֹא (“not”) or the *qere*, the homophone לוֹ (“to him”).² As for צָר, the question is whether to accept the MT vocalization of צָר (“constraint,” “distress,” “affliction”) or to vocalize it as צִיר,

2 David Flusser (*Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Qumran and Apocalypticism* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007], 61–64) notes that the reading לוֹא found in the *Great Isaiah Scroll* at Qumran should not be interpreted as a synthesis of the *ketiv* לֹא (“not”) and the *qere* לוֹ (“to him”) “because the *plene* orthography לוֹא is typical in Qumran texts” (62).

which would yield “messenger.” In addition, the first words of 63:9 (“in all their afflictions”) can either be linked to the preceding ones in 63:8 (“and he became their savior in all their afflictions”), or understood as the beginning of a new phrase (“In all their afflictions,” etc. ...). These two moving pieces can, theoretically, yield the following four combinations:

1. לֹא + צַר: In all their afflictions *he was not* afflicted and the angel of his Face saved them
2. לוֹ + צַר: In all their afflictions *he was* afflicted and the angel of his Face saved them
3. לֹא + צַר: [...] in all their afflictions. *No messenger or angel*—his Face saved them.
4. לוֹ + צַר: [...] in all their afflictions. *He had a messenger* and the angel of his Face saved them.

Leaving aside לוֹ + צַר, a combination that makes no real sense of this verse, the first three possibilities have all been entertained by scribes, translators, and interpreters. The first option is represented by the MT as written (*ketiv*), by the Vulgate³ and the Targum;⁴ the second option is the MT according to the suggested reading (*qere*); the third option corresponds to the LXX. Judging from the LXX of Isa 63:9 (ἐκ πάσης θλιψέως οὐ πρέσβυς οὐδὲ ἄγγελος ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς κύριος ἔσωσεν αὐτούς) it appears that the original sense was צַר, which later gave way to צַר; the Targum and Vulgate may represent “an intermediate stage” on the way to the final form of the MT.⁵

The fluctuation in vocalization and the option for the *qere* or *ketiv* of Isaiah 6:9 are not a case of scribal accident or dispassionate philological reasoning; rather, certain theological and polemical agendas have left their mark in the text.⁶ A brief survey of the reception history of our text will shed some light on this point.

3 Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 17.29: *in omni tribulatione eorum non est tribulatus et angelus faciei eius salvavit eos*. Cf. Jerome’s witness about the coexistence of the *qere* and *ketiv* in his time: “Where we have translated, *In all their trouble he was not troubled*, what is expressed in Hebrew as *lo* and is an adverb of negation can be read as *not* and as *he*” (PL 24:615 AB; trans. Thomas P. Scheck, in *St. Jerome: Commentary on Isaiah; Origen Homilies 1–9 on Isaiah*, Ancient Christian Writers 68 [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2015], 805).

4 “Whenever they sinned against Him, that He might have brought upon them distress, He did not distress them (לֹא אָעִיק לְהוֹן); but an angel was sent from Him, who in His mercy redeemed them.” Cf. Peshitta, “In all their afflictions he did not afflict them” (ܠܐ ܥܘܩܝܩ ܠܗܘܢ).

5 This “evolutionary” interpretation is advocated by Flusser, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period*, 63.

6 For a rich dossier of relevant texts comprising the theological agenda of depicting divine work without mediators, see Mauro Pesce, *Dio senza mediatori. Una tradizione teologica dal giudaismo al cristianesimo* (Brescia: Paideia, 1979).

It should be noted at the outset, however, that the Ancients viewed much of this rather differently, assuming, quite simply, that divine providence furnished us with more than one “correct” and theologically edifying text. On the Christian side, Jerome’s *Commentary on Isaiah* quotes both the Hebrew and the Greek, notes the various possible readings of the Hebrew, and, without expressing any preference, proceeds to deliver exegetical and theological observations on each variant.⁷ On the rabbinic side, despite the unquestioned authority of the MT, several midrashim, including one in the *Passover Haggadah*, although very likely aware of the LXX reading of Isa 63:9, use a very similarly worded phrase to make their emphatic profession of faith: “the Lord brought us forth from Egypt not by means of an angel, not by means of a seraph, not by means of a messenger, but rather the Holy One by himself.”

2 Learned Fathers and Rabbis on “The Lord Himself”

Christian exegesis of Isa 63:9 seems unanimous in interpreting “the Lord” christologically and his saving action as referring to the salvation brought by Christ. Irenaeus of Lyon exploits the angelic–divine contrast in the LXX version in order to find scriptural confirmation that Jesus was both God (as opposed to a mere prophet)⁸ and truly and fully human (as opposed to a mere angel).⁹ Tertullian, Cyprian, and Oecumenius make the same argument with explicit

7 Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 17.29 (PL 24:615 AB; trans. Scheck, 805): “Where we have translated, *In all their trouble he was not troubled*, what is expressed in Hebrew as *lo* and is an adverb of negation can be read as *not* and as *he* ... On the other hand, the Septuagint recorded something else, that is not found in the Hebrew.”

8 Irenaeus, *Epid.* 88; 94 (trans. John Behr, *St Irenaeus of Lyon: On the Apostolic Preaching* [Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997], 94, 97): “And that He Himself was going to effect, by Himself, this blessing and to redeem us Himself by His blood, Isaias announces, saying: Not an intercessor nor an angel, but the Lord Himself saved them because he loves them and spared them; He Himself redeemed them [Isa 63:9] ... for it is no longer an intercessor, Moses, nor an angel, Elias, but the Lord Himself who saves us ...”

9 Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.20.3–4 (Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies. Livre III*, SC 211 [Paris: Cerf, 1974], 392, 394), my translation: “Wherefore, then, the Lord himself [gave] him who is from the Virgin, Emmanuel, as the sign of our salvation, since it was the Lord Himself who saved those who, of themselves, had no means be saved ... Again, that the one who would save us would be neither a mere human, nor some fleshless being—for the angels are without flesh—he announced beforehand, saying: ‘Neither an elder, nor angel, but the Lord Himself will save them because He loves them, and will spare them: He will Himself set them free.’”

reference to Isa 63:9,¹⁰ whereas the *Epistle to Diognetus* and Ps.-Hippolytus' Paschal homily seem to allude to it.¹¹

Tertullian's polemical engagements against Marcionites, Valentinians, and Ebionites offer the occasion for more detailed expositions. In *Against Marcion* he can extract from Isa 63:9 the proof that the providential transition from the Law and the prophets to Christ was not, as his dualist opponent claimed, a radical break with the Old Testament demiurge.¹² Against Valentinians and Ebionites, Tertullian's Christology finds support in Isaiah: neither did Christ take on angelic (rather than human) nature;¹³ nor was an angel "in him," as in the prophet Zechariah (cf. ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοί: Zech 1:9, 13, 14, 17; 2:3, 7; 4:1,

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- 10 Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 14.6 (Ernest Evans, ed., *Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation* [London: SPCK, 1956], 49/49–52/53); Cyprian of Carthage, *Test.* 2.8 (Wilhelm Hartel, ed., *S. Thasci Caecili Cypriani opera omnia*, CSEL 3/1 [Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1868], 72); Oecumenius, *Comm. Apoc.* 3.13.6 (Marc de Groote, ed., *Oecumenii commentarius in Apocalypsin* [Louvain: Peeters, 1999], 114; trans. John N. Suggit, *Oecumenius: Commentary on the Apocalypse*, Fathers of the Church 112 [Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2006], 61): "He says, *I saw a strong angel proclaiming, 'Who is worthy to open the little scroll and break its seal?'* (Rev 5:2) 'No one, most divine angel,' one would say to him; 'only the incarnate God, who took away sin and who canceled the bond which stood against us (Col 2:14) and with his own "obedience" (Rom 5:19) healed our "disobedience" (Rom 5:19). He says, *And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the little scroll* (Rev 5:3). For neither did an angel accomplish this for us, as Isaiah says, 'Not an envoy, nor an angel, but he himself saved them because he loved them' (Isa 63:9) neither a living man, nor even one of the dead."
- 11 *Diogn.* 7.2 (Henri-Irénée Marrou, ed., *À Diognète*, SC 33 [Paris: Cerf, 1965], 66, 68; my translation): "He did not send some subordinate to humankind—whether an angel, or an archon, or one of those given charge over earthly things, or one of those entrusted with administering heavenly things—but the maker and fashioner of all things himself ... him did he send to them"; Ps.-Hippolytus, *In sanctum Pascha* 45 (Pierre Nautin, ed., *Homélies pascales I*, SC 27 [Paris: Cerf, 2003], 165; my translation): "Seeing us, from heaven, as were being tyrannized by death ... he entrusted the service on our behalf neither to his angels nor to his archangels; but the Word himself, in obedience to his Father's commands, took over the whole battle for us."
- 12 Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.22.11 (Ernest Evans, ed., *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1972], 1:382/383): "So that even though there has been a transference made of this hearing from Moses and from Elijah to Christ, this is not as from one god to another god, nor to a different Christ, but by the Creator to his own Christ, in accordance with the demise of the old covenant and the succession of the new: *Not a delegate*, says Isaiah, *nor a messenger, but God himself shall save them*, now in his own person preaching, and fulfilling the law and the prophets."
- 13 Tertullian, *Carn.* 14.6 (Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation*, 48/49–50/51): "'But,' say they, 'Christ was also clothed upon with an angel.' By what method? 'The same by which he might have been clothed with man.' Then the reason for it also is the same. For Christ to be clothed with manhood, man's salvation was the reason, the restitution of that which had perished. Man had perished: it was man that must be restored ... how shall he

4, 5);¹⁴ nor was he himself an angel, such as Gabriel or Michael, since Isaiah's title "angel of great counsel" (Isa 9:5, LXX: μεγάλῃς βουλήσ ἀγγελοσ) is a designation of his function, not nature.¹⁵ Indeed, Tertullian concludes, "What more do we need, when we hear Isaiah crying out, *Not an angel nor a delegate, but the Lord himself has saved them?*"

In his interpretation of Song 1:2 ("Let Him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"), Origen compares the preparatory revelation on Sinai, mediated by angels ("His holy angels put themselves at my service and ministered to me, bringing me the Law as a betrothal gift; for *the Law*, it is said, *was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator* [Gal 3:19]) with the direct, unmediated presence of the incarnate Logos:

The kisses are Christ's, which He bestowed on His Church when at His coming, being present in the flesh, He in His own person spoke to her the words of faith and love and peace, according to the promise of Isaiah who, when sent beforehand to the Bride, had said: *Not a messenger, nor an angel, but the Lord Himself shall save us* (Isa 63:9–10).¹⁶

On the rabbinic side of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, the preference for the reading "in their afflictions *he was* afflicted" (rather than "in their afflictions *he was not* afflicted") was coextensive with a theology affirming God's solidarity and co-suffering with Israel—though the precise causal relation or possible polemical intention are difficult to determine.¹⁷ As for the difference between the MT ver-

be thought to have clothed himself with an angel when he is made lower than the angels by being made man, as being flesh and soul (Ps 8:5) ..."

14 Tertullian, *Carn.* 14.6 (Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation*, 52/53): "This view of the matter could have suited Ebion, who determines that Jesus is a bare man, merely of the seed of David, and therefore not also the Son of God ... so as to state that an angel was in him in the same way as in Zechariah."

15 Tertullian, *Carn.* 14.6 (Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation*, 52/53): "Certainly he is described as *the angel of great counsel*, 'angel' meaning 'messenger,' by a term of office, not of nature: for he was to announce to the world the Father's great project, that concerned with the restitution of man. Yet he is not on that account to be understood as an angel, in the sense of a sort of Gabriel or Michael."

16 Origen, *Comm. Cant.* 1.5, 8 (Luc Brésard, Henri Crouzel, Marcel Borret, *Origène: Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques, Tome 1*, sc 375 [Paris: Cerf, 2006], 180, 182; trans. R.P. Lawson, *Origen: The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies*, Ancient Christian Writers 26 [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1957], 60). Origen's connection with Song 1:1 is followed by Jerome (*Comm. Isa.* 17.29 [PL 24:615 C]).

17 See Flusser, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period*, 64: "Did the *qere* יָל ('to him') allow the verse to be 'harnessed' as a proof-text to the idea that God suffers with Israel, or perhaps the contrary, the notion of divine commiseration with Israel gave rise to the *qere* יָל?" At

sion, “the angel saved them,” and the LXX reading, “it was no angel but the Lord himself who saved them,” it will become evident that rabbinic texts appeal to (something like) the latter in *theophanic* passages—God’s revelatory, saving, or punishing interventions—in an effort to subvert theological views deemed heretical and dangerous.¹⁸

Mekhilta de R. Ishmael twice refers to the smiting of the Egyptian firstborn to emphasize that the agent was none but the Lord acting alone and not “through an angel or through a messenger.” In a bit of circular reasoning, the “I” doing the smiting in Exod 12:12 is shown to be the Lord alone because in Exod 12:29 the smiting is attributed to “the Lord”; then, “the Lord” in Exod 12:29 must be understood to act directly, without angelic intermediaries, because at Exod 12:12 he speaks in the first person singular, “I will smite.”¹⁹

Even the theophany on Sinai had to be safeguarded from any notion of angelic mediation, as is the case in *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan, Version B*. The famous opening of *Pirqe Avot* 1.1 (“Moses received Torah from God at Sinai. He transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, the elders to the prophets, the prophets to the members of the Great Assembly”) is here given the following clarification:

Moses received Torah from Sinai. Not from the mouth of an angel and not from the mouth of a Seraph, but from the mouth of the King over the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.²⁰

any rate, from this vantage point the Christian “stretching” of divine compassion into inhumanization, death, and descent to Sheol, appears as a difference of degree, not kind. Cf. Tatian, *Or.* 13: τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ; τοῦ πεπονθότος Θεοῦ; Ignatius, *Eph.* 1.1: αἵματι θεοῦ; *Rom.* 6.3: μιμητὴν εἶναι τοῦ πάθους τοῦ θεοῦ μου; Tertullian, *Carn.* 5: *passiones Dei*; *Test Levi* 4: ἐπὶ τῷ πάθει τοῦ υψίστου; Melito, *Peri Pascha* 96: Ὁ κρεμάσας τὴν γῆν κρέματαί. Ὁ πῆξας τοὺς οὐρανούς πέπεκται. Ὁ στηρίξας τὰ πάντα ἐπὶ ξύλου ἐστηρικται. Ὁ δεσπότης παρῦβρισαι. Ὁ θεὸς πεφόνευται.

- 18 For the complete dossier of relevant texts and their discussion, see Pesce, *Dio senza mediatori*, 29–47.
- 19 *Mek. R. Ishmael, Pisha* 7.2.4; 13.2.3 (trans. Jacob Neusner, ed., *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael: An Analytical Translation*, 2 vols [Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1988], 1:43, 75): “And I will smite (Exod 12:12): Might I infer that it is to be through an angel or through a messenger? Scripture says, *and the Lord smote all the firstborn* (Exod 12:29)—not through an angel or a messenger”; “*that the Lord smote all the firstborn of Egypt* (Exod 12:29): Might I infer that it was through an angel or a messenger? Scripture says, *and I will smite* (Exod 12:12)—not through an angel or a messenger.”
- 20 *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan, Version B*, 2 (Anthony J. Saldarini, ed., *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan/Abot de Rabbi Nathan, Version B: A Translation and Commentary* [Leiden: Brill, 1975], 25).

Finally, *Sifre Deuteronomy* uses Isa 63:9 to differentiate between God's direct interaction with Israel and his indirect, angelically mediated, relation with the nations:

Vengeance is mine, and recompense (Deut 32:35): I will requite it of them, I myself, not through an angel nor through a messenger, as it is said, *Come now; therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh* (Exod 3:10); and, *And it came to pass that might that the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians* (2 Kgs 19:35).²¹

Deut 32:35 is here taken to represent a mode of intervention *different* from that in Isa 3:10 and 2 Kgs 19:35—retribution against Israel is exclusively God's, whereas the Egyptians and Assyrians are punished by prophetic or angelic messengers. Similarly, to the lands of the Gentiles God "sends" (תִּשְׁלַח) the rain—hence, by means of a messenger (תִּשְׁלַח)—whereas to the land of Israel he "gives" (תִּתֵּן) it directly:

I will give the rain of your land in its season (Deut 11:14). I will give—I Myself, not by the hands of a messenger—the rain to your land (Deut 11:14)—not the rain of all the lands. Similarly Scripture says, "Who gives rains upon the earth, and sends waters upon the fields" (Job 5:10).²²

The texts surveyed above give evidence of intra-Jewish polemics surrounding the questions of direct vs. indirect divine agency and strict monotheism vs. binitarian monotheism—polemics rather well-known and abundantly discussed in scholarship.²³ As Hindy Najman observes,

21 *Sifre Deut.* 324 (trans. Reuven Hammer, ed., *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986], 336).

22 *Sifre Deut.* 42.1 (Hammer, *Sifre*, 86). This notion goes back to earlier tradition: see Deut 32:8–9 (LXX), where the nations are divided "according to the number of the of the angels of God" (ἀγγέλων Θεοῦ; MT: "the sons of Israel"), whereas the Israelites become "the Lord's portion" (μερίς Κυρίου); *Jub.* 15:31–32 (trans. Orval S. Wintermute, in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985], 2:87): "over Israel he [God] did not cause any angel or spirit to rule because he alone is their ruler ... so that he might guard them and bless them and they might be his and he might be theirs henceforth and forever."

23 See Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers In Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity And Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977); Paul A. Rainbow, "Jewish Monotheism as the Matrix for New Testament Christology: A Review Article," *NovT* 33 (1991): 78–91; Peter Hayman, "Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?," *JJS* 42 (1991): 1–15; Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992);

Jubilees takes every opportunity to elaborate the explicit references to angels in the biblical texts of Genesis and Exodus, and even, on occasion, to add angels to episodes where they are not mentioned in biblical texts. In striking contrast, some rabbinic traditions seek to eliminate even angels who seem to be explicitly mentioned.²⁴

Aside from stripping theophanic passages of any other presence than God's, angelic agency is also suppressed by "demoting" angels to signify human agents—prophets. As examples Najman refers to the contrast between Num 20:16 ("and when we cried to the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt," וישלח מלאך ויצאנו ממצרים) and its interpretation in *Lev. Rab.* 1: "The prophets are called *malakhim*. This is indicated by what is written, *And he sent a messenger (malakh), and brought us forth out of Egypt ...* (Num 20:16). Was it then an angel of the Lord? Surely it was Moses! Why then does it call him '*malakh*'? In fact, from this one learns that prophets are called *malakhim*." "In other words," explains Najman, "no angel is intended here, but rather Moses himself."²⁵ Incidentally, very similar identifications of the "angel" of Exodus with Moses and of the angel sent to lead Israel into the Holy Land with Joshua occur in Irenaeus and Eusebius of Caesarea.²⁶

Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); the articles collected in Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, Gladys S. Lewis, eds., *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Larry W. Hurtado, "First Century Jewish Monotheism," *JSTJ* 71 (1998): 3–26; idem, "Monotheism, Principal Angels, and the Background of Christology," in Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins, eds., *Oxford Handbook to the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 546–564; Daniel Boyarin, "Two Powers in Heaven; or, The Making of a Heresy," in Hindy Najman and Judith R. Newman, eds., *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 331–370; Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (Continuum, London, New York, 2007); Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, TSAJ 107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); idem, *Yahoel and Metatron: Aural Apocalypticism and the Origins of Early Jewish Mysticism*, TSAJ 169 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

24 Hindy Najman, "Angels at Sinai: Exegesis, Theology and Interpretive Authority," *DSD* 7 (2000): 313–333 at 328.

25 Najman, "Angels at Sinai," 329. Cf. *Mek. R. Shimon b. Yohai*, Kaspā 81.1 (David Nelson, ed., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai* [Philadelphia, Pa.: Jewish Publication Society, 2006], 370): "I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have made ready (Exod 23:20): This [refers to] a prophet (זה נביא). And thus Scripture says, *And angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim* (Judg 2:1)."

26 Irenaeus, *Epid.* 94 (Behr, *St Irenaeus of Lyon: On the Apostolic Preaching*, 97): "for it is no longer an intercessor, Moses, nor an angel, Elias, but the Lord Himself who saves us ..."; Eusebius, *Dem. ev.* 4.17 (Ivar A. Heikel, ed., *Eusebius Werke VI: Demonstratio euangelica*, Die

When surveying the reception history of the Bible, special attention must be afforded to texts such as the Passover Haggadah or the Byzantine festal hymns. These are texts which, by their characteristic of liturgical embeddedness (and, hence, repetitive usage in a ritual context), had come, by the end of the tenth century CE, to enjoy far greater popularity than anything else written by the Fathers of the Church or the great Rabbis of the Synagogue. They ought to be regarded as a distillate of their respective theological traditions.

3 “The Lord Himself” in the *Passover Haggadah*

Older scholarship debated whether the liturgical script for the Passover *seder*—the *Passover Haggadah*—should be viewed as a product of Second Temple Judaism or as a post-70 CE composition.²⁷ As summarized by Joshua Kulp, the consensus among rabbinic scholars today is that we are dealing with the product of a centuries-long evolution that began after 70 CE and stretched well into the second half of the millennium.²⁸ For as long as the *Haggadah* was presumed to be pre-Christian, it was often discussed as the literary source of

Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller 23 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913], 196–197): Joshua, who bears the name of the Lord—i.e., for Eusebius, Jesus—is the angel sent to lead Israel into the Holy Land, just as John the Baptist is the angel sent to prepare his way. Cf. Mark 1:2–4; Matt 11:9–11.

- 27 According to Louis Finkelstein (“The Oldest Midrash: Pre-Rabbinic Ideals and Teachings in the Passover Haggadah,” *HTR* 31 [1938]: 291–317), it was composed “no later than the Maccabean Age; and probably before that, in the last decades of the third century B.C.” (298), probably by Simeon the Just (312). By contrast, Solomon Zeitlin (“The Liturgy of the *First Night of Passover*,” *JQR* 38 [1948]: 431–460) concluded that “[t]he Haggadah as it is now recited belongs to the period after the destruction of the Temple” (460).
- 28 Joshua Kulp, “The Origins of the Seder and Haggadah,” *CBR* 4 (2005): 109–134: “Nearly all scholars agree that there was no *seder* or *haggadah* while the Temple still stood” (110); “Nearly all rabbinic scholars ... agree that most of the elements known from the *seder* as described in the Mishnah are missing from descriptions in Second Temple literature, including *Jubilees*, Josephus, Philo, the Gospels, and the sections of the Mishnah and the Tosefta which deal with the Passover as offered in the Temple (*m. Pesahim* 5–9). This includes the absence of a *seder* or a *haggadah*” (112); “Some of the most famous elements of the current *seder*—recitations such as the *dayyenu* [‘it is enough for us’] and the *ha lachma anya* [‘this is the bread of affliction’]—were not part of the evening’s ritual until the post-Talmudic period” (111); “In all likelihood, many of the elements of the midrash as it appears in geonic Haggadot ... first emerged in Babylonia in the talmudic and even geonic periods” (122). See also the meticulous research and similar conclusions of Clemens Leonhard, *The Jewish Pesach and the Origins of the Christian Easter: Open Questions in Current Research* (Berlin: Walther de Gruyter, 2005), 73–118.

Christian anti-Jewish compositions such as Melito of Sardis' *Peri Pascha*.²⁹ This is no longer tenable today. It is rather more credible to posit that the Passover *Haggadah* was constructed in direct and deliberate opposition to Christian teachings and practices³⁰—although one must take into account the dating of the various elements and layers in the *Haggadah*, and consider that the religious polemics discerned in rabbinic texts does not necessarily and always carry over into the later *Haggadah*, which remains only marginally polemical.³¹

Let us consider a fragment of the *Haggadah's* extensive midrash on Deut 26:5–9 (cf. *m. Pesahim* 10.4: “[the father] expounds from *My father was a wandering Aramean* [Deut 26:5] until he completes the whole entire passage”). This addition “seems to have entered the text in late geonic times”³² and is generally acknowledged to carry polemical (anti-Christian) freight.³³ The passage most

29 Eric Werner, “Melito of Sardes, the First Poet of *Deicide*,” *HUCA* 27 (1966): 191–210; David Flusser, “Some Notes on Easter and the Passover Haggadah,” *Imm* 7 (1977): 52–60; Stuart G. Hall, “*Melito in the Light of the Passover Haggadah*,” *JTS* 22 (1971): 29–46. In a direct response to Flusser and Werner, Michael D. Brocke (“On the Jewish Origin of the ‘Impropria,’” *Imm* 7 [1977]: 44–51) finds their case for “a straight dependence between specific Jewish and Christian texts” completely unconvincing (44).

30 This approach is represented, in its maximalist form, by Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in the Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006], 87, 73–75, 81. A large section of the book (56–91) expands upon and refines Yuval's earlier study, “Easter and Passover as Early Christian Dialogue,” in Paul Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, eds., *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times* (South Bend, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1999), 98–106. Whereas Werner had argued that the Passover *Haggadah* gave the impetus for Melito's *Peri Pascha*, a parody with a sharp anti-Jewish twist, Yuval finds that the Passover *Haggadah* is shot through with implicit anti-Christian polemics: telling the story of Passover via a midrash on Deuteronomy 26 aims at “countering the Christian attempt to appropriate the story of the Exodus from Egypt” via a Christological “second story”; *ha lachma anya* (“this is the bread of affliction”) and the stern demand to explain the meaning of the Passover foods is a denial of the Christian (Eucharistic) exegesis of the Passover lamb, bread, and wine; the suppression of references to Moses is “pulling the rug from under those who regarded Moses as an archetype of Jesus.”

31 See Leonhard, “Die Pesachhaggada als Spiegel religiöser Konflikte,” in Albert Gerhards and Stephan Wahle, eds., *Kontinuität und Unterbrechung: Gottesdienst und Gebet in Judentum und Christentum* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005), 143–171. According to Leonhard (*Jewish Pesach*, 43, n. 86), “traces of interreligious conflicts that are found in the Haggada are either reflections of medieval encounters or the consequence of quotations of rabbinic texts (that may reflect Jewish opposition against Christianity in late Antiquity) within the Haggada.”

32 Leonhard, *Jewish Pesach*, 107.

33 See Franz E. Meyer, “Die Pesach-Haggada und der Kirchenvater Justinus Martyr,” in Peter von der Osten-Sacken, ed., *Treue zur Thora: Beiträge zur Mitte des christlich-jüdischen*

relevant to the topic at hand is the midrash on Deut 26:8 (“And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders”). The text reads as follows:

And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt: not by the hands of an angel, and not the hands of a seraph, and not by the hands of a messenger, but the Holy One, blessed be he, himself, in his own glory and in his person. As it is said: *For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night and will smite every first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord* (Exod 12:12).

For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night: I and not an angel.

I will smite every first-born in the land of Egypt: I and not a seraph.

And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I, and not a messenger.

I am the Lord: I am He, and no other.

With a mighty hand: this is the blight, as it is said ... (Exod 9:3)

and with an outstretched arm: this is the sword, as it is said ... (1 Chron 21:16)

and with great terribleness: this is the revelation of the Divine Presence, as it is said ... (Deut 4:34)

and with signs: this is the rod of Moses, as it is said ... (Exod 4:17)

and with wonders: this is the blood, as it is said ... (Joel 3:3).³⁴

Deut 26:8 is explained in light of the peculiar, LXX-like, reading of Isa 63:9 (evidently not marked as a biblical reference). “As it is said” is, rather, used to introduce quotations from Exod 12:12, 9:3, 1 Chron 21:16, Deut 4:34, Exod 4:17, and Joel 3:3. Of these, Exod 12:12 has been further expanded into an addi-

Gesprächs. Festschrift für Günther Harder zum 75. Geburtstag (Berlin: Institut für Kirche und Judentum, 1977), 84–87; David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 326. Even Leonhard agrees that the *Haggadah* subscribes to the polemical agenda of the rabbinic texts that constituted its source: “Die Wendung ‘nicht durch einen Gesandten’, die in verschiedenen Formen in der rabbinischen Literatur belegt ist ... kann dort und vielleicht auch bei ihrer Übernahme in die Haggada als antichristliche Bemerkung verstanden werden” (Leonhard, “Die Pesachhaggada,” 165).

34 Nahum N. Glatzer, ed., הגדה של פסח. *The Passover Haggadah with English Translation Introduction and Commentary, based on the commentaries of E.D. Goldschmidt* (New York, NY: Schocken, 1969), 36 (Hebrew)/37 (English).

tional midrash, once again by invoking the phrase (not marked as Scripture) “neither an angel nor a messenger.”

The insistence on the sole agency of the Lord not only denies any angelic involvement in the Exodus, but also suppresses any reference to Moses as a messenger—even though both are affirmed by a number of biblical texts.³⁵ Scholars have sometimes interpreted this strategy as “a sweeping rebuttal” of “the ideational directions that elevated Moses to the rank of demigod, whether in the teachings of the Samaritans or in Alexandrian Jewish-Hellenistic thought”³⁶ and “an emphatic protest against the belief in angels as God’s intermediaries.”³⁷ Indeed, during the Second Temple era the saving agent in the Exodus narrative acquired a rather lofty status: Isa 63:10 refers to it as the “holy spirit” whom the Israelites have rebelled against and grieved (cf. the guiding and guarding angel of Exod 23:21, who embodies the divine Name and would therefore not forgive any rebellion on the part of Israel);³⁸ Jubilees understands him as “the angel of the Face”; Philo refers to him as God’s true reason/logos (τὸν ὀρθὸν αὐτοῦ λόγον), the first-born Son (πρωτόγονον υἱόν), “the vice-regent of the great king” (μεγάλου βασιλέως ὑπαρχος); the *Apocalypse of Abraham* calls him “Yahoel of the same name” and describes him as “a power through the medium of his [God’s] ineffable name”; Targum Ps.-Jonathan to Exodus identifies him

35 E.g., Exod 3:10 (God sends Moses: $\text{אֶת־מֹשֶׁה} / \text{ἀποστείλω σε}$); Num 20:16 (“the Lord sent an angel— $\text{אֶת־מַלְאָכִי} / \text{ἀποστείλας ἄγγελον}$ —and brought us out of Egypt”); 1Sam 12:8 (“the Lord sent— $\text{אֶת־מֹשֶׁה} / \text{ἀπέστειλε}$ —Moses and Aaron who brought your ancestors out of Egypt”); Exod 12:23 (“the destroyer” as divine agent).

36 David Henshke, “The Lord Brought Us Forth from Egypt’: On the Absence of Moses in the Passover,” *AJSR* 31 (2007): 61–73 at 67–68. For “exalted Moses” lore in *Jubilees*, Ezekiel the Tragedian, Philo, and the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, see Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967); Andrei A. Orlov, “Exodus 33 On God’s Face: A Lesson From the Enochic Tradition,” *SBLSP* 39 (2000): 130–147; idem, “In the Mirror of the Divine Face: The Enochic Features of the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian,” in George Brooke, Hindy Najman and Loren Stuckenbruck, eds., *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 183–199.

37 Finkelstein, “Oldest Midrash,” 307.

38 On the introduction of “holy spirit” language in the Exodus account, in Hag 2:4–5 and Isa 63:7–14, see John R. Levison, *The Jewish Origin of Christian Pneumatology. The 2017 Duquesne University Eleventh Annual Holy Spirit Lecture* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2018), 8: “Haggai and the author of a lament in Isaiah 63:7–14 accomplished something unprecedented: they introduced the holy spirit into the traditions of the exodus, in which God had rescued Israel from Egypt through a cadre of divine agents—pillars, an angel, clouds, and God’s presence or *panim*. Now, claimed these prophets, the holy spirit took on the role of those agents by standing in Israel’s midst and guiding them, once again, to the promised land.”

as the archangel Michael, “the Prince of Wisdom.”³⁹ Among Christians, from Jude 5 and 1 Corinthians 10 to Justin Martyr, Melito, and Clement of Alexandria, the identification of Jesus as the one who led Israel out of Egypt to Sinai, and through the desert into the Holy Land, was virtually unanimous.⁴⁰ All of these speculations have been the target of the Rabbis’ repeated affirmation, ritualized and popularized in the *Haggadah*, that it was, in fact, “neither an angel, nor a messenger, but the Lord himself” that saved Israel.

Some fragments from the Cairo Geniza (as well as Sa’adia Gaon’s text of the *Haggadah*) have an interesting addition: “not by the hands of an angel, and not the hands of a seraph, and not by the hands of a messenger, *and not by a word*” (or even “not by means of *the word*,” לֹא עַל יְדֵי הַדִּיבֵר—*or, as Boyarin renders it, “not by means of the Logos”*). Some scholars hypothesized that this phrase targeted non-rabbinic, or perhaps Johannine Christian, speculations on Logos.⁴¹

39 *Jub.* 27.29 (Wintermute, 2:54); Philo, *Agr.* 51 (trans. Francis Henry Colson, George Herbert Whitaker, *Philo 111: On the Unchangeableness of God. On Husbandry. Concerning Noah’s Work as a Planter. On Drunkenness. On Sobriety*, LCL 247 [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930], 134); *Apoc. Ab.* 10:3, 8 (trans. Ryszard Rubinkiewicz, in Ryszard Rubinkiewicz and Horace Lunt, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. [New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985], 1:693–694); *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* Exod 24:1: “And Michael, the Prince of Wisdom, said to Moses, Come up etc.” (cf. Exod 24:1, “and he said to Moses, Come up etc.”) See also *b. Sanh.* 38, where a certain *min* invokes Exod 24:1 as proof of a second divine power: “It is written, ‘And to Moses he said, come up unto the יְהוָה [Exod 24:1].’ It should have said: ‘Come up to me!’” Rav Idit responds that “[t]his was Metatron, whose name is like the name of his master, as it is written: ‘for My name is in him’ [Exod 23:21],” and adds immediately that, far from worshipping Metatron, Israel never even accepted him as a messenger: “We have sworn that we would not even receive him as a guide, for it is written ‘If Your face goes not [do not bring us up from here]’ [Exod 33:15].”

40 Jude 5: Ἰησοῦς λαὸν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου σώσας; 1 Cor 10:9: μὴ δὲ ἐκπειράζωμεν τὸν Χριστόν, καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν ἐπέειρασαν, καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ὀφειῶν ἀπώλλυντο; Justin, *Dial.* 120.3: “Jesus, who led your fathers out of Egypt”; Melito, *Peri Pascha* 84–85; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.7.56–60 (“our pedagogue, the holy God Jesus” is the “Lord” who led Israel out of Egypt and through the desert, and gave the Law through his servant Moses).

41 According to Finkelstein (“Oldest Midrash,” 296, n. 13), the text is targeting “the Alexandrian doctrine of the Logos.” Shlomo Pines (“From Darkness into Great Light,” *Imm* 4 [1974]: 47–51 at 50) also holds that “the passage in the *Haggadah* has the function of a polemic,” being “crystallized out of a struggle with Hellenistic texts,” and concludes that “there is no need ... to look in the rest of the words mentioned for a polemic against the doctrine of the Christian Logos.” On the contrary, Yuval (*Two Nations in the Womb*, 80, n. 121) maintains that this addition is made deliberately and “in clear opposition to John 1:1.” Daniel Boyarin (“Beyond Judaism: Metatron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism,” *JSJ* 41 [2010]: 323–365 at 333) refers to the *Haggadah* in the course of his analysis

Given its late date, however, this addition is more likely to reflect medieval anti-Christian polemics.⁴²

To conclude, Jewish tradition seems determined to find a robust Scriptural denial of “binitarian” conceptions at all cost—even at the cost of using a reading of that verse which is at odds with the MT and coincides in substance with what Christians were reading in the LXX.⁴³ If the target of the Rabbis’ rebuttal is the Christian exegesis of the Exodus, more needs to be said about the Christian side of the story.

4 “The Lord Himself” in Byzantine Hymnography

To understand the view that was popular among Christians let us now consider the use of Isaiah 63 in two Byzantine hymns dating anywhere from the fifth to the eleventh centuries and widely disseminated in the liturgical books.⁴⁴

of *b. Sanh.* 38b, summarizing the rabbinic reasoning as follows: “[A]s the Haggadah has it: Not by means of an angel, and not by means of an agent, and not by means of the Logos (that one’s only in old manuscripts). ‘You may exist, Metatron, say the Rabbis, but we will not worship you.’ Somebody, it would seem was doing just that.”

42 As noted by Leonhard (“Die Pesachhaggada als Spiegel religiöser Konflikte,” 165), this expansion is not present in the Palestinian Haggadot and cannot, therefore, be taken as a witness to a rebuttal of Christian conceptions of Logos before the middle ages.

43 As an aside, a similar instance of the *Haggadah* using a biblical text in a non-MT version that corresponds to what is found in the LXX, also occurs with the phrase “and with great terribleness” (וּבְמִרְאָה גְדֹלָה) in Deut 26:8. The exegesis set forth in the *Haggadah*—“*And with great terribleness*: this is the revelation (unveiling, uncovering, denuding) of the Shekhinah (הַשְׁכִּינָה) (זו גְּלוּי שְׁכִינָה)”—is arrived at by reading מְרִאָה (*mar’eh*) instead of מוֹרָא (*mora*). Yet, this reading is *not* derived from the verse invoked as its support (Deut 4:34) in its MT reading (which uses the very same word, מוֹרָא, in the plural: וּבְמִוֹרָאִים גְּדֹלָיִם); it is, rather, consonant with the LXX version of both Deut 26:8 and 4:34, “and with great *visions*” (καὶ ἐν ὁράμασι μεγάλαις) and effectively recuperates what seems to have been the original reading, now extant only in the Greek. See Finkelstein, “Oldest Midrash”: “In fact, there can be little doubt that ... the verse *ubemora’ gadol* which is translated ‘and with great terribleness,’ was originally read *ubemar’eh gadol*, ‘and with a great Vision.’ Only the reading *ubemar’eh gadol* could justify the interpretation, ‘this refers to the visible manifestation of God.’” (310); “Similar renderings of *ubemora’* are found also in the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targumim to Deut 4:34 and Jer. 32:21. It is also found in Peshitta and Targumim to Deut 34:12. The Vulgate, which in all the passages cited follows the Masoretic readings, translates the phrase in Deut 4:34, *horribiles visiones*, combining both senses” (310, n. 39).

44 Σταυρωθέντος σου Χριστέ, which is part of the First Royal Hour of Great Friday, is ascribed to Cyril of Alexandria. In any case, it cannot postdate the 8th–9th century, when this hymnographic material was codified. The second hymn, Ἐλήλυθας ἐκ Παρθένου, is the Eirmos of Ode 4 in the Canon of the Resurrection for Tone 2 ascribed to John Mavropous, the

As in the case of the *Haggadah*, the value of these hymns resides, precisely, not in their authorship, origin, or age, but in their liturgical usage. Indeed, once injected into the “lifeblood” of Church worship, this exegesis assumed an extensive presence across temporal, cultural, and linguistic borders, eventually garnering widespread acceptance and reverence to an extent unrivaled by other patristic voices.

Σταυρωθέντος σου Χριστέ, ἀνηρέθη ἡ τυραννίς, ἐπατήθη ἡ δύναμις τοῦ ἐχθροῦ· οὔτε γάρ Ἄγγελος, οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος ἔσωσας ἡμᾶς. Δόξα σοι.

By your crucifixion, O Christ, the tyranny was destroyed, the power of the enemy was trampled underfoot. For it was neither an angel nor a man, but the Lord himself that saved us. Glory to you!

Ἐλήλυθας ἐκ Παρθένου οὐ πρέσβυς οὐκ Ἄγγελος, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος, σεσαρκωμένος, καὶ ἔσωσας, ὄλον με τὸν ἄνθρωπον· διὸ κραυγάζω σοι· Δόξα τῇ δυνάμει σου Κύριε.

You have come from the Virgin, incarnate—neither a messenger nor an angel, but the Lord Himself—and have saved the whole of me, of humankind (saved me, humanity, entirely); therefore I cry to you: Glory to your power, O Lord!

Both hymns are, essentially, doxologies (Δόξα σοι, Δόξα τῇ δυνάμει σου Κύριε) taking as their “pretext” Christ’s Incarnation and Crucifixion. Each of these “great and paradoxical mysteries,” to invoke a frequent liturgical formula, are understood as distinct yet complementary specifications of Isaiah’s prophetic text. In other words, the hymnographer sees, encapsulated in Isa 63:9 LXX, the paradox of the “Lord himself” becoming flesh and being crucified (σεσαρκωμένος, σταυρωθέντος). God’s supreme abasement—the wondrous revelation of his supreme power—is highlighted by being contrasted to the fictional alternative of a “merely” human or angelic Savior. The ensuing message is that the “tyranny” could not have been broken and “all of humanity” been saved by either human or angelic agency.

Having in mind the use of Isa 63:9 in the Passover *Haggadah*, the Paschal allusions in *Σταυρωθέντος σου Χριστέ* suddenly appear more blatant and potent.

Metropolitan of Euchaites (d. 1079). For the presence of this hymn in the various liturgical books, see Enrica Follieri, *Initia hymnorum ecclesiae Graecae*, 5 vols (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1963), 3:529, 1:418.

The connection with the Paschal Lamb—quite evident, since the hymn is recited on Great Friday⁴⁵—is articulated by referencing the destruction of the “tyranny” and of “the power of the enemy,” that is, the crushing of Egypt’s might and its Christian allegorization as the slaying of death and the exodus from mortality to resurrection.

While the Jewish tradition, which eventually finds liturgical expression in the *Haggadah*, is interested in defending and imposing the notion of exclusive divine agency at the Exodus at the expense of Moses and the angels, the Byzantine hymns give voice to the venerable and widespread Christian tradition, which identifies “the Lord” of the Exodus narrative (and, implicitly, of the Isaiah verse) with the “Lord” of Christian worship: Jesus.⁴⁶ Building on this assumption, the hymns reiterate the good news of Christ’s death and resurrection as a Christological “second take” on Passover, and stress the complex humanity-and-divinity of this “Lord”: neither a mere man, too weak to save humankind, nor a God alien to the reality of humanity’s embodied reality. This last point becomes clearer when we consider the exegesis of Dan 7:13 in Byzantine hymns in relation with rabbinic exegesis.

5 “One Lord, Ancient and Young”: Early Christian Exegesis of Daniel 7:13

The two characters in Daniel’s vision, one “ancient of days”—white-haired, seated on a fiery throne—and the other “like a son of man,” and the elevation of the latter to a state of universal and eternal rule that replicates that of

45 A later liturgical tradition also adds this hymn to the preparation of the Eucharistic Gifts—the ritual of the Prothesis (from ἄρτος τῆς προθέσεως/ἄρτις ἡ ἁγία at 1 Sam 21:6/7)—mandating that it be recited immediately following the words, “Sacrificed is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, for the life of the world and its salvation.” This tradition postdates the liturgical commentaries of Symeon of Thessalonica (dated shortly before 1429) and the early sixteenth-century Ps.-Germanos, both of which offer descriptions and interpretations of the Prothesis that mention no addition to “Sacrificed is the Lamb of God ...” (PG 155:264; PG 98:397). At some point, however, the hymn found its way into the ritual of the Preparation, and was printed in the Greek Hieratikon as late as the 1987 edition. See Ἱερατικόν: Αἱ θείαι λειτουργίαι Ἰωάννου του Χρυσοστόμου, Βασιλείου του Μεγάλου και των Προηγουμένων μετά της τυπικῆς αὐτῶν Διατάξεως και τινῶν ἀπαραιτήτων ἱερῶν ἀκολουθιῶν και ευχῶν (Athens, Greece: Αποστολική Διακονία, 1987), 95–96.

46 Interpreting biblical theophanies as “Christophanies”—manifestations of the Logos-to-be-incarnate—was an important “ingredient” in the gradual crystallization of a distinct Christian exegesis, doctrine, liturgy, and spirituality. See Bogdan G. Bucur, *Christophanic Exegesis and the Making of a Christian Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

the first character, had the potential to be theologically problematic. To quote Boyarin, “[t]he two-throne apocalypse in Daniel calls up a very ancient strand in Israel’s religion, one in which, it would seem, the El-like sky god of justice and the younger rider on the clouds, storm god of war, have not really been merged as they are for most of the Bible.”⁴⁷

Perhaps this problem was already apparent long ago, since the angelic *pesher* immediately following the vision (Dan 7:15–28) offers a “monotheizing” explanation the Son of Man as an allegorical image for the people of Israel.⁴⁸ Perhaps, too, the peculiar reading in the Old Greek, which depicts the one like a son of man approaching “like” (ὡς) the Ancient of Days rather than “unto” (ἐώς) him, had the same intention of subverting the dangerous binitarian (“Two Powers”) theology of the text, by merging the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man.⁴⁹ Perhaps—and perhaps other theories that have been proposed⁵⁰ make better sense of this unsolvable textual and theological conundrum.⁵¹

What we do know for sure is that rabbinic scholars were concerned by the potential that a passage such as Daniel 7 (alongside Exod 23:20–23; 15:3) held for

47 Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012), 46.

48 See Boyarin, *Jewish Gospels*, 43: “... the author of the book of Daniel, who had Daniel’s vision itself before him, wanted to suppress the ancient testimony of a more-than-singular God, using allegory to do so.”

49 This hypothesis is among those noted in passing by Johan Lust, “Dan 7,13 and the Septuagint,” in Katrin Hauspie, ed., *Messianism and the Septuagint: Collected Essays by J. Lust* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 1–8 at 5: “the Septuagint may present us with a correction of the MT and Theodotion, a correction that may have had a theological intention. The translator could not accept the messianic character of the ‘one like a son of man’ in the MT and Theodotion. He therefore transformed the One ‘like a son of man’ into the ‘Ancient of Days.’” It was developed by Segal, *Two Powers*, 202: “The LXX apparently translated ‘the son of man’ vision in such a way as to make one suspicious that very early ‘two powers’ traditions were being challenged.” Similarly, Loren Stuckenbruck, “‘One like a Son of Man as the Ancient of Days’ in the Old Greek Recension of Daniel 7, 13: Scribal Error or Theological Translation?,” *ZNW* 86 (1995): 268–276 at 275: “It is thus tempting to attribute a monotheizing tendency to the translator, who may have seen a theological difficulty in the presence of two heavenly figures in a passage that mentions a plurality of thrones.”

50 A thorough but rather more speculative study by Johannes Lust (“Dan 7,13 and the Septuagint”) argued that the current MT is, in fact, an “early Targum” of the original Hebrew text of Daniel and that the OG translates accurately that original Hebrew text, now lost, in which the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man were indeed “one and the same symbol.” In this case, the distinction between the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man would have been *introduced* by the current MT—the Aramaic that supplanted the original Hebrew—in order to give voice to the apocalyptic-messianist agenda of that “early Targum.” The weakness of Lust’s intriguing proposal is, clearly, the absence of a Hebrew text to verify it.

51 For an extensive discussion see Bucur, *Christophanic Exegesis*, 208–214.

heretical interpretation—“two powers in heaven”—and insisted that the one and same God is “the one of the sea” (a young warrior) and “the one of Sinai” (the aged judge), and that the two thrones in Daniel’s visions are for the two aspects of God, justice and mercy.⁵²

Judging from one strand in the Christian reception history of Daniel 7—the Gospels presuppose the clear distinction between the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man—the binitarian heresy combatted by the Rabbis most certainly overlapped with Christianity. As Boyarin observes, in a discussion of *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* to Exod 20:2, the classic anti-binitarian text,

Segal remarks that the text has “identified the people who believe in ‘two powers in heaven’ as gentiles” (*Powers*, 41) and then later is somewhat nonplussed, remarking, “they must have been gentiles well-versed in Jewish tradition to have offered such a dangerous and sophisticated interpretation of Dan 7.9f” (*Powers*, 55). Well, Gentiles who are so well-versed and who would make such a dangerous and sophisticated interpretation, precisely of Daniel 7, are called Christians!⁵³

There is, however, another Christian reading of the Son of Man. In Rev 1:13–14 the exalted Jesus is called “son of man” but is depicted in terms that correspond to the Ancient of Days of Dan 7:9 (“white hair”). In subsequent centuries many Christian writers would interpret the two characters as two aspects of Christ. As I have shown at length elsewhere,⁵⁴ since the Christological interpretation of the Ancient of Days (as part of a Christological polymorphism that also sees the Son of Man as Christ) became a standard occurrence in Byzantine festal hymnography, it very likely was the more “popular” interpretation. Consider the following example of hymnographic theology, drawn from a stanza in Romanos the Melodist’s Second Kontakion on Theophany:

Ἄρωμεν ἅπαντες τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς πρὸς Κύριον τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, βοῶντες ὡς Ἱερεμίας: Ὁ ὀφθεις ἐπὶ γῆς, οὗτος ἐστὶν Θεὸς ἡμῶν ὅστις καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις θέλων συνανεστράφη θέλων συνανεστράφη, καὶ τροπὴν οὐχ ὑπέμεινε / ὁ δεῖξας ἑαυτὸν ἐν μορφαῖς τοῖς προφήταις, ὃν Ἰεζεκιὴλ ἐμὶ πύρινον ἄρμα ὡσπερ εἶδος ἀνδρὸς ἐθεάσατο, καὶ Δανιὴλ ἀνθρώπου υἱὸν καὶ παλαιὸν ἡμερῶν, τὸν ἀρχαῖον καὶ νέον ἓνα Κύριον κηρύττων τὸν φανέντα καὶ φωτίσαντα πάντα.

52 See Segal, *Two Powers*, 33–59, ch. 2: “Conflicting Appearances of God”; Boyarin, “Two Powers in Heaven; or, The Making of a Heresy.”

53 Boyarin, “Two Powers in Heaven; or, The Making of a Heresy,” 342.

54 Bucur, *Christophanic Exegesis*, 208–246.

Let us all raise our eyes to God in heaven, as we cry like Jeremiah: The One who appeared on earth, this is our God, who also willingly lived among men (cf. Bar 3:38), and underwent no change, who showed himself in different shapes to the prophets, whom Ezekiel contemplated like the form of a man on the fiery chariot, and Daniel as a son of man and ancient of days, proclaiming the ancient and the young to be one Lord: The One who appeared and enlightened all things.⁵⁵

According to Romanos, then, Daniel 7 proclaims *one Lord*—specifically, the one-who-would-be-incarnate, Jesus Christ—simultaneously young and old, son of man and ancient of days: ἀνθρώπου υἱὸν καὶ παλαιὸν ἡμερῶν, τὸν ἀρχαῖον καὶ νέον ἓνα Κύριον. In a similar manner, a homily on the Meeting of the Lord penned between 325 and the middle of the seventh century, ascribed to Methodius of Olympus,⁵⁶ delights in writing that the aged Simeon received in his arms, as an infant, the Ancient of days, τὸν ἐν νηπιότητι παλαιὸν τῶν ἡμερῶν, “the preeternal one as an infant,” τὸν ἐν νηπιότητι προαιώνιον, who is none other than the God of Abraham, the Holy One of Israel, the Mystagogue of Moses and Lawgiver.⁵⁷

All of this is nothing new in early Christian literature. It falls, rather, within the category of “polymorphic Christology,” well known in scholarship on Christian Origins.⁵⁸ Moreover, polymorphic Christology remains a theological option as late as the ninth century—albeit one of doubtful orthodoxy, which elicited Photius of Constantinople’s criticism. As Krahling McKay puts it, “while Photius [*Cod.* 114] mentions these texts in order to condemn them as erroneous, his obvious knowledge of them suggests that copies of apocryphal literature were available for Byzantine theologians to study as late as the ninth century.”⁵⁹

55 Romanos, *Second Kontakion on Theophany* 15 (Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode: Hymnes IX–XX*, SC 110 [Paris: Cerf, 1965], 288).

56 Ps-Methodius of Olympus, *De Simeone et Anna* 6 (PG 18:360C). The homily is printed in PG 18:348–381. On the question on dating and authorship, see the thorough stylistic and doctrinal analysis of Vinzenz Buchheit, *Studien zu Methodios von Olympos* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), 133–140.

57 Ps-Methodius of Olympus, *De Simeone et Anna* 8 (PG 18:365B); 6 (PG 18:360C).

58 See Gedaliahu Stroumsa, “Polymorphie divine et transformations d’un mythologème: l’Apocryphon de Jean et ses sources,” *VC* 35 (1981): 412–434; Hugues Garcia, “L’enfant vieillard, l’enfant aux cheveux blancs et le Christ polymorphe,” *RHPR* 80 (2000): 479–501; Paul Foster, “Polymorphic Christology: Its Origins and Development in Early Christianity,” *JTS* 58 (2007): 66–99.

59 Gretchen Krahling McKay, “Christ’s Polymorphism in Jerusalem, Taphou 14: An Examination of Text and Image,” *Apocrypha* 14 (2003): 177–191 at 185.

Paradoxically, Christian advocacy of the full divinity of Christ finds itself in agreement with rabbinic polemics against “two-power” theology on this point: for the rabbinic texts investigated by Segal, the one and same God is “the one of the sea” (a young warrior) and “the one of Sinai” (the aged judge), the young Beloved with curled locks, black as a raven (Song 5:11) and the white-haired Ancient of Days; and the two thrones in Daniel’s visions are for the two aspects of God, justice and mercy. For Christians, it is the one and same Christ who is “the one Lord, both ancient and new,” as Romanos expresses it, both Son of Man and Ancient of Days, newborn child and eternal God. As a matter of fact, Stroumsa observed decades ago that “these rabbinic texts offer ... a remarkable parallel ... to the conception according to which Christ appears under the form of a youth and of an old man.”⁶⁰

6 “One Power”: Christian Orthodoxy

The Christological polymorphism of the Byzantine hymns discussed above seems to complicate the landscape by revealing more complexity and nuance in the Christian theological “field.” It seems that the “Christophanic exegesis” shared by all Church writers mentioned so far does not necessarily reveal a “binitarian” or “two-power” theology.

In point of fact, fourth-century Trinitarian Orthodoxy emphatically *rejects* the two-power or three-power doctrines of subordinationist Christology (“Arianism”) or Pneumatology (“Pneumatomachianism”).⁶¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, celebrated as “the Theologian” par excellence,⁶² offers the following criticism of his Pneumatomachian adversaries:

They say: If you speak of “god” and “god” and “god,”—how is it that you do not mean three gods? how are you not turning the object of worship

60 Stroumsa, “Polymorphie divine,” 421.

61 Alan Segal, “‘Two Powers in Heaven’ and Early Christian Trinitarian Thinking,” in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins, eds., *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73–95: “from the point of view of the rabbis, all Christians seem to be ‘two powers’ sectarians; but from the point of view of orthodoxy, only those who incline in the direction of Origen and Eusebius are” (94).

62 Gregory of Nazianzus’ homilies, the most copied of all Byzantine manuscripts after the Scriptures, were recited on Sundays and feast days over the course of the liturgical year, used in classroom exercises, and “plagiarized,” one might say, in poetic compositions that eventually became the normative and generally received hymnography of Byzantine Christianity.

into several principles (πολυαρχία)? ... Here is how I answer them: how is it that you label us tritheists—you who revere the Son (although you have rejected the Spirit)? Are you then not ditheists? (τί φατε τοῖς τριθεΐταις ἡμῖν ... ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐ διθεΐται)? ... Now, if you [are among those who] revere him ... let us ask you: what argument is there in defense of your ditheism, if ever you are accused of it? If there is a sensible argument—by all means, make your answer and give us, too, a way to answer! For whatever your arguments are in rejecting [the accusation of] ditheism, those very arguments will be good enough for us against [the accusation of] tritheism.⁶³

The Pneumatomachian accusation—namely, that adding a third term to the divinity amounts to “tritheism”—applies to their own addition of the Son to the “one God” of Scripture; and they know full well that such a charge is refuted by stating that the distinction of the hypostases does not preclude the fundamental oneness of the divinity. Nazianzen’s adversaries do, indeed, believe in distinct “powers,” which happen to be two: their theology actually *is* ditheistic. By contrast, Gregory’s own theology is not “tritheistic” according to the same logic, since it does not count several powers but, as he states repeatedly, “the one godhead and power.”⁶⁴

The “ditheism” that Gregory of Nazianzus discerns in Pneumatomachian theology corresponds to the rabbinic charge against those who worship “two powers in heaven.” It should, therefore, not be surprising to find that the “Christophanic” exegesis of Isaiah 63 and Daniel 7 proposes something else than the expected “two power” theology.

63 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 31.13 (PG 36:148).

64 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 31.33 (PG 36:172): “... to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one godhead and power (τὴν μίαν θεότητά τε καὶ δύναμιν)”; *Or.* 40.41 (PG 36:417): “This I give to you as a companion and champion throughout your life: the one godhead and power in the three (τὴν μίαν ἐν τοῖς τρισὶ θεότητά τε καὶ δύναμιν)”; *Or.* 1.7 (PG 35:401): the sound faith in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one godhead and power (τὴν μίαν θεότητά τε καὶ δύναμιν); *Or.* 22.12 (PG 35:1144): “... the definition of piety, namely to worship, in three—the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the one godhead and power (τὴν μίαν ἐν τοῖς τρισὶ θεότητά τε καὶ δύναμιν).”

7 Concluding Observations

Navigating between the Scylla of “polemicomania”⁶⁵ and the Charybdis of “parallelomania,”⁶⁶ scholars are increasingly adopting the view that Christianity and rabbinic Judaism constitute “two sister religions that took shape in the same period and with a common background of subjugation and destruction” (which explains “their agreement on the centrality of the messianic idea and the centrality of Passover”), and that “these two religions did not emerge as two separate entities with clear identities.”⁶⁷ If, in manner reminiscent of Boyarin,⁶⁸ we envisage a theological continuum in a process similar to that of *mitosis*, with *internal* polemics leading to the gradual emergence and self-identification of two distinct religious bodies, it is not surprising to find that, even after the internal polemics have become polemics between external rivals, the two religious bodies have reconstituted distinct but analogous versions of the theological vocabulary and syntax inherited from the common matrix.⁶⁹ To put it plainly, the Church and the Synagogue think and pray in *analogous* ways.

65 “A problem with Yuval’s work,” writes Kulp (“Origins of the *Seder* and *Haggadah*,” 124), “is that once he starts looking for polemics, he finds them nearly everywhere. Instead of Sandmel’s famed ‘parallelomania’ we encounter ‘polemicomania.’” This criticism is probably excessive, although Yuval’s argument that the similarity in sound between *afikoman* in *m. Pesahim* 10.8 (“one may not add an *afikoman* [אִפִּיקוֹמָן] after the Pesah sacrifice”) and ἀφικάμενον in *Peri Pascha* 66 (Jesus “having come [ἀφικάμενον] from heaven to earth ...”) suggests that the Sages intended “to pull out the rug from under the Christian interpretation” (*Two Nations in Your Womb*, 76) is as conjectural as Werner’s opposite claim that Melito wrote ἀφικάμενον because he “wanted to mimic” the Passover rule about the *afikoman* (“Melito of Sardes, the First Poet of *Deicide*,” 205).

66 Israel Jacob Yuval, “Christianity in the Talmud: Parallelomania or Parallelophobia?,” in Franklin T. Harkins, ed., *Transforming Relations: Essays on Jews and Christians Throughout History in Honor of Michael A. Signer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 50–74.

67 Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 69–70.

68 E.g., Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 8–9: “If one were to travel from Paris to Florence speaking only the local dialect in each town or village, one would not know when one had passed from France to Italy ... The reason that we speak of French and Italian as separate language is precisely because the dialect of Paris and the dialect of Florence have been canonized as the national languages.” By analogy, “one could travel, metaphorically, from rabbinic Jew to Christian along a continuum where one hardly would know where one stopped and the other began.”

69 I find mitosis to be a helpful metaphor because it describes the *process* of division rather than its result, and because mitosis results in two daughter cells each having the same number and kind of chromosomes as the parent nucleus.

The Christian and rabbinic exegesis of Isaiah 63 and Daniel 7, as expressed in their exegetical wrestling with Scripture, in doctrinal statements, and liturgical compositions, shows interesting points of convergence: *both* reject the notion that the “saving” would have been carried out by an angelic or prophetic intermediary, insisting, rather, on the exclusive work of the Lord; *both* view Isaiah 63 as one of many theophanies, in which, at diverse times and in diverse manners, the same Lord spoke to the patriarchs and prophets, and to the people of the covenant; and *both* articulate the “correct” view by appealing to the theological device scholars call “polymorphism.”⁷⁰ Even the “Christophanic” exegesis of Isa 63:9 and Dan 7:13—which is normative orthodoxy for the Church and unbearable heresy for the Synagogue⁷¹—does not negate the shared fundamental theo-logic of Christian and rabbinic discourse: unity and transcendence of God, doubled by God’s relentless *synkatabasis* manifested in polymorphic theophanies that constitute the crucial articulators of the biblical story.

In the opening paragraphs of this essay I mentioned the theological manifesto of the *Theophaneia School*, penned by the group’s academic and spiritual mentor. I see no better way to end this contribution than by quoting the final paragraph of that same document:

To the world outside the Orthodox Church, especially to the scholarly world, we offer our work as at once an apology—in the sense of an explanation and a defense—for Orthodox theology and spirituality, and as a labor in common with, first of all, our brothers and sisters in Christianity, who are also seeking out the origins of the Faith once received by the Apostles; and, secondly, with Jewish scholars who are exploring continuities with their own past; and to both we acknowledge ourselves profoundly indebted. *They have helped us, and they continue to help us discover ourselves. We hope in our turn to return the favor.*⁷²

70 Pesce (*Dio senza mediatori*, 169–182) insists on the fact that the Jewish texts rejecting mediatorship (the rabbinic midrashim and the later *Haggadah*) do not depend on the text of Isa 63:9 (LXX), and argues that both are likely representing a single exegetical and theological tradition at least as ancient as the LXX itself.

71 Indeed, as Golitzin does not fail to remind us, “[t]heophany permeates Orthodox Tradition throughout, informing its dogmatic theology and its liturgy. That Jesus, Mary’s son, is the very One who appeared to Moses and the prophets—this is the consistent witness of the ante-Nicene Fathers, and remains foundational throughout the fourth century Trinitarian controversies and the later Christological disputes” (Golitzin, “Theophaneia,” xviii).

72 Golitzin, “Theophaneia,” xviii–xx (emphasis added).

PART 4

Pseudo-Dionysius, Plato, and Proclus



Revisiting the Christian Platonism of Pseudo-Dionysius

István Perczel

1 On the Need of Studying Proclus for Understanding Dionysian Christianity

In this study that I offer as a celebratory piece to Alexander Golitzin, I intend to address an age-old problem and try to give a technical solution to it: namely the question of whether the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus is of Christian or of Platonist philosophical inspiration. Perhaps nobody has done as much as Vladika Alexander to uncover the Christian sources and inspiration of the Corpus. His monumental work was summarised in his recent monograph, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, published in 2013.¹ Yet, what made the deepest influence on me was the original version of this monograph, *Et introibo ad altare dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*,² which was published in 1994, but which I encountered in its first form as a doctoral dissertation in the Leuven theological library as far back as 1992, and which I devoured eagerly. In this double monograph, Alexander Golitzin has dug deep into the Christian spiritual tradition to show the patristic and Christian spiritual antecedents of the Corpus.

In the two very different introductions to the two volumes, he briefly surveys the literature, presenting the great debate that started perhaps with Luther (“Stay away from that Dionysius, whoever he was!”)³ and gained momentum

1 Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, CS 250 (Collegeville, Minn.: Cistercian Publications, 2013). As I am using an e-book, I am giving the page numbers according to the electronic version, which do not match with the page numbers of the printed version.

2 Alexander Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, Analekta Vlatadon 59 (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, 1994).

3 Joachim Knaake, ed., *Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 6 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1888), 6:562, cited in Golitzin’s *Mystagogy*, Introduction, 17–18.

with the discovery of the transtextual reutilization by Pseudo-Dionysius of Proclus' work—not only his vocabulary, but entire long chunks of text from the Diadochus' oeuvre—by Joseph Stiglmayr and Hugo Koch.⁴ This literature, up to the present day, is haunted by the perplexing question: how can an author, whose work has been organically integrated into the development of Christian theology and who, up to modern times, enjoyed the reputation of being an orthodox Christian teacher, be so deeply influenced by pagan Neoplatonism? And conversely, how can an author, so deeply immersed in Neoplatonist philosophy, still be considered a Christian? Yet, the great importance of the discovery by Stiglmayr and Koch notwithstanding, Dionysian studies can hardly escape the plague of specialization: experts in patristic studies will easily recognise the patristic, even scriptural, background of the *Corpus*, while experts in Neoplatonist philosophy will unmistakably rank it among the works of the philosophers. This dichotomy is further aggravated by the temptation of two extremes. Pseudo-Dionysius is either considered as an orthodox authority, or, as E.R. Dodds has emblematically formulated it, someone who merely dressed Proclus' "philosophy in Christian draperies."⁵

Researchers feel ever more the need of a synthesis. This is the program that Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi formulated in his most recent learned and useful monograph:

Our tentative objective will be to balance the diverse acquisitions of the research in the perspective to arrive at a reading paradigm that is capable to explain how it is possible that in the *Corpus Dionysiacum* are combined the undeniable Neoplatonist formation of its author with its similarly undeniable Christian orthodoxy.⁶

4 Josef Stiglmayr, "Der neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogenannten Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Übel," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895), 253–273, 721–748; Hugo Koch, "Proklus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen," *Philologus* 54 (1895), 438–444; idem, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen* (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1900). However, at least Pseudo-Dionysius's dependence on the Neoplatonist school was already suggested by Johann Georg Veit Engelhardt, *Die angeblichen Schriften des Areopagiten Dionysius übersetzt und mit Abhandlungen begleitet* (Sulzbach: Seidel Kunst und Buchhandlung, 1823), xi–xii. I owe the reference to Engelhardt to Ben Schomakers.

5 Eric Robertson Dodds, ed., *Proclus, The Elements of Theology. A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), xxvi.

6 Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi, *Dietro 'Dionigi l'Areopagita': La genesi e gli scopi del Corpus Dionysiacum* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2018), 28–29.

Yet, orthodoxy is a historically elusive category, so that one might immediately ask, “Which Christian orthodoxy?” as fighting factions within Christianity always stressed their own orthodoxy and the heterodoxy of their opponents. Thus, I would reformulate Mainoldi’s program in a looser form: we should arrive at a perspective that is capable to explain how this author combines his undeniable Neoplatonist formation to his similarly undeniable Christian inspiration, leaving the historically irrelevant question of orthodoxy to theological discussions.

Now, it occurs to me that the debate on Dionysian Neoplatonism versus Christianity cannot be solved by multiplying either the Neoplatonist or the Christian references. Given the indebtedness of the author to Neoplatonist philosophy, and especially to Proclus, one should give account for what precisely he did with his Neoplatonist sources. And for this, we need a close parallel reading of Proclus’ and Dionysius’ texts, something that the protagonists of a Christian, or patristic, Dionysius rarely do. So, in the following, I will attempt to shed a sharper light on Pseudo-Dionysius’ Christian inspiration through finding more Proclus in his writings than scholarship has ever been able to find. I will propose the paradox that the more we understand the thoroughgoing dependence of this author on Proclus, the clearer picture we get of his deeply thought-through Christianity. By doing so, I hope to add my small contribution to Vladika Golitzin’s efforts to discover the Christian (Pseudo-)Dionysius.

I will not deal here with the popular proposal that Dionysius would be dependent also on Damascius.⁷ This hypothesis is based on undeniable similar-

7 On Damascian parallels in the CDA, see L.H. Grondijs, “Sur la terminologie dionysienne,” *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé* 4/18 (1959): 438–447; Ronald Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of PseudoDionysius: A Study in the Form and meaning of the Pseudo-Dionysian Writings* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 17–30; Salvatore Lilla, “Pseudo-Denys l’Aréopagite, Porphyre et Damascius,” in Ysabel de Andia, ed., *Denys l’Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident. Actes du Colloque International; Paris, 21–24 septembre 1994*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 151 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 117–152 at 135–152. Based on these parallels, far-reaching theories have been elaborated on the dependence of the CDA on Damascius’ *De principiis*, the most radical being that of Carlo Maria Mazzucchi in “Damascio, autore del Corpus Dionysiacum, e il dialogo Περὶ πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης,” *Aevum* 80/2 (2006): 299–334, according to whom, after his demonstration, the burden of proof falls on those who want to claim that Pseudo-Dionysius is not Damascius (ibid., 328). However, few are those today who accept Mazzucchi’s hypothesis. It has been refuted, by Emiliano Fiori in his review in *Adamantius* 14 (2008): 670–673; by Tuomo Lankila in “The Corpus Areopagiticum as a Crypto-Pagan Project,” *The Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 5 (2011): 14–40 at 39; and by Giocchino Curiello, “Pseudo-Dionysius and Damascius: An Impossible Identification,” *Dionysius* 31 (2013), 101–116. See also the summary of this debate in Mainoldi, *Dietro “Dionigi l’Areopagita,”* 107–113. Yet,

ities between the two authors, which are being interpreted either as a dependence of Pseudo-Dionysius on Damascius, or even as the identity of the two authors, or as an interlinear debate that Pseudo-Dionysius might have conducted with Damascius upon reading him. Yet, these parallels are not comparable to the references to Proclus' texts in the CDA. As far as I know, nobody has found long texts of Damascius paraphrased by Pseudo-Dionysius, such as those of Proclus. Moreover, it seems to me an unreflective dogmatic position that, if there are similarities between a pagan philosophical text and a Christian text, the latter must be derivative from the first and not vice versa, even when the chronology is unfavourable to this supposition. By now, the consensus that Pseudo-Dionysius had been a member of the inner circles in the Athenian Neoplatonist school of philosophy, which Damascius headed before its closure in September 529,⁸ is widely held.⁹ Now, if Pseudo-Dionysius and Damascius were members of the same philosophy school, there is no objective reason why Damascius could not have read the work of his fellow-student, even if the latter was

the unproven hypothesis of the dependence of the CDA on Damascius' texts reappears oft and ever. See recently Tuomo Lankila, "A Crypto-Pagan Reading of the Figure of Hierotheus and the 'Dormition' Passage in the *Corpus Areopagiticum*," in David D. Butorac and Danielle A. Layne, eds., *Proclus and His Legacy* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 175–182 at 177–178, and Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi, "The Transfiguration of Proclus' Legacy: Pseudo-Dionysius and the Late Neoplatonic School of Athens," *ibid.*, 199–217 at 210–217, accepted also by Adolf Martin Ritter in *Dionys von Areopag* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 155. In *Dietro "Dionigi l'Areopagita"*, 113–142, Mainoldi further develops his interpretation of the Dionysian Christian Platonist synthesis as a reply to and criticism of Damascius' anti-Christian metaphysics.

- 8 On the precise date and circumstances of Justinian's edict on the closure of the Academy, see Joëlle Beaucamp, "Le philosophe et le joueur. La date de la 'fermeture de l'École d'Athènes,'" *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002): 21–35. See also *idem*, "L'enseignement à Athènes au VI^e siècle: droit ou science des astres?" in Henri Hugonnard-Roche, ed., *L'enseignement supérieur dans les mondes antiques et médiévaux: aspects institutionnels, juridiques et pédagogiques; colloque international de l'Institut des Traditions Textuelles, Fédération de Recherche 33 du CNRS*, [Paris, 7–8 octobre 2005], *Textes et Traditions* 16 (Paris: Librairie philosophique Vrin, 2008), 201–218.
- 9 Perhaps the latest proof for the author of the CDA belonging to the Athenian school's inner circles is my discovery that the most important Proclian work for the construction of the CDA is the *Platonic Theology*, in "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology," in Alain-Philippe Segonds et al., eds., *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne. Actes du colloque international de Louvain (13–16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink* (Leuven and Paris: Leuven University Press and Les Belles Lettres, 2000), 491–532. According to Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, this work was only known to Proclus' close pupils and was published long after the death of Proclus, perhaps in the times of Simplicius, that is, not before the last years of the Academy; however, it was not much used until the Byzantine Proclus Renaissance in the eleventh century. See Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, eds., *Proclus, Théologie Platonicienne*, livre I (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968), cl–clvi, especially cliii. See on this, most recently, also E.S. Mainoldi, *Dietro "Dionigi l'Areopagita"*, 116.

a Christian Platonist, especially because all the evidence seems to show that the CDA was written long before the generally accepted *terminus ante quem*, 528 CE.

Yet, we do not need this counter-hypothesis either. To my mind, the parallels hitherto found between the CDA and Damascius prove only that, after Proclus, there was an Iamblichean turn in the school of Athens, or that, even in his lifetime, there was an Iamblichian tendency within the school, the characteristics of which are an enhanced stress on apophaticism, a return to the Iamblichian concept of the Absolutely Ineffable and of the One as One-All, and a rethinking of Proclus' metaphysical realism in terms of language philosophy. The CDA and Damascius' work both belong to this trend. However, the same trend is also observable in a Platonist writer who is earlier than Proclus, namely Synesius of Cyrene, whom Pseudo-Dionysius has definitely read.¹⁰ Also, if we observe metaphysical differences between the Pseudo-Dionysian and the Damascian systems, one should not hastily conclude that they are necessarily due to the authors' respective Christian and pagan convictions. They may well reflect intra-school debates about purely metaphysical questions.

Nevertheless, at this stage we should lay aside the question of the relation between the CDA and Damascius, the aim of the present study being to analyse the CDA's undeniable dependence on Proclus' texts. For this purpose, I will draw on a previous finding of mine, which I presented to the scholarly public first in the year 2000, in a volume dedicated to the completion of the edition by Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink of Proclus' *chef-d'oeuvre*, the *Platonic Theology*.¹¹ There, I published a study deemed preliminary, showing that the most important work of Proclus for Pseudo-Dionysius was precisely the *Platonic Theology*, an almost continuous paraphrase of which constitutes, so to say, the warp of the texture of the Dionysian texts. It is into this warp that the author weaves as weft threads references to and paraphrases of other texts, be they philosophical or Christian theological, thus producing a complex transtextual web. Yet, my preliminary analysis in that study had not got farther than the investigation of how Pseudo-Dionysius had used the first three chapters of Book I of the *Platonic Theology*, with sporadic references to other chapters, and an Appendix establishing Dionysian correspondences to the first seven chapters, without any analysis. My philological work, although

10 The relationship between Synesius, Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius is the subject of the M.A. thesis of Dachi Pachulia, written at the Philosophy Department of Central European University Budapest, and defended in June 2019.

11 István Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Platonic Theology*." In the following, I will be using the abbreviation *PT* for the *Platonic Theology*.

generally positively received, has not triggered any continuation. Now, I intend to go beyond the results of that study and extend my investigations to the first three books of the *PT*.

I believe that the research presented in this essay demonstrates that the study of the precise philosophical position of Dionysius, and of the Neoplatonist literary and intellectual influences that he had undergone, reveals for us, more than anything, precisely his Christianity and his position in the theological debates that were going on in the Church in the very period when he composed his writings. What we should finally see is the structuralist position of a Christian Platonist, who proposed a genuinely Christian metaphysical interpretation of Plato's works as an alternative to the pagan Neoplatonist interpretation. In this, he was both preceded and followed by a long line of Christian intellectuals whose orthodoxy was often doubted but without whom the intellectual history of Christianity would be unimaginable.

2 Plaidoyer of a "Conspiracy Theorist"

In the introduction to *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, Alexander Golitzin dedicates a separate chapter to something that he considers a particularly negative phenomenon in Dionysian scholarship, namely, some "extravagant views" labelled as "conspiracy theories."¹² The three conspiracy theorists targeted are Carlo Maria Mazzucchi, Rosemary Arthur and me. While Mazzucchi is presented as one arguing for Damascius being the author of the *Corpus* and trying to inject Neoplatonism as a virus into Christianity, and Rosemary Arthur as proposing an alchemist-magician Dionysius, I am presented as one who wants to see in Pseudo-Dionysius

a cunning and deliberately deceptive heretic of the most extreme sort: a crypto-Nestorian as well as a Protoctist/Tetradite Origenist, whom Leontius of Byzantium knew very well and criticized severely (without naming him, however, since Leontius was concealing his own [Isochrist] brand of Origenism); Dionysius would have authored the anonymous *De Trinitate* (usually ascribed to Didymus), a work in which the polemic against Arianism, when properly decoded, reveals a fierce critique of Cyrillian Christology [...] the text in *DN* III.2 describing, according to the scholiast, the apostles' gathering at the funeral service for Mary Theotokos,

¹² Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 20 ff.

would refer to a council in which Dionysius took part, “possibly the council of Chalcedon”—and, again, “James” stands for the bishop of Jerusalem, “Peter” for the Pope of Rome, etc.; the term “theology” is a coded reference to the teachings of Origen, Eusebius, and Evagrius, while “Trinity” conceals a christological “triad” in the Origenistic-Evagrian tradition; conversely, christological affirmations are to be read as cryptic references to the Trinity.¹³

I am grateful that I was given the opportunity to present my speech of defence in this very volume that celebrates Vladika Alexander’s achievements. In fact, the above statements—needing some correction—are fair enough, but the conclusion that, per consequence, I am a conspiracy theorist who wants to present Pseudo-Dionysius as “a cunning and deliberately deceptive heretic of the most extreme sort,” is neither true nor fair.

What I have been interested in from the very outset of my research, which I started in 1992 in Leuven under the mentorship of Carlos Steel, who should be profusely thanked for this initial impetus, was to find the philological and methodological clues for understanding this text, which is far from being easily understandable. Seeing the contradictory interpretations that are influenced, more often than not, by the interpreters’ a priori personal convictions, at a very early stage I decided to discard any a priori concept about the author and his teaching. The very incomprehensibility of the text, often combined with grammatical imprecision, also betraying serious textual corruptions, had convinced me of the need of a decoding technique.

As I had learned that there was an early Syriac translation by Sergius of Reshaina, datable to the early sixth century, while our earliest Greek manuscript (Paris BnF cod. Gr. 437) dates to the early ninth century, I thought that no textual research into the Corpus could be done without studying this early translation. It was for this reason that I began to learn Syriac and that later I obtained, first from the Washington Library of Congress and, then, directly from Mount Sinai, due to the kindness of Fr Justin, the librarian of Saint Catherine’s monastery, copies of the unique manuscript containing this translation, *Sinaiticus syriacus* 52. Finally, I was not disappointed in my expectations: indeed, it has turned out that Sergius had been working on a better, less corrupt text, even a different redaction.¹⁴ To see this, it is enough to

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ This claim was repeatedly challenged by Emiliano Fiori. See, first of all, his “Introduction” to the critical edition of *DN, MT* and the Epistles: Emiliano Fiori, ed., *Dionigi Areopagita, Nomi divini, Teologia mistica, Epistole. La versione di Sergio di Rēš‘aynā (VI secolo)*,

read Sergius's version of the *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*, whose core importance for understanding the Corpus was pointed out by Alexander Golitzin himself.¹⁵ The text that Sergius translated had been organised differently from the presently known Greek. It consisted of eighteen chapters, instead of the seven contained in the second redaction and often it had alternative readings; sometimes half sentences had been left out from the original in the second redaction. Moreover, even the chapters are overlapping the present-day chapter limits, showing that the second redaction has split original chapters into two. Some further proofs for this statement, based on the texts' relationship to those of Proclus, will also be proposed here below.

Moreover, hunting for the code of the Dionysian texts, I was reading both the Neoplatonist and the Christian literature. As I deepened these studies, I was finding ever more astonishing background texts, overwritten and reused by Pseudo-Dionysius. As I saw that the Corpus, its Neoplatonist vocabulary notwithstanding, was saturated by scriptural references, I thought that by identifying the exegetical traditions to which the author adhered, one would find the milieu from which the work emanated. During this research, to my greatest surprise, I found out that the author adhered to the Origenist exegetical tradition, on the one hand, and to Antiochian Christology, on the other. Nothing was premeditated in this inquiry.

Now, here are the corrections to the above presentation of my work: the term "crypto-Nestorian" is one that I might have used sometime, astonished as I was by the heavy indebtedness of the author to Antiochian theology, mostly Theodoret, but including Nestorius, too. Yet, by now I see this story in a much more variegated light, taking into consideration the fierce imperial oppression of the Antiochian party after Ephesus. If the Antiochians wanted to survive, they had to go underground.¹⁶ Nevertheless, I have never written that Pseudo-Dionysius had been a Protocist/Tetradite Origenist. In fact, the Pro-

CSCO 656. *Scriptores Syri* 252 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), xxxiii–xxxviii, subchapter titled "L'ipotesi de Perczel: difficoltà derivanti dalla storia della tradizione greca." Yet, Fiori's edition, studies, and also our oral discussions, make it clear that he has less problem with the "two-redaction theory" than with my explanation that the second redaction was made to mitigate the CDA's original 'Origenism.' That the Syriac has a different and often much better text than the one witnessed by the Greek textual tradition would be difficult to deny. I must admit that, due to many other duties, I have never given a systematic response to Fiori's criticisms. This will not be done in the present study either, but it will present some additional arguments in favour of the "two-redaction theory."

15 See, especially, Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei*, 231–232.

16 This was an unavoidable necessity after the edict of Theodosius II, promulgated in August 435. See Paul Krüger, ed., *Corpus Iuris Civilis 11th ed.* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1954), I.5.6, 51.

toctist/Isochrist schism within the Origenist movement can be dated to the 540s, although it must have had its roots in earlier debates, while I am dating the composition of the *Dionysian Corpus* to the second half of the fifth century, perhaps to the 470s or 480s. What I claimed, following David Evans,¹⁷ and based on the writings of Leontius of Byzantium, was that Pseudo-Dionysius, together with Theodore of Mopsuestia, was one of the authorities used by the Proctocist Origenists. This, and not more, is what I claimed somewhat dubitatively in a study published in the year 2000.¹⁸ Finally as to the “Origenism” of the Corpus, provoking a series of rejections,¹⁹ this idea was introduced by none other than Alexander Golitzin himself.²⁰ Even recently, he adhered to his original expression “Neoplatonised Origenism.”²¹ Besides my own philological research pointing in this direction, it was precisely his study, read in 1992, which had oriented me.

I think that, if anything, it is the methodological and philological inquiry that has some worth in my research. The conclusions remain always debatable, they are even less important than the methodology. It is this methodology that I try to pursue in the present essay, too. I ask my readers, here as elsewhere, not to reject the conclusions under the influence of a priori convictions before attending to the methodology and its philological details.

17 David B. Evans, “Leontius of Byzantium and Dionysius the Areopagite,” *Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines* 7 (1980): 1–34.

18 István Perczel, “Once Again on Dionysius the Areopagite and Leontius of Byzantium,” in Tzotcho Boiadjiev, Georgi Kapriev, and Andreas Speer, eds., *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter: Internationales Kolloquium in Sofia vom 8. Bis 11. April 1999 unter der Schirmherrschaft der Société Internationale pour l’Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 41–85.

19 Notably, Karl Pinggéra and Emiliano Fiori have dedicated several studies to refute my claims of the “Origenism” of the CDA. See Karl Pinggéra, “Die Bildwelt im ‘Buch des heiligen Hierotheos’—Ein philosophischer Mythos?,” in Martin Tamcke, ed., *Mystik—Metapher—Bild: Beiträge des VII. Makarios-Symposiums, Göttingen 2007* (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag, 2008), 29–41; Emiliano Fiori, “Mélange eschatologique et ‘condition spirituelle’ de l’intellect dans le corpus dionysiacum syriaque,” *Parole de l’Orient* 35 (2010): 261–276 and idem, “The Impossibility of the *Apocatastasis* in Dionysius the Areopagite,” in Sylwia Kaczmarek et al., eds., *Origeniana Decima: Origen as Writer* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 831–844.

20 See the entire section on “The Desert Fathers and Evagrius of Pontus,” in Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei*, 319–348.

21 Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 270 ff.

3 The Framework: Pseudo-Dionysius' Writing Methods

Here I am proposing a summary, based on previous publications, for understanding Pseudo-Dionysius' writing methods. This summary might be useful for understanding the specific inquiries contained in the main body of this essay.

1. The CDA is a kind of late antique fiction, a Joycean novel, so to speak.²² The author operates at multiple layers, plays a kind of hide-and-seek game, operates with transtextual wordplays and ambiguities, which can be understood only by those who know the subtexts to which he refers. He does not define his concepts and exegetical or philosophical principles, which should be guessed or known from other sources. Also, he operates by doublets: what is insufficiently expressed at one place gets its explanation from another place—this is a way to hide the key of the meaning of the given passages. Moreover, the fiction, and its “mystical” dimension, is enhanced by its incomplete structure: it presents itself as if it were only the tip of an iceberg—the underwater part of the iceberg being constituted by works that have never been transmitted under the pseudonym “Dionysius the Areopagite.” I believe that these missing works have been written actually and transmitted under diverse, mostly fourth century, pseudonyms. Some of them can be identified, a fact which greatly advances the understanding of the Corpus. In particular, in two previous studies, I published material which I believe to be proving beyond reasonable doubt that the Pseudo-Didymian *De trinitate* found by G.B. Mingarelli in a unique manuscript can be identified as the “lost” *Theological Outlines* mentioned eight times in the CDA.²³ This identification, if it ever gets accepted in scholarship, should

22 For the definition of the term “Joycean,” see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joycean>. On the *Dionysian Corpus* as a late antique fiction as well as the writing methods listed above, see, more extensively, István Perczel “Dionysius the Areopagite,” in Ken Perry, ed., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Patristics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 211–225. Recently, Ben Schomakers has also proposed that we should consider the Corpus a novelistic fiction: Ben Schomakers, “An Unknown Elements of Theology? On Proclus as the Model for the Hierotheos in the *Dionysian Corpus*,” in David D. Butorac and Danielle A. Layne, eds., *Proclus and His Legacy* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 183–198. There should be no debate about whose idea this is, as the two of us are continuing our discussions on the CDA since 1992, when our friendship began.

23 István Perczel, “Le pseudo-Denys, lecteur d’ Origène,” in Wolfgang A. Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg, eds., *Origeniana Septima. Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 673–710 at 690–701. Here, I analyzed the intertextual relationship between *Divine Names* 11, 1 and *De trinitate* 1. 18, 35–41 the first text referring to the second as one contained in the *Theological Outlines*; in István Perczel, “The Pseudo-Didymian *De trinitate* and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: A Preliminary Study,” *Stu-*

conclude the sterile debate about the question whether Pseudo-Dionysius was a Christian or not, as the *De trinitate* consists in a string of exegetical glosses on the Bible. In fact, the *De trinitate/Theological Outlines* contains Pseudo-Dionysius' interpretation of positive, dogmatic theology.

Thus, we can distinguish between the narrower *Dionysian Corpus* transmitted under the Dionysian pseudonym (CDA_n) and the wider *Dionysian Corpus* (CDA_w) containing also the identifiable extracorporeal writings (CDA_e).²⁴ The incompleteness of the structure plays a great rôle in the construction of the

dia Patristica 58/6: Neoplatonism and Patristics (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 83–108 at 95–108, I analysed a similar but more complex intertextual relationship between *Mystical Theology* III, *Divine Names* IV, 19, *Celestial Hierarchy* I, 1 and X, 3, on the one hand, and, on the other, *De trinitate* II, 6.8, 1–3, the latter being referred to in *MT* as belonging to the *Theological Outlines*. There are six more mentions of the *Theological Outlines* in the CDA, all of which can be identified as referring to concrete passages in the *De trinitate*. For a full list of the extracorporeal writings mentioned in the CDA, see Perczel "The Pseudo-Didymian *De trinitate* and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: A Preliminary Study," 87–89.

- 24 However, here we face another Dionysian puzzle: at least three manuscripts containing the *Dionysian Corpus* also contain a Neoplatonist 'Hymn to God,' (the famous "Ὠ πάντων ἐπέκεινα hymn) as one of the works attributable to the great Dionysius. The hymn is also transmitted in collections containing the poetic works of Gregory the Theologian, of Nazianzus. Finally, Cardinal Bessarion attributed the hymn to Proclus. According to Martin Sicherl, "Ein neuplatonischer Hymnus unter den Gedichten Gregors von Nazianz," in John Duffy and John Peradotto, ed., *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies presented to L.G. Westerink at 75* (Buffalo: Arethusa, 1988), 61–83, the hymn cannot belong either to Proclus, or to Gregory, and its textual transmission within the *Dionysian Corpus* is far better than in the other transmission lines. Moreover, the words of the hymn are echoing specific Pseudo-Dionysian doctrines and expressions. Thus, the most probable author is the one who authored the *Dionysian Corpus*, and the hymn has been transmitted within this Corpus, too. This attribution has divided scholarship. Werner Beierwaltes who had accepted the Dionysian authorship has later changed his view. In a later article, Pietro Podolak has also expressed his doubts, saying that the hymn remains unattributable. See Pietro Podolak, "Un inno dello Ps. Dionigi l'Areopagita? Alcune osservazioni sul carme 1,1,29 attribuito a Gregorio di Nazianzo," *Auctores Nostris* 5 (2007): 187–202. However, I cannot accept two of Podolak's arguments, namely that the hymn is already cited by Olympiodorus in 525, which would make this citation the earliest reference to the *Dionysian Corpus* and that there is nothing specifically Christian in the hymn. On the one hand, 525 is not too early a date for the appearance of the Corpus. Admittedly, the first mentions of the CDA can be found in the writings of Severus of Antioch, which are datable to the period between 518 and 528 (see Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998], 11–15). On the other hand, the very fact that the hymn is addressed to the single God is quite telling, most of all if one compares it to Proclus' hymns to the pagan gods. Its vocabulary is definitively Dionysian.

intracorporeal writings, too. Whatever structure the author builds up, he also destroys in a subtle play.

2. The author's pseudonym is an anagram of the author's name, while the pseudonyms of the protagonists, almost all taken from the New Testament, are denoting concrete persons—some of them being the author's contemporaries, others important—often controversial—figures of the preceding Church history. Here is a list of those pseudonyms that I believe to have been able to decipher:

2.a. The author's fictional teacher, Hierotheus (also an author's name—τοῦ Ἱεροθέου): Theodoret of Cyrus (Θεοδορίτου). This is also an anagram; however, the identification is in no way based on the anagram but on that of the sources of the Christological texts in the CDA. The scholarly consensus around the opposite view notwithstanding, the identification of these sources leaves no doubt about the Antiochian dyophysite convictions of Pseudo-Dionysius.

2.b. The author's name *Dionysius the Areopagite* (Διονυσίου Ἀρεοπαγίτου): *Agapetus, bishop of Rhodes* (Ἀγαπίτου Ῥοδίων νησίου)—an almost perfect anagram. According to my reconstruction, Agapetus, who was the bishop of Rhodes for sure between 457–474 CE, while the date of the end of his episcopacy is unknown, is identical to the deacon and then, priest Agapetus, a confidential of Theodoret of Cyrus, a chaplain of the Roman legions in Thrace, who was carrying Theodoret's letters to Constantinople between c. 440 and 448.²⁵ The invention of the pseudonym as an anagram seems to be the first piece invented for the fiction, on which the entire playful imagination depends. Once the pseudonym was found, the idea to write a Christian philosophical persiflage upon the model of Saint Paul's speech at the Areios Pagos was naturally emerging.²⁶ I must admit that I was hesitant to publish my deciphering for the name Διονύσιος Ἀρεοπαγίτης. I knew that scholars would not be happy to accept it and would not have dared to publish it, had I not been encouraged by my friend, the Byzantinist Roger Scott. I was right in my expectations: the deciphering did not receive any enthusiastic reception. Interesting are, from this point of view, Tuomo Lankila's remarks:

25 István Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the Pseudo-Dormition of the Holy Virgin," *Le Muséon* 125 (2012): 55–97 at 86–92.

26 See Christian Schäfer, *Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite: An Introduction to the Structure and the Content of the Treatise On the Divine Names* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 163 ff.; Charles M. Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym," in Sarah Coakley and Charles M. Stang, eds., *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 11–25.

Unfortunately, Perczel's anagram-making instead of confirming his conclusion on identification seriously weakens in my mind his argument on authorship, because it seems quite artificial and is an example of overkill in interpretation. How should we comprehend this method? What if the author's name had been instead of Agapetus of Rhodes, for instance, Hipponax of Sinope?²⁷

I would respond to this saying that nothing depends on this anagram. The essence of the method is to use the information that the author himself had placed within his text. First, I observed that anagram-making is a favourite method of Pseudo-Dionysius when dealing with his sources. For example, he takes a text of Proclus, rearranges its elements, transcribes some of its expressions, and comes up with a convincing new text, which sounds as if it had been freshly invented. This is a kind of anagram-making. Second, through an analysis of the CDA's sources, and especially those of the texts attributed to the fictive Dionysius' fictive teacher, Hierotheus, I had arrived at the conclusion that Hierotheus is Theodoret of Cyrus.²⁸ Thirdly, I had realized that Hierotheus is quite a good anagram of Theodoret.²⁹ At a moment, I began to think about whether Dionysius the Areopagite could also be an anagram. Then, immediately I realized that the name could be invented as an anagram of the name Agapetus of the island of Rhodes, a name I had never heard before. Then, I looked for this putative Agapetus, and found out that there was indeed a bishop of Rhodes called Agapetus, whose office time coincides with the dating I had established for the CDA and that, if it can be supposed that this Agapetus, a staunch Chalcedonian, is identical to the deacon and later priest Agapetus who served as a kind of secretary and courier of Theodoret, then, whatever can be known about this Agapetus fits the sparse biographical data that one can establish about the author of the CDA. While the more serious analyses do not depend on this identification, I find this a far better method for a potential identification than establishing an a priori hypothesis about the potential famous historical persons behind the pseudonyms Hierotheus and Dionysius

27 Lankila, "A Crypto-Pagan Reading of the Figure of Hierotheus and the 'Dormition' Passage in the *Corpus Areopagiticum*," 177.

28 On Theodoret (and Nestorius) being the source of the CDA's Christology, see István Perczel, "Theodoret of Cyrhus: The Main Source of Pseudo-Dionysius' Christology?" in Markus Vinzent, ed., *Studia Patristica xcvi: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford, 2015*, vol. 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 351–375.

29 On the anagram, see Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the Pseudo-Dormition of the Holy Virgin," 85–86.

(Stieglmayr: Severus of Antioch; Mazzuchi: Isidore and Damascius; Lankila and Ben Schomakers: Proclus and an unknown pupil of his; Lourié: John the Eunuch and Peter the Iberian etc.) and trying to prove such hypotheses through more or less artificial methods.

The Apostles: James, the Brother of God: Juvenal, the first patriarch of Jerusalem; “Peter, the Head and most venerable Majesty of the theologians”: Pope Leo, John, exiled to Patmos: Nestorius;³⁰ Bartholomew: Origen.³¹

Philosophers, protagonists of paganism: “Apollophanes the Sophist”: Proclus;³² “Clement the Philosopher”: Porphyry.³³

Negative figures, magicians: “Simon the Magician”: Jerome; “Elymas the Magician”: Theophilus of Alexandria;³⁴ “Demophilus the Monk”: the Monk Theodosius, self-made Archbishop of Jerusalem.³⁵

3. The novelistic events of the fiction, described as taking place in the Apostolic times, are normally cryptic allusions to contemporary, or earlier, but still fourth or fifth century events. Thus, according to my reconstruction, the Pseudo-Dormition of the Holy Virgin in *DN III. 2–3* is in fact a report on the events at the Council of Chalcedon and, most of all, Theodoret’s restoration to his episcopacy, as the members of Theodoret’s party saw it; so also, the prophecy of Letter x about Saint John the Apostle’s return from his exile to Asia and the victory of his theology is an interpretation of Chalcedon as the victory of Antiochian theology and the vindication of Nestorius;³⁶ the rebuke of Demophilus the Monk for arrogating to himself the rank of a bishop based on the claim that his bishop has committed a grave sin, reflects on the story of the monk Theodosius, who revolted against Juvenal for signing the acts of Chalcedon, which the miaphysites considered as an act of treason; the accusations of the Magicians Simon and Elymas against the party of Dionysius are the anti-Origenist writings of Jerome and Theophilus of Alexandria, written during the first Origenist controversy, which find their due refutation in the *CDA*.³⁷ Finally, the interpretation of the solar eclipse at Christ’s crucifix-

30 On this, see Perczel, “Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the Pseudo-Dormition of the Holy Virgin,” 76–81.

31 On this, see Perczel, “Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology,” 516–519.

32 On this, see Perczel, “Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology,” 527–530.

33 This statement needs detailed philological proof, which I intend to publish later.

34 On this, see István Perczel, “‘Théologiens’ et ‘magiciens’ dans le *Corpus Dionysien*,” *Admantius* 7 (2001): 54–75.

35 This, again, would need a detailed demonstration.

36 On these, see Perczel, “Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the Pseudo-Dormition of the Holy Virgin.”

37 See Perczel, “‘Théologiens’ et ‘magiciens’ dans le *Corpus Dionysien*.”

ion is a puzzle of interpretation. However, the whole text of Letter VII consists of ad hominem arguments to Proclus—called Apollophanes in the letter—namely refuting his theory on the eternity of the perceptible world and arguing for the possibility of divine intervention into the revolutions of the heavenly spheres. Thus, the contemplation of the extraordinary solar eclipse at the Crucifixion seems to be a cryptic reference to a Christian Platonist interpretation of the eclipse mentioned in the gospels as the main proof of divine intervention, being the prefiguration of the future reversal, according to the myth of Plato's *Statesman* 269c–274d, of the revolutions of the circles of the Identical and the Different at the Second Coming, when the heavenly luminaries would rise in the West and set in the East, and when the human beings would be born from the earth—meaning the Resurrection of the dead—and disappear at the end of their lives, meaning the general Restoration (*apocatastasis*).³⁸

4. As mentioned above, it seems that the warp of the whole texture of the Pseudo-Dionysian texts, including the extracorporeal writings such as the *De trinitate/Theological Outlines*, is something like an almost continuous paraphrase of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*. It is possible that there was a written paraphrased text, which the author rearranged for the purposes of CDA_w, but it is also possible that he knew the *Platonic Theology* so well that when he was composing his text he could always refer to the relevant passage in Proclus' chef d'oeuvre. Some features of the Corpus, namely the existence of such a continuous paraphrase of Proclus' *De malorum subsistentia* in Chapter IV of the *Divine Names*, indicate that the first variant is perfectly possible.

5. The author was weaving into the warp, as weft-threads, paraphrases of other texts; these could be Proclian, other Neoplatonist, or Christian texts. References not only to the Bible but also to its exegetical traditions are omnipresent in the CDA, while the entire *De trinitate/Theological Outlines* is built up in the form of scriptural commentaries.

Writers from whose texts the weft-threads are spun (the main authors of Dionysius' library) include: A. Neoplatonists: Proclus, Plotinus, Iamblichus; B. Christians: Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Evagrius, Didymus the Blind, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Synesius of Cyrene.

6. Apparently, the next step was tailoring the tissue thus obtained upon the following pattern: four Gospels plus nine Apostolic letters plus a tenth letter

38 This is the first time, that I am publishing this interpretation. On the Seventh Letter and Proclus, see Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology," 527–530.

addressed to “St. John the Evangelist,” corresponding to the Book of Revelations. A puzzle remains: what about the Acts of the Apostles?

The “Gospels”: three “synoptic Gospels” treating the descent of the divine Light into the world through three stages: 1. through the hierarchy of the divine processions; 2. through the celestial hierarchy; 3. through the earthly hierarchy of the Church; 4. a “Johannine” Gospel treating the ascent of the soul up to the divine Darkness, which is the *Mystical Theology*. Yet, the *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*, treating the last phase of the descent, is as much about the ascent to God.

The nine Letters serve as a compendium of the whole Dionysian theology. They constitute a Christian metaphysico-allegorical interpretation of the nine hypotheses of the *Parmenides* of Plato, that is, the par excellence theological text of the Neoplatonists. Their interpretation follows the way—with some idiosyncratic deviations remaining within the same tradition—it was practiced in Proclus’ school.³⁹

The tenth letter, corresponding to the Revelations of John, refers to an event contemporary to Dionysius’ life. It is a cryptic *vaticinium ex eventu*. In my interpretation, it foretells to “John,” the symbolical name of the person whom the author considers the rightful holder of the see of Constantinople, namely Nestorius, that his theology is to be victorious and that he would be reinstated to the Asian land. As mentioned above, here again, the author is referring to the Council of Chalcedon, which seems to be the crucial event of his life and which he interpreted as a victory of Antiochian dyophysite theology. The letter may also draw on the legend, spread both in Nestorian and miaphysite circles, according to which Emperor Marcian wanted to recall Nestorius from his exile in the Great Oasis and invite him to Chalcedon, a rehabilitation that was prevented by Nestorius’ untimely death.⁴⁰

7. We should give account for a puzzling fact as well: the first Syriac translation of CDA_n by Sergius of Reshaina (d. 536) reveals an underlying Greek redaction that is different in many respects from the one transmitted in the entire Greek text tradition. Conspicuous is that elements of this putative redaction underlying the Syriac go back to the same Proclian sources as the extant Greek

39 This is the hypothesis of Ronald Hathaway, put forward in *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius: A Study in the Form and meaning of the Pseudo-Dionysian Writings* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969). I have elaborated upon Hathaway’s hypothesis in “The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: The *Fourth Letter* in its Indirect and Direct Text Traditions,” *Le Muséon* 117 (2004): 409–446.

40 On this, see Perczel, “Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the Pseudo-Dormition of the Holy Virgin,” 79–81.

version, but often independently of the latter, that is, they contain paraphrases of or allusions to Proclus, often to the same passages as the standard version, which are missing from the latter, and *vice versa*. I do not see any possible explanation for this other than that we are dealing with two authorial versions, one destined for interior circulation within the circles of the author—this was the redaction translated by Sergius: CDA_{ni}—while the other was destined for wider circulation: CDA_{ne}.

The situation is complicated by the fact that the latter version, which we could call the vulgate text of the CDA, later underwent much textual corruption, but also interventions because of the theological importance of the text which it had acquired through its quasi-apostolic authority. However, there is one phenomenon which cannot be explained by the existence of two authorial versions. While there are subtle differences in the other treatises, the Sergian Syriac text of the Ecclesiastic Hierarchy radically differs from the Greek. Its structure is different: it consists of a linear string of eighteen chapters, similar to those of the other three treatises, while *EHGr* is ordered according to a rather artificial arrangement of an introductory chapter and six more chapters, each treating one church service. The sentences of *EHSyr* are often longer, important elements are missing from the Greek and the entire vocabulary of the Syriac text is more contemplative than that of the Greek. Also, the connection of the Syriac version to Proclus' text is more direct than that of the Greek. To my mind, this indicates that the *EHSyr* reflects a first redaction, which was heavily revised before the publication of the CDA.⁴¹

4 An Illustration of the Relationship between Proclus' Works, the Platonic Theology and the Dionysian Corpus

Perhaps nothing is as befitting to illustrate the way Pseudo-Dionysius used the *Platonic Theology* for the warp of the texture of the CDA (point 4. above) as the correspondence between the titles and chapter titles of the *Platonic Theology* and the CDA_w. In an earlier study I have established some preliminary facts.⁴² In another one, I used the touchstone of the transtextual utilization of the *Platonic Theology* as a partial method for establishing the "Pseudo-Dionysian" author-

41 See, for example, especially, "The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius," in Sarah Coakley and Charles M. Stang, eds., *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 27–42.

42 Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology."

ship of the Pseudo-Didymian *De trinitate/Theological Outlines*.⁴³ In the second study, I have shown that the author of the *De trinitate* used, in Book II 2/21–22,6–20⁴⁴ and Book III 37,⁴⁵ a passage of *Platonic Theology* III. 2, the paraphrase of which is directly continuing, precisely from where the paraphrase in the *De trinitate* stops, in *Divine Names* v 6–7. This shows that the transtextual reutilization of the *Platonic Theology*—a voluminous work after all—extends far beyond the narrow *Dionysian Corpus*.

As a continuation to those studies, here I am giving two tables of the correspondence between the titles of CDA_w as derived from Proclus, and the chapter titles of the *PT* and the CDA_w. I think these tables show quite clearly the intricate transtextual relation between Proclus—especially his *Platonic Theology*—and Pseudo-Dionysius, as well as the validity of the “warp and weft” theory outlined above (section 3, points 4–6), together with that of the two-redaction theory (point 7). They also give a hint about the unity of CDA_n and CDA_w, the transtextual relation to the *Platonic Theology* running through both corpora as a red thread. The first table shows how the titles of CDA_w derive from Proclus. The second table shows—be it only through selected excerpts—how the chapter titles of CDA_w—but also the contents of the chapters—derive from those of the *Platonic Theology*.

4.1 Treatise Titles

The following table shows how four among the treatises mentioned in the CDA derive their titles from Proclus:

Proclian titles	Dionysian titles—Greek	Dionysian titles—Syriac
Περὶ τῆς κατὰ Πλάτωνα θεολογίας	Περὶ μυστικῆς θεολογίας πρὸς Τιμόθεον	ܐܠܟܘܢܐܘܪܐܘܬܐ ܘܟܘܠܘܬܐ ܕܗܐܠܘܗܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܝܢ (ܕܩܘܕܫܐ) ܕܠܘܗܐ
<i>PT</i> βιβλίον πρώτων καθ'. Περὶ τῶν θείων ὀνομάτων καὶ τῆς ὀρθότητος αὐτῶν τῆς ἐν Κρατύλῳ παραδεδομένης.	Περὶ θείων ὀνομάτων	ܩܘܕܫܐ ܐܠܟܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ
Ὑποτυπώσεις ἀστρονομικαί	Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις	ܩܘܕܫܐ ܕܠܘܗܐ ܐܠܟܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ

43 Perczel, “The Pseudo-Didymian *De trinitate* and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: A Preliminary Study,” 92–95.

44 Ingrid Seiler, ed., *Didymus der Blinde, De trinitate, Buch 2, Kapitel 1–7*, Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie 52 (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1975), 28.

45 MPG 39, col. 976, 12–18.

(cont.)

Proclian titles	Dionysian titles—Greek	Dionysian titles—Syriac
Στοιχειώσις θεολογική (Στοιχειώσεις θεολογικάί M ¹ Petritsi) ⁴⁶	Ἱεροθέου Θεολογικάί στοιχειώσεις	ܡܠ ܦܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܕܬܘܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܬܘܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ
[“Υμνοί]	Ἱεροθέου τοῦ ἀγιοτάτου ἐκ τῶν ἐρω- τικῶν ὕμνων	ܘܕܗܝܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܘܬܐ
On the Platonic Theology	To Timothy, On the Mystical The- ology	To Timothy, On the Mystical The- ology
PT I, XXIX. On the divine names and on their correctness as it has been transmitted in the Cratylus	On the Divine Names	On the Divine Names
Outlines of Astronomy	Theological Outlines	Compositions on Theology
The Elements of Theology	Theological Elements of Hiero- theus	Introduction to the treatises that Hierotheus has written about the Discourse on the Substance (11.9, 133.14 = Fiori 22.8–9) On the Introduction to theology (11.9, 134.6 = Fiori 22.19)

46 Most of the Byzantine manuscripts of the *Elements of Theology* give the title in singular: Στοιχειώσις θεολογική, except for the first, original hand of Marcianus 678, saec. xiii–xiv, M¹ according to Dodds’ sigla. However, in the Georgian translation of Ioanne Petritsi, which—according to our joint research with Levan Gigineishvili—is based on a copy that was independent of the Byzantine standard tradition known from all the Greek manuscripts, the title is also in the plural. This is explicitly stated in Petritsi’s Introduction: “Now, the title written upon the text says: *The Theological Elements of Proclus Diadochus, the Platonist Philosopher*.” This perfectly corresponds to the title as transmitted by M¹, and also to the Dionysian persiflage, which only reverses the order of the words but keeps the plural number, just like in the other cases of titles adapted from Proclus. These concordant testimonies make it very probable that the original title of Proclus’ treatise was Στοιχειώσεις θεολογικάί. This recognition makes Ben Schomakers’ subtle musings on the meaning of Pseudo-Dionysius’ changing the singular to a plural superfluous (see Schomakers, “An Unknown Elements of Theology?,” 196–197).

(cont.)

Proclian titles	Dionysian titles—Greek	Dionysian titles—Syriac
		Notes on the Contemplation of Theology (III.2, 139.18 = Fiori 26.17–18)
[Hymns]	From the Erotic Hymns of the most holy Hierotheus	From the treatises On the Celebrations of Love of the holy Hierotheus

This table shows how Pseudo-Dionysius derived the titles of the treatises of his works—both intracorporeal and extracorporeal—and also of the ones attributed to his teacher Hierotheus—from Proclus. The title of the treatise *On the Mystical Theology* is modeled upon the very title of Book 1 of the *Platonic Theology*, “Mystical” replacing the attribute “according to Plato”—a very appropriate change as, in the entire Corpus, Pseudo-Dionysius replaces the Platonist teaching with that of Christianity, and even the Proclian role attributed to Plato as a divine figure with that of Jesus. The title of the *Divine Names* is apparently derived from that of the last chapter of Book I of the *Platonic Theology* and could be also considered as a sub-title of the first book of the *PT*, which treats the common names of the Proclian gods and is amply used in the *Divine Names*. The title of the extracorporeal treatise *Theological Outlines* is modeled upon that of the *Outlines of Astronomy*, while the concise introductory work of ‘Hierotheus,’ to which Pseudo-Dionysius refers three times in the *Divine Names* (twice in II. 9 and once in III. 2), is derived from the concise introductory work of Proclus summarising his teaching on the gods, most probably to indicate a similarity of the capitular form (as Pseudo-Dionysius clearly tells us, speaking about “chapters” [κεφάλαια: III.2, 139.22] and “concise definitions” [συνοπτικοὶ ὄροι: *ibid.* 140.6–7]).

Finally, it is impossible to establish a clear correspondence between the original title of Proclus’ hymns and Hierotheus’ Erotic Hymns as Proclus’ extant seven hymns have not been transmitted to us in a corpus but only in an anthology contained in 15th-century Italian manuscripts, so that we don’t know whether there was a collective title given to them.⁴⁷ Yet, the fact that Proclus wrote an *Elements of Theology* and also hymns to deities is most probably at

47 Ernst Vogt, ed., *Procli hymni: Accedunt hymnorum fragmenta, epigrammata, scholia, fontium et locorum similium apparatus, indices* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1957).

the basis of the analogous presentation of Hierotheus by Pseudo-Dionysius, who attributes to his teacher both a *Theological Elements* and *Erotic Hymns* to God. However, it is noteworthy that the texts that Pseudo-Dionysius ‘cites’ from Hierotheus’ *Erotic Hymns* are in prose. From Proclus’ works, they resemble most some passages from the Commentary on the Alcibiades,⁴⁸ and from Theodoret’s, there is a close resemblance with Theodoret’s treatise *On Divine Love* (Περὶ θείας ἀγάπης), being the Epilogue of his *History of the God-lovers* (Φιλόθεος ἱστορία).⁴⁹

The tendency, observed here, to reuse Proclus’ titles for constructing the titles of the Dionysian—and also Hierothean—treatises also shows that the hasty inference from the coincidence between *Elements of Theology* (Proclus) and *Theological Elements* (Hierotheus), that this would justify a Hierotheus = Proclus equation, does not stand to reason.⁵⁰ In fact, based on the same logic, one could also propose that Dionysius is a pseudonym for Proclus. There remains the likelihood that, at least for the CDA_n, Proclus’ literary activity is the model upon which the entire structure of the Dionysian fiction is built up.

4.2 Chapter Titles

The following table on the correspondence of the chapter structures between the *PT* and the CDA_w intends to give a taste of the way the transtextual utilization of the *Platonic Theology* is meandering through the entire oeuvre of Pseudo-Dionysius. I have added here only some of the relevant correspondences from a longer list.

48 This has been established by Josef Stiglmayr in “Das Aufkommen der Pseudo-Dionysischen Schriften und ihr Eindringen in die christliche Literatur bis zum Lateranconcil 649. Ein zweiter Beitrag zur Dionysiusfrage,” in *Jahresbericht des öffentlichen Privatgymnasiums an der Stella matutina zu Feldkirch*. Veröffentlicht am Schlusse des Schuljahres 1894–1895 (Feldkirch: Sausberger, 1895), 32–34.

49 Pierre Canivet and Alice Leroy-Molinghen, eds., *Théodoret de Cyr. L’histoire des moines de Syrie*, vol. 2, SC 257 (Paris: Cerf, 1979) 314.

50 For this hypothesis, see most recently, Lankila, “A Crypto-Pagan Reading of the Figure of Hierotheus and the ‘Dormition’ Passage in the *Corpus Areopagiticum*” and Schomakers, “An Unknown Elements of Theology?”

Chapter titles in the *Platonic Theology*Chapter titles in the *Dionysian Corpus*—Greek (CDA_w)⁵¹Chapter titles in the *Dionysian Corpus*—Syriac (CDA_{iii})⁵²

Βίβλιον πρώτον⁵³

α'. προοίμιον, ἐν ᾧ διώρισταί τῆς πραγματείας ὁ σκοπός, μετ' εὐφημίας τῆς τε αὐτοῦ τοῦ Πλάτωνος καὶ τῶν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ διαδεξαμένων τὴν φιλοσοφίαν.

DN. κεφάλαιον α'. τίς ὁ τοῦ λόγου σκοπὸς καὶ τίς ἡ περὶ θεῖων ὀνομάτων παράδοσις.

EH. τί[ς] ἢ τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱεραρχίας παράδοσις καὶ τίς ὁ ταυτῆς σκοπὸς κεφ α'.⁵⁴

ܐܠܘܘܝܘܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܢܘܢܐ
ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ
ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ
ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ

ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ
ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܘܘܪܝܬܐ
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β'. τίς ὁ τρόπος τῶν λόγων ἐν τῇ προκειμένῃ πραγματείᾳ καὶ τίνα προηγεῖσθαι δεῖ τῶν ἀκροασσμένων παρασκευήν.

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- 51 All the data about the Greek CDA are taken from the Göttingen critical edition: *Corpus Dionysiacaum I: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De divinis nominibus*, herausgegeben von Beate Regina Suchla, PTS 33 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990) and *Corpus Dionysiacaum II: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De coelesti hierarchia–De ecclesiastica hierarchia–De mystica theologia–Epistulae*, herausgegeben von Günter Heil und Adolf Martin Ritter, PTS 36 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991).
- 52 As to Sergius of Reshayna's translation of the Syriac CDA, for *DN*, *MT* and the Letters, I have used Emiliano Fiori's critical edition: Emiliano Fiori, ed., *Dionigi Areopagita, Nomi divini, Teologia mistica, Epistole. La versione di Sergio di Resš'aynā (VI secolo)*, CSCO 656. *Scriptores Syri* 252 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014). The list of the chapter titles of *DN* is found on pp. 3–4, and that of the chapter titles of *MT*, on p. 106. For the *CH* and the *EH* I have used the digital copy of Sinaiticus syriacus 52, generously provided by Father Justin, the Librarian of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. The list of the chapter titles of *CH* can be found on fol. 50rv, while the list of the chapter titles of *EH* is on fol. 80rv.
- 53 See the list of the chapter titles in Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, eds., *Proclus, Théologie Platonicienne*, livre I (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968), 1–4.
- 54 This title can be found only in the unique manuscript Laurentianus cod. 202, saec. x. (Fa).

(cont.)

Chapter titles in the <i>Platonic Theology</i>	Chapter titles in the <i>Dionysian Corpus</i> —Greek (CDA _w)	Chapter titles in the <i>Dionysian Corpus</i> —Syriac (CDA _{ni})
<p>ζ'. τίνα τὰ ἐν Πολιτείᾳ ῥηθέντα διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον ἀναλογίας περὶ τῆς πρωτῆς ἀρχῆς· ἐν οἷς λέγεται πὼς τὰγαθὸν ἀνυμνεῖται, πὼς φανότατον τοῦ ὄντος, πὼς ὁ ἥλιος ἕκγονος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, καὶ ὅτι καθ' ἐκάστην τάξιν τῶν θείων ὑπέστη μόνος ἀνάλογος ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἀρχῇ, καὶ πὼς πάντων ἐστὶν αἰτία τῶν ὄντων πρὸ δυνάμεως οὔσα καὶ ἐνεργείας.</p>	<p>DN. κεφάλαιον δ'. περὶ ἀγαθοῦ, φωτὸς, καλοῦ, ἔρωτος, ἐκστάσεως, ζήλου, καὶ ὅτι τὸ κακὸν οὔτε ὄν οὔτε ἐξ ὄντος οὔτε ἐν τοῖς οὐσίαν.</p>	<p>ܟܝܨܐܘܢ ܕܠܘܟܝܢܝܢ ܕܟܝܝܢܝܢ ܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ ܕܠܘܕܝܥܘܨ</p>
<p>[...] Βιβλίον τρίτον⁵⁸</p>	<p>?/Ἔποτυώσεις θεολογικαί Book II⁵⁹</p>	
<p>α'. ὅτι μετὰ τὸν περὶ τῆς μίας ἀρχῆς λόγον κοινῇ πραγματεύεσθαι χρὴ περὶ τῶν θείων τάξεων, ὅσαί τε εἰσι καὶ πὼς διαιροῦνται ἀπ' ἀλλήλων.</p>	<p>κεφάλαιον α'. περὶ τοῦ τὴν ἁγίαν Τριάδα ἀκατάληπτον εἶναι.</p>	
<p>β'. ὅτι πλήθος ἐνάδων μετὰ τὸ ἐν ὑπέστη, καθ' ὅς οἱ θεοὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχουσιν.</p>	<p>κεφάλαιον β'. περὶ τοῦ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ περὶ αἰρετικῆς ἀντιθέσεως.</p>	
<p>Book I.</p>		
<p>1. <i>Preface</i>, in which the aim of the treatise is defined, with praise of Plato himself and of those who have received the philosophy from him.</p>	<p>DN. Chapter I. What is the aim of the discourse and what is the tradition on the divine names? EH. What is the tradition of the Ecclesiastic hierarchy and what is its aim? Chapter I.</p>	<p>DN. Chapter I: <i>Preface</i>. On theology and on the aim of the treatise. EH. Chapter IV. On the aim of the treatise and on the question of where the spiritual motion of the high priesthood that divinely brooded in us, starts.</p>

58 See the list of the chapter titles in Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, eds., *Proclus, Théologie Platonicienne*, livre III (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978) 1–4.

59 Seiler, *Didymus der Blinde, De trinitate*, Buch 2, Kapitel 1–7, 28.

(cont.)

Chapter titles in the <i>Platonic Theology</i>	Chapter titles in the <i>Dionysian Corpus</i> —Greek (CDA _w)	Chapter titles in the <i>Dionysian Corpus</i> —Syriac (CDA _{ni})
2. What is the way of proceeding of the discourses in the present treatise, and what kind of preparation is needed on the part of those who listen to it?		<i>EH</i> . Chapter I. On the admonition that this treatise needs piety ⁶⁰ and that to Jesus who is beyond all things are likened those who use the ecclesiastic hierarchy in the right way.
3. Who is the Platonic theologian, where he starts, to which hypostases he ascends, and which is the power of the soul according to which he acts particularly?	<i>MT</i> . Chapter I. What is the divine obscurity?	<i>MT</i> . Chapter I. Prayer to the Substance/Existence and an explanation on those that will be said, and on the question, how one should ascend from the visible and perceptible natures to those invisible. <i>EH</i> . Chapter III. What is the high-priesthood and what is the meaning of the name of the high-priest, and wherefrom is the high-priesthood and whereto it ascends?
4. Theological methods, according to all of which Plato orders the teaching about the gods.	<i>MT</i> . Chapter II. How to become united and to offer hymns to the one Who is the Cause of all and Who is above all things.	<i>MT</i> . Chapter II. How to become united to the one Who is the Cause of all and above all things and to offer Him glorifications?
5. Which are the dialogues, from which it is mostly possible to derive Plato's theology and to which orders does each of these lead us.	<i>MT</i> . Chapter III. Which are the affirmative theologies and which are the negative ones.	<i>MT</i> . Chapter III. Which is the theology that composes concerning the Existence/Substance that which is said and which is that, which separates from it that which is said.
6–9.	<i>DN</i> . Chapter II. On the unified and distinguished theology and on what the divine union and distinction is.	<i>DN</i> . Chapter II. On the union and the distinction of theology and on what the divine union and distinction is.

60 The original of the Syriac ܩܘܪܒܢܐ must be εὐλάβεια.

(cont.)

Chapter titles in the <i>Platonic Theology</i>	Chapter titles in the <i>Dionysian Corpus</i> —Greek (CDA _w)	Chapter titles in the <i>Dionysian Corpus</i> —Syriac (CDA _{ni})
10. What do accomplish those who say that the hypotheses of the Parmenides are about the principles among the beings and what should be added to what they say from the very tradition of our teacher?	<i>DN.</i> Chapter III. What is the power of the prayer, and on the blessed Hierotheus, on piety and the theological writing.	<i>DN.</i> Chapter III. What is the power of the prayer, and on the blessed Hierotheus, on piety and the theological writing.
[...] 18. What is the goodness of the gods and how they are said to be the causes of all good things? In which, on that evil is ornated according to a parasite subsistence and that it is also subordinated to the gods.	<i>DN.</i> Chapter IV. On the Good, the Light, the Beautiful, the Love, ecstasy, zeal, and on that evil is neither being, nor from the being, nor among the beings.	<i>DN.</i> Chapter IV. On the Light of the Good, on the beautiful Love, on the departure of the mind, on zeal, and on that evil is not being, and was not from that which is, and is not among those that are.
[...] 20. What is the simplicity of the gods and how is it that their simplicity is appearing variegated in the secondary entities.	<i>DT/TO</i> 11.6.8. On the subject that (the Holy Spirit) is good, itself giving birth to the goodnesses, truths, wisdoms and loves; and that in its concept is conceived “all good gift and all perfect donation.”	<i>CH.</i> Chapter I. On that all divine splendour that is shining forth in a variegated way upon those that participate in it, remains in its own simplicity, and not only this, but it also unites with itself those whom it illuminates.
29. On the divine names and on their correctness as it has been transmitted in the <i>Cratylus</i>	<i>DN.</i> Chapter I. What is the aim of the discourse and what is the tradition on the divine names?	<i>DN.</i> Chapter I: Introduction. On theology and on the aim of the treatise.

(cont.)

Chapter titles in the *Platonic Theology*
Chapter titles in the *Dionysian Corpus*—Greek (CDA_w)
Chapter titles in the *Dionysian Corpus*—Syriac (CDA_{ni})

Book II.

[...]

2. Second approach, which shows that the hypostasis of the One is transcendent to all the corporeal and incorporeal substances.

MT. Chapter IV. That the one That is supereminently the Cause of all the perceptible things is none from among the perceptible things.

MT. Chapter IV. That the one That in its elevation is the Cause of all that are perceived, is not one from among the perceptible natures.

MT. Chapter V. That the one That is supereminently the Cause of all the intelligible things is none from among the intelligible things.

MT. Chapter V. That the one That in its elevation is the Cause of all that are known, is not one from among the intelligible things.

[...]

7. What are those that were said in the Republic through the analogy with the Sun about the First Principle? There, it is also said how it is celebrated as the Good, how it is more luminous than being, how is the Sun a progeny of the Good and on the subject that in every order of the divine beings their came to be a monad that is analogous to that Principle and on how it is the Cause of all the beings, while it is before potentiality and act.

DN. Chapter IV. On the Good, the Light, the Beautiful, the Love, ecstasy, zeal, and on that evil is neither being, nor from the being, nor among the beings.

DN. Chapter IV. On the Light of the Good, on the beautiful Love, on the departure of the mind, on zeal, and on that evil is not being, and was not from that which is, and is not among those that are.

De trinitate/Theological Outlines

Book III.

1. On that after the discourse on the one Principle, one should treat in general the divine orders, how many they are and how they are distinguished from each other.

Book II.

Chapter I. On that the holy Trinity is incomprehensible.

(cont.)

Chapter titles in the <i>Platonic Theology</i>	Chapter titles in the <i>Dionysian Corpus</i> —Greek (CDA _w)	Chapter titles in the <i>Dionysian Corpus</i> —Syriac (CDA _{ni})
2. On that after the One a multiplicity of henads came about, according to which the gods receive their subsistence.	Chapter II. On that there is the Holy Spirit of God and on a heretical counterargument.	


In the above table, I included only 13 chapters from Book I of the *Platonic Theology* and 2–2 chapters from Books II and III to illustrate how the presence of the *Platonic Theology* runs through the Greek CDA, the putative original of the Syriac translation, and the *De trinitate/Theological Outlines*. However, this is a greatly simplified picture, the real relationship being much more complicated. Often, the Dionysian titles and chapter contents draw from several chapter titles and contents in the *PT*, while one chapter in the *PT* may be used in several Dionysian ones.

The correspondences between the chapter titles are sometimes obvious, and sometimes less manifest. However, even when they are not obvious, the correspondence of the contents of the chapters reinforces the transtextual relationship. This relationship also shows that the chapter titles are integral part of both the *Platonic Theology* and the Dionysian writings and that the latter are not secondary text-parts as Bernhard Brons had argued, an argument accepted by the editors of the Göttingen critical edition, who have relegated the titles to the apparatus criticus.⁶¹

5 Analysis of the Correspondences between the *Platonic Theology* and the Wider *Dionysian Corpus*

PT I.1 treats the “aim” (σκοπός) of the entire treatise, which is reflected both in the title of the first chapter of *DN* and that of the *EH* in the Greek tradition, which is, however, preserved by only one manuscript. Yet, only the Syriac of

61 See Bernhard Brons, *Sekundäre Textpartien im Corpus Pseudo-Dionysiacum? Literarkritische Beobachtungen zu ausgewählten Textstellen*. Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften von Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 1975, 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975).

DN I reflects the subtitle of the *PT* chapter: “Preface” (προοίμιον: ). As mentioned above, the structure and the chapter titles of the *EH* are radically different in the Greek vulgate version and in Sergius’ Syriac translation, the latter consisting of eighteen chapters, while the vulgate text consists in seven. Quite significantly, the first chapters of the Syriac *EH* (*EHSyr*) have a direct relationship to those of the *PT*, which is a further proof of the two-redaction theory summarised above in section 3 under point 7. In other words, it would be a rather improbable hypothesis to suppose that the differences between *EHGr* and *EHSyr* were due to the fact that Sergius, the Syriac translator, first divided the seven chapters of *EHGr* into eighteen and then consulted the chapter titles of the *Platonic Theology* precisely at those chapters from where the text of the Greek text was derived, to create new Proclian-sounding chapter titles. Rather, this phenomenon indicates that Sergius had the original Greek redaction in hand, which was rearranged in an artificial manner in the Greek *EH* text. With this rearrangement, the connection of the chapter titles to the original titles of the *PT* was lost, only one manuscript, Laurentianus cod. 202 (Fa) preserving a chapter title similar to the Syriac, and thus, to the *PT*. Chapter *IV* of *EHSyr*, corresponding to the Greek text of p. 68.16–69.19 in Heil’s edition, also bears a similar title and refers to the “aim” of the treatise, while it also draws on *PT*. 1.3. when asking about the starting point and the end of the ascent of the Platonic theologian transformed here into the faithful divinized through the “high-priesthood,” which is the original meaning of *hierarchia*, and is translated so in the Syriac.

The title and the content of *PT* 1.2, treating the necessary preparation for listening to the treatise is reflected in the Syriac title and, indeed, the content of the first chapter of *EHSyr*. Proclus first describes the way in which he is going to expose the theology of Plato, and second, he tells how the listener should ascend, through the ethical virtues, via the purification of the thoughts and the study of physics, to the contemplation of beings, until he establishes himself *through divine love* “in the stable and immutable and secure kind of the knowledge of the divine things” and “through unshaken mind and the indefatigable power of the life” he hastens to the divine light. This is fairly closely paraphrased in the first chapter of *EHSyr*, which corresponds to p. 63,3–64,14 in Heil’s edition, but whose Syriac text is much stronger than the Greek. In fact, the latter seems to be heavily truncated. However, both in *EHGr* and *EHSyr*, the stress is transferred from contemplative philosophy to theurgy, “the divine activity,” which is accomplished in the liturgy of the Church. Thus, the methodological exposition of Plato’s philosophy becomes the light-manifestation of Jesus donating the ecclesiastic hierarchy (the high-priesthood) to the Church. Also, the philosopher/theologian of Proclus is trans-

formed into the community of the Christian believers who, by the priesthood donated to them, *through the divine love*

approach towards the substances which are above us, in our likeness to them in the measure of our power, when we are likened to the immutability and stability of their holy establishment. And by this, when we set our gaze upon the blessed brightness of the divinity of Jesus and holily see the things we are permitted to see, and are illuminated by the secret intelligence of the knowledge of the things seen, *then we receive the power to be able to become saints and sanctifying, sons of light and illuminators, perfected by God and perfecting, priests and ordaining priests.*⁶²

This is a very strong text about the divinisation of the faithful through the contemplation triggered by the liturgy, and is a subtle philosophico-mystical reformulation of the words of Saint Paul: “till we come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). However, while expanding upon Saint Paul, Pseudo-Dionysius preserves even the vocabulary of Proclus, whose “establishing himself in the stable and immutable and secure kind of the knowledge of the divine things” (τῶ δὲ μονίμῳ καὶ ἀκινήτῳ καὶ ἀσφα-

62 I am citing here the Syriac version, which is more complete than the Greek. This is found at Sin. Syr. 52 fol. 81^{rb-va}, corresponding to Heil 64.5–14. Here, clearly EHGr has several lacunae and only *EHSyr* preserves the original text. *EHGr*: ἀφιερῶμενοι καὶ ἀφιερῶται, φωτειδεῖς καὶ ... θεουργικοὶ τετελεσμένοι καὶ τελεσιουργοὶ ... γενέσθαι δυνησόμεθα, which could be translated, taking into consideration the lacunae as “we become capable to become offerings and offerers, luminous and ... working by God perfected and perfecting ...” Now, in the Syriac, “saints and sanctifying” translates ἀφιερῶμενοι καὶ ἀφιερῶται, meaning in fact “offerings and offerers”—see the liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom: “for you are the offerer and the offering, the receiver and the dividend, Christ our God.” The parallel clearly shows the Christological content of the Pseudo-Dionysian text. From the next pair, “sons of light and illuminators” the Greek has only the first part of the pair: φωτειδεῖς. Apparently, the second pair, φωτίζοντες is missing. Where the Greek reads θεουργικοὶ τετελεσμένοι καὶ τελεσιουργοὶ “working by God perfected and perfecting,” the Syriac reads “perfected by God and perfecting,” which, with very high probability, translates θεουργικῶς τετελεσμένοι καὶ τελεσιουργοὶ. Apparently, due to the corruption of the text, a scribe changed θεουργικῶς to θεουργικοὶ in order to give a pair to φωτειδεῖς, thus obtaining “similar to the light and acting divinely,” which, however, gives no good meaning. Finally, “priests and ordaining priests” is missing from the Greek but is a logical addition referring to Christ’s eternal priesthood. The original Greek of this pair must have been, taking into consideration Sergius’ usual vocabulary, ἱερεῖς καὶ ἱερούργοι. Thus, the original must have read something like this: ἀφιερῶμενοι καὶ ἀφιερῶται, φωτειδεῖς καὶ φωτίζοντες, θεουργικῶς τετελεσμένοι καὶ τελεσιουργοὶ, ἱερεῖς καὶ ἱερούργοι γενέσθαι δυνησόμεθα.

λεί τῆς τῶν θείων γνώσεως προσιδρύσας εἶδει) becomes “when we are likened to the immutability and stability of their holy establishment” (τῆ ... ἀφομοιώσει τοῦ μονίμου τε καὶ ἀνεξάλλακτου τῆς αὐτῶν ἱερᾶς ἰδρύσεως in the Greek). But this is just one example among many others for the Dionysian substitution of the Christian liturgy to the activities in a philosophy school.⁶³

PT I.3 is transcribed in the first chapter of the *Mystical Theology*, whose divergent titles in the Greek and Syriac text traditions both go back independently to Proclus' title. From the comparison of the two chapters we can understand that the “divine Obscurity” (ὁ θεῖος γνόφος) is nothing other than “the power of the soul” according to which “the Platonic theologian” (in Pseudo-Dionysius' transcription the divinised Christian) “acts particularly.” Proclus defines this power as the *hyparxis* of the soul, its “existence” beyond being, which he also calls “the flower of the soul.”⁶⁴ It is this Obscurity, which will come back in Letter v, as the power for knowing the superluminous Darkness of Letter I.

The title and the content of *PT I.3* is also echoed in Chapter III of *EHSyr*, corresponding to p. 65.22–68.15 in Heil's edition. Here again, we see that Pseudo-Dionysius replaces the life of the Platonist philosophy school with the liturgical life of the Church. And this, once again, proves Alexander Golitzin's intuition on the central role of the *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy* and of liturgical spirituality in the *Dionysian Corpus*. Moreover, if my intuition that the continuous reading of the *Platonic Theology* governed the writing process of the *Dionysian Corpus* is correct, then, in the way the first chapters of the *Platonic Theology* are handled, one may see the intricate relationship between the *Mystical Theology* and the *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*, the liturgical contemplation being the means of the contemplative elevation for Pseudo-Dionysius. One may also see that the themes of the Celestial Hierarchy come much later—first with *PT I.20*!—although the words of *PT I.3*. are also echoed in the Prologue to the Celestial Hierarchy. This justifies Golitzin's intuition:

As we maintain that the *EH* provides us with the unique context within which the other treatises are to be read and their doctrine apprehended, we cannot accept Roques' analysis [according to which Dionysius was imperfectly modelling his *EH* on the Neoplatonist structure of the *CH*] as adequate. We look up to the *CH* (and *DN/MT*) from the *EH* and not down from the angelic world to ours.⁶⁵

63 See also, Perczel, “Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology,” 514.

64 See *ibid.*, 521–522.

65 Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei*, 216–217; *idem*, *Mystagogy*, 241.

As far as the main text of the first three chapters of the *Mystical Theology* is concerned, the first is clearly based on a paraphrase of the *Platonic Theology* 1. 3. I must admit that I have not yet found the place where Pseudo-Dionysius uses the body of *PT* 1.4. It seems to me that the chapter title of *MT* II. is modelled upon the title of *PT* 1.4 and that, in this chapter, he follows the thought of the first paragraph of Proclus' chapter in inverted order, but the rest he does not use here. Rather, he adopts the thought of *PT* II.11 on the ascent through negations and the descent through affirmations. *MT* III. consists of two parts: its first part, which treats the—partly intra- and partly extracorporeal—works of Pseudo-Dionysius' positive theology, draws its inspiration from *PT* 1.5, which treats the Platonic dialogues from which the one and comprehensive *Platonic Theology* is to be derived, while the second part of this chapter in the *Mystical Theology* is modeled upon the end of chapter I.11.

Chapters *PT* 1.6–9 seem to be condensed in *DN* II, while *DN* III echoes *PT* 1.10 in its title, content and vocabulary. Here, Pseudo-Dionysius introduces his usual transformations. The metaphysical speculation which, according to Proclus, gives the correct interpretation of the nine hypotheses and the many subhypotheses of the Parmenides as treating the principles among the beings, is transformed here to the power of the prayer. It is here that Proclus introduces the teaching of his teacher Syrianus, “our teacher on the truth about the gods and the companion of Plato” (ὁ δὲ δὴ τῆς περὶ θεῶν ἡμῖν ἀληθείας καθηγεμῶν καὶ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ... ἀριστῆς).⁶⁶ Pseudo-Dionysius had already introduced his “glorious teacher” (κλεινὸς καθηγεμῶν) Hierotheus in *DN* II.9, although without naming him, but it is here that he glorifies him and his teaching as that of one of the main actors of the Pseudo-Dormition scene, which I believe to be a cryptic report on Chalcedon (see above in section 3, point 3).

It would be complicated and too long to follow the way Pseudo-Dionysius uses the subsequent chapters of *PT* I. I have adduced some obvious cases only: to *PT* 1. 18 corresponds *DN* IV both according to its title and its content, but in its first half, which is based on Proclus' interpretation of the simile of the Sun in Book VI of the *Republic* (507b–509c), it also uses very closely *PT* II. 7. Besides this, it also draws on Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic*. However, while rewriting II.7, Pseudo-Dionysius weaves through Proclus' interpretation of the Sun simile scriptural references, that give to the text a strong Trinitarian and Incarnational twist. Thus, when he says that the light of the ray of the Sun “is from the Good and the Image of the Goodness” (*DN* IV.4, 147.2–3: ἐκ τὰγα-

66 *PT* I.10, p. 42.9–10.

θεοῦ γὰρ τὸ φῶς καὶ εἰκῶν τῆς ἀγαθότητος), he is almost imperceptibly citing Wis 7:26: “For she (Wisdom) is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and the image of His Goodness (εἰκῶν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ).” I wrote “almost imperceptibly,” as this reference is missing from the critical edition, and—as far as I can judge—from the scholarly literature, too.

These scriptural references give a new meaning to the Sun simile. Thus, “our Sun” (IV.1, 144.1: ὁ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἥλιος) becomes a metaphorical name for the incarnate Christ, whose Light, coming from the Good, is the divine nature in him, while the Good is identified, here and elsewhere, with the Father. This scripturalization of the Platonist analogy allows Dionysius to expose his Antiochian Christology subtly. Thus, even the following passage is about Christ:

I do not say according to the word of the worn-out teaching (κατὰ τὸν τῆς παλαιότητος λόγον) that the Sun, being God and the Creator of this universe, himself oversees the visible world, but only that “the invisible things” of God “from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead” (Rom 1:20). However, I should speak about this in the *Symbolic Theology*.

DN IV.4–5, 149.5–9

The reference to the *Symbolic Theology* also indicates that “Sun” is here a symbolical name, evidently for the incarnate Christ. And the “worn-out teaching” is that of the Cyrillian party, which wrongly identifies the incarnate Christ with God the Word, rather than that of the pagan sun worship. To this Cyrillian view, Pseudo-Dionysius opposes the theory of ἀντένδειξις of Antiochian Christology, according to which the humanity of the incarnate Christ is a non-identical mirror image of the divine Logos dwelling in him. I understand that one of the most ‘scandalous’ findings of my research into the *Dionysian Corpus* is its Antiochian Christology. Yet, this is an unavoidable conclusion, once the Antiochian sources of the Dionysian Christological texts are found.⁶⁷

The Christological understanding of the name “Light” continues when Pseudo-Dionysius turns to the “intelligible light-naming” of the Good one (IV.5, 149.11: ὁ ἀγαθός as distinguished from τᾶγαθόν, which is a name for the Father). This denotes the “Ray emanating from the Source” (IV.6, 150.1–2: ἀκτὶς πηγᾶς)—an ancient Christological metaphor—which “illuminates all mind

67 On the Antiochian sources of Pseudo-Dionysius’ Christology see Perczel “Theodoret of Cyrrhus.”

above, around and in the world from its fullness" (IV.6, 150.2–3: πάντα τὸν ὑπερκόσμιον καὶ περικόσμιον καὶ ἐγκόσμιον νοῦν ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ καταλάμπουσα). This is definitively "the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world," from whose "fullness we all have received, and grace for grace" (John 1:9, 16).

Space does not allow me to follow up this analysis of the way the Christian weft threads are woven into the warp of the Proclian exegesis of the Sun simile, adopted in *DN IV* from *PT II.7*. Suffice it to say that the henadic gods of Proclus, who are spreading the source-goodness of the One onto the entire metaphysical and physical world are transformed here, through a monumental triadic and Christological metaphor, into the communication to the world of the source-goodness of the Father by Christ and the Holy Spirit, who take over the metaphysical role of the henads. This is a standard pattern, observable at all parts of the Dionysian adaptation of the *Platonic Theology* in particular, and of Proclus in general. In fact, already E.R. Dodds noted this transformation, although he found it "grotesque."⁶⁸ Yet, this is precisely one of the elements allowing Pseudo-Dionysius to construct a genuine Christian metaphysics.⁶⁹

In the second half of *DN IV*, Pseudo-Dionysius switches to *PT I.18*, namely its teaching that the gods are not the causes of any evil and he uses as weft thread a reworked version of Proclus' *De malorum subsistentia*. However, the question with which this investigation starts is not Proclian but Christian:

If the Beautiful and Good is covetable, desirable and lovable to all, given that even the non-existent is desiring it, as we have said, and tries to be in it in a way, and if it is that which gives form to the formless and even the non-being can be said, and is supersubstantially, concerning it, then, how can it be that the crowd of the demons does not desire the Beautiful and Good, but leaning toward matter and fallen from the angelic identity

68 Dodds, *Proclus, The Elements of Theology*, xxviii, concerning Pseudo-Dionysius' adopting of *velut flores et supersubstantialia lumina*, which Proclus says about the henads in *De malorum subsistentia* 209.27, to refer to the Son and the Spirit in *DN 2.7*, 132.2–3.

69 On the Dionysian transformation of Proclus' *henadic* theory into Trinitarian theology see also Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology," 502–503 and particularly Perczel, "The Pseudo-Didymian *De trinitate* and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: A Preliminary Study," 92–95. The claim that Pseudo-Dionysius has eliminated the *henads* of Proclus because the word *henad* occurs rarely in the plural in the *CDA*, made by Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi (in "The Transfiguration of Proclus' Legacy: Pseudo-Dionysius and the Late Neoplatonic School of Athens," in David D. Butorac and Danielle A. Layne, eds., *Proclus and His Legacy* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017], 199–217 at 208–210) does not correspond to the evidence provided by the texts.

maintained by the desire of the Good, it is the cause of all the evil both for itself and to all the others about whom we say that they are affected by evil?

*DN IV.18, 162.6–12*⁷⁰

It is well known that the close Proclian paraphrase that follows this question had triggered the recognition, by Joseph Stiglmayr and Hugo Koch, of the Proclian origins of Dionysian philosophy.⁷¹ Yet, it was only in 1997 that Carlos Steel proposed that the whole argument about evil having a mere “parasite subsistence” (*παρυσπύστασις*) is introduced into *DN IV* to argue for the final salvation of all, including the demons.⁷² In the same volume, I proposed that one of the main eschatological passages in Dionysius, *DN I.4, 112.10–14*, speaks about the final *apocatastasis* in the henad and monad of original creation, and analyzed the same passage again, in another publication.⁷³ Yet, since then, this recognition has not come through. In particular, Emiliano Fiori has dedicated three studies to prove that Pseudo-Dionysius is, in fact, on the anti-Origenist side, and that the rather clear statements in the CDA about universal salvation⁷⁴ should

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- 70 Syriac text in Fiori, *Dionigi Areopagita*, 42.11–19. The Syriac displays the following variants: “for leaning toward matter” and “fallen from the desire of the Good characteristic of the angelic order.”
- 71 Stiglmayr, “Der neuplatoniker Proklus”; Koch, “Proklus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen.”
- 72 Carlos Steel, “Proclus et Denys: De l’existence du mal,” in Ysabel de Andia, ed., *Denys l’Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident. Actes du Colloque International; Paris, 21–24 septembre 1994*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 151 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 89–116 at 101–102.
- 73 István Perczel, “Denys l’Aréopagite et Syméon le Nouveau Théologien,” in Ysabel de Andia, ed., *Denys l’Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident. Actes du Colloque International; Paris, 21–24 septembre 1994*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 151 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 341–357 at 346–349 and István Perczel, “Une théologie de la lumière: Denys l’Aréopagite et Evagre le Pontique,” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 45/1 (1999): 79–120 at 96–99.
- 74 See *DN VIII.9, 205.20 ff.* and particularly: “If one would celebrate Salvation also as the one who snatches, in a salvaging way, from the worse the whole beings (τὰ ὅλα: a Proclian expression denoting the incorporeal beings), by all means we should accept this celebrator of the salvation through all the ways (τούτων ... τὸν ὑμνωδὸν τῆς παντοδαπῆς σωτηρίας) ...” (*ibid.*, 205.20–206.1 = Fiori, *Dionigi Areopagita*, 84.10–13). The Syriac reads the text slightly differently: “If one would like to call Salvation also the one who ransoms in a salvaging way all that exists from those things that are disgraceful for its nature, we would also accept him by all means as a perfect celebrator of the salvation through many ways.” It is clear that the Syriac translates by “salvation through many ways” the same term τῆς παντοδαπῆς σωτηρίας, which means “through all [the possible] ways.” “The one who snatches, in a salvaging way, from the worse the whole beings” and is called Salvation, is Christ.

be understood in the Neoplatonist sense as preserving the present cosmological order of creation.⁷⁵ This is an odd way of arguing from Pseudo-Dionysius' putative non-Christian Neoplatonism for his putative non-universalist orthodoxy against the idea of his universalist and eschatological Christianity. All the odder is this argument as this interpretation of *σωτηρία* would suppose the idea of an eternal world, the opposite of which is definitively Pseudo-Dionysius' doctrine.⁷⁶ Once again, in this debate, I would rather trust Alexander Golitzin's analysis about the eschatological dimension of the *Dionysian Corpus*.

Yet, the identification of the *De trinitate* as the Dionysian extracorporeal *Theological Outlines* and its indebtedness to the *Platonic Theology* offers a solution to this problem, showing not only that Pseudo-Dionysius is definitively a Christian author, but also what kind of Christian he is. Here, Proclus' words about the nonexistence of evil are reworked in a more direct way to deny the existence of eternal punishment. The philosophical principle of the nonexistence of evil, which for Proclus meant the dissolution of the particular evil in the greater good of the whole and the universe, becomes in the *DN*, and even more emphatically in the *DT/TO*, a doctrine of universal salvation. Earlier, I presented this parallel, but I failed to recognise that the source of both texts is not simply the *De malorum subsistentia*, but also *PT* I.18.

PT I. 18, 83.12–13; 84.16–27

DN IV, 19, p. 163, 11–14 = Sin. Syr.
52, fol. 19 rb-va

DT/TO II.6.8, 2, pp. 140–141

Due to this cause of the existence, the gods are givers of good things and of no evil [...] **Nor is it allowed that here the evil come to be unmixed, entirely deprived of the good, and even if something is evil for the part, it is definitively good for the whole and the universe.** For the universe is always happy (Tim 34b8) and consists always of perfect parts, which

If all beings are from the Good, since the nature of the Good is to produce and to save, while the nature of evil is to corrupt and to destroy, there is none among the beings that is from the evil, nor is [evil] the evil-itself, if indeed it is evil also for itself. Also, if it is not that [that is, evil-itself], **then evil is not entirely evil but, as far as it exists at all, it has a part of**

This is the one Good, the cause for all things of all good things. It is through It that the good that is here-below is being done. *And It saves all things to which It is present, just like evil, which accedes to us through free will, is corruptive.* This is what those outside understood and say that those evil have this greatest good in themselves that while they try

75 See Emiliano Fiori, "Elementi evagriani nella traduzione siriana di Dionigi l'Areopagita: La strategia di Sergio di Reš'ayna," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 27 (2010) 323–332; idem, "Mélange eschatologique et 'condition spirituelle' de l'intellect dans le corpus dionysiacum syriaque," *Parole de l'Orient* 35 (2010): 261–276 and, especially, idem, "The Impossibility of the *Apocatasis* in Dionysius the Areopagite," in Sylwia Kaczmarek et al., eds., *Origeniana Decima: Origen as Writer* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 831–844, especially 839 ff.

76 See the Seventh Letter, and my interpretation thereof above, in section 3, point 3.

(cont.)

PT I. 18, 83.12–13; 84.16–27

DN IV, 19, p. 163, 11–14 = Sin. Syr.
52, fol. 19 rb-va

DT/TO 11.6.8, 2, pp. 140–141

exist according to nature. What is against nature, has always been evil for the particular beings and it is in these that one finds ugliness, asymmetry, distortion and parasite subsistence. In fact, what is corrupted becomes corrupted for itself and leaves its own completeness, but for the universe it is incorrupt and undecaying, and whatever is deprived of the good is deprived in relation to itself and its own subsistence because of the weakness of its nature, but for the whole and as part of the universe, it is good.

the good. Also, if the beings desire *That which is Beautiful and Good* and if all things do whatever they do because of what looks good to them, and if for all the aim of the beings the beginning and the end is (*what looks*) good (*to them*), **given that nobody does what he does looking at the nature of evil, how would the evil be among the beings, or how could (evil) exist at all, being deprived of this good desire?**⁷⁷

to do evil to others, they are the first to reap the fruit of their own wickedness,⁷⁸ (8,3) but the Holy Spirit, as I have said earlier, *being the Good-without-need and the Good-that-is-always-whole-for-all-things*, which is not second to the One and the First Good, has received witnesses about this that are equal to those about the Father and the Son, as it has been demonstrated in the First Book and as Ezra prophesied, freely speaking to the *divine Goodness*, because he knew that, **even if somebody commits a sin, it is impossible that she [that is, the divine Goodness] would make him suffer: “and you gave your good Spirit to return them to their right mind (Ezra 11 [Neh 19:20]).”**⁷⁹

77 Καὶ εἰ τὰ ὄντα πάντα ἐκ τἀγαθοῦ, φύσις γὰρ τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ παράγειν καὶ σώζειν, τῷ δὲ κακῷ τὸ φθεῖρειν καὶ ἀπολλύειν, οὐδὲν ἔστι τῶν ὄντων ἐκ τοῦ κακοῦ, καὶ οὐδὲ αὐτό ἔστι [αὐτὸ ἔσται: Suchla] τὸ κακόν, εἶπερ καὶ ἑαυτῷ κακόν εἴη, καὶ εἰ μὴ τοῦτο, οὐ πάντη κακόν τὸ κακόν, ἀλλ’ ἔχει τινὰ τἀγαθοῦ, καθ’ ἣν ὄλως ἔσται, μοῖραν· καὶ εἰ τὰ ὄντα τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ ἐφίεται, καὶ πάντα ὅσα ποιεῖ, διὰ τὸ δοκοῦν ἀγαθὸν ποιεῖ, καὶ πᾶς ὁ τῶν ὄντων σκοπὸς ἀρχὴν ἔχει καὶ τέλος τὸ (δοκοῦν) ἀγαθόν [τἀγαθόν: Suchla]—οὐδὲν γὰρ εἰς τὴν τοῦ κακοῦ φύσιν ἀποβλέπον ποιεῖ ἂ ποιεῖ—πῶς ἔσται τὸ κακόν ἐν τοῖς οὐσίαι, ἢ ὄλως ὄν τῆς τοιαύτης ἀγαθῆς ὀρέξεως παρηρημένον (τὸ κακόν); The punctuation is mine and is different from the one in Suchla’s critical edition. I also have changed Suchla’s text at two points. First, I wrote αὐτό ἔστι instead of αὐτό ἔσται—adopting the reading of two manuscripts, namely Pn and Pb according to Suchla’s sigla and also changing the accent. On the one hand, this corresponds to Sergius’ translation and, on the other hand, I felt this necessary, because otherwise the continuation: καὶ εἰ μὴ τοῦτο: ‘if it is not that’, that is, if evil is not evil-itself, would be meaningless. In fact, the text does not entirely deny the existence of evil: it says that, as evil is also from the Good, it is not absolute evil, precisely because it is evil also for itself and, so, auto-destructive and, therefore, good. Sergius’ translation of this part can be translated so: “there is no being created by the evil, nor is it evil itself, given that evil is also evil for itself. And given that it

6 Conclusions

Space does not allow me to continue the detailed analysis of the correspondences in the table. I am inviting the expert readers to do so because this comparison offers much food for thought.

To resume, one might say that this mysterious author has constructed not only the *Dionysian Corpus* proper, but also the extracorporeal *De trinitate/Theological Outlines*, based on a transtextual reusal of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*. Besides revealing one of the most important traits of the author's writing technique, this recognition gives us a precious tool to understand the way he used and transformed Proclus' metaphysical system by weaving into this warp the weft of scriptural references, of other philosophical writings and of Christian exegetical, spiritual and theological texts and ideas.

Based on this inquiry, I think one may definitively reject the hypothesis of a "crypto-pagan" origin of the Corpus, cherished by such excellent authors, who otherwise—one must say—have greatly contributed to the deeper understanding of this text, as E.R. Dodds, Ronald Hathaway, Carlo Maria Mazzucchi and Tuomo Lankila. While it is difficult to maintain this hypothesis in the case of the CDA_n, it becomes impossible to apply it to the DT/TO, which is based on scriptural exegesis, while also using the PT.

Yet, the Christianity expressed in these texts is not what we would conceive of as "orthodox teaching" according to our present-day standards (also variable according to present-day confessions). The author was definitively keen on giving a metaphysical structure to the Biblical revelation, but this was a rather natural aim in the early Christian centuries. Justinian's condemnations beginning with 529, that is, the closure of the Academy, and culminating in the condem-

is not this [that is, evil itself], it is not so that evil is evil in all respects ..." I also wrote a second time τὸ (δοκοῦν) ἀγαθόν for line 17 of Suchla's edition, because apparently this is what Sergius translates: *καλάρα καίγα καμ:καλῆ ἰσθησασ κα οσ δα καυ δα*: "all the aim of all things has got as its beginning and end that which looks like good." Finally, since the final clause sounds in Sergius' text like this, "how will be evil among the beings and, if it is at all, how would evil be deprived of this desire?," I suppose that the last word in this sentence in Sergius' original was τὸ κακόν.

78 Καὶ αὐτὸ ἐστὶν τὸ ἐν ἀγαθόν, αἴτιον πᾶσιν πάντων ἀγαθῶν· καὶ δι' αὐτὸ πράττεται τὸ κάτω ἀγαθόν· καὶ αὐτὸ σώζει πάντα, οἷς ἂν παρή, ὥσπερ τὸ κακόν ἐκ προαιρέσεως ἡμῶν συμβαῖνον φθείρει. οὐ αἰσθόμενοι καὶ οἱ ἕξω φασὶν ὡς· οἱ κακοὶ τοῦτο μέγιστον ἔχουσιν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀγαθόν· ἄλλους γὰρ ἐπιχειροῦντες κακοῦν, αὐτοὶ πρότεροι τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀπολαύουσι μοχθηρίας. See Hesiod, *Erga* 265, 6 and Stobaios 10, 77: "All unjust person first taste their own wickedness, before leaving it to others." The references have been indicated by Mingarelli and Seiler.

79 For a detailed comparison of the DN and DT/TO texts, see Perczel, "The Pseudo-Didymian *De trinitate* and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: A Preliminary Study," 100–107.

nations of the Three Chapters and of Origenism in 553, have greatly contributed to the development of an anti-metaphysical Christianity, which was enhanced by the appearance of Protestantism and has entered the scholarly consensus, too. Yet, it is useful to remind ourselves that in the early Christian centuries, up to the sixth, it was otherwise: Christian intellectuals had much less problem conversing with the philosophy and science of their times.

The Christology of the CDA is definitively an Antiochian interpretation of Chalcedon, a recognition which might sound scandalous in the light of over a hundred years of research. The discovery of the direct sources of the Christological texts in the CDA does not leave any room for the traditional Cyrillian interpretation of this Christology. One may object that there is a “Dormition of the Holy Virgin” scene in *DN III*, but this pious interpretation does not stand to reason. Yet, one thing is for sure: neither Pseudo-Dionysius’ Antiochian convictions, nor the fact that the Antiochian interpretation of Chalcedon had been under growing pressure until it got condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 553, makes any one of its representatives an insincere Christian.

There remains the universalist perspective of the Corpus and its “Origenism,” so-called. Definitively, the “Origenist” monks of Palestine have quite a bad reputation in present-day scholarship. The general tendency is to prove that they had misunderstood Origen and Evagrius, whose spiritual and intellectual authority have been restored by modern scholars. The latter would like to cleanse their heroes from the taint of “Origenism.” Yet, if we look at the reception of both the Origenists and their condemnations in the second half of the sixth and in the seventh centuries, we find that it was not unambiguous at all. While the narrative of Cyril of Scythopolis, the great historian of the anti-Origenist fight, is dominating our ideas, John Moschus tells the same story otherwise. For example, Abba Nonnus, the leader of the Palestinian Origenists, is painted in Cyril’s narrative in just slightly lighter colours than Beelzebub but, apparently, he was considered a great saint not only by Leontius of Byzantium, his pupil, but also by John Moschus.⁸⁰ We still need much historical and doctrinal study until we might understand what the real doctrines of these “Origenists” were.

Be this as it may, my ongoing work on the edition and commented translation of the *EHSyr* has convinced me that Alexander Golitzin was right in placing the *EH* in the centre of the *Dionysian Corpus* and of Dionysius’ thought in gen-

80 On this, see István Perczel, “Saint Maximus on the Lord’s Prayer: An Inquiry into His Relationship to the Origenist Tradition,” in Antoine Lévy et al., eds., *The Architecture of the Kosmos: St Maximus the Confessor—New Perspectives* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2015), 221–278 at 254–271.

eral. Although this should be clear from the Greek text as well, it is even clearer from the Syriac—which I believe to preserve the original version of the text—that the aim of the author of the CDA was to adapt Evagrius' doctrine of spiritual contemplation to the liturgical life of the Church. For Pseudo-Dionysius, it is not simply the lonely ascetic, but the entire community of the faithful, which should ascend to the highest levels of contemplation by means of theurgy, that is, the sacraments and the liturgical life. This community is the corresponding term, but also the counterpoint, of the community of elect philosophers in the oeuvre of Proclus.

Individual and Liturgical Piety in Dionysius the Areopagite

Andrew Louth

A sense of some tension between individual and liturgical piety seems to be aboriginal to Christianity. In the Gospel, the Lord says, “When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret ...” (Matt 6:6), and yet we know that the Lord himself attended worship in the synagogue and in the Temple, though very much more is made of Jesus’ solitary prayer, in the mountains, for instance, than his worship in public. Later in the Christian tradition there is a contrast between the hermit, praying alone away from other people, in the desert or on the top of a pillar, and the worship of the Christian community, gathered together for the Eucharist. The resolution of the latter tension, at least, is perhaps to be found in the realization that the tension between the prayer of the solitary and the prayer of the gathered community most easily finds resolution if we see both as participating in different ways in the liturgical worship of the heavenly courts, or—what I think is a variant of the same thing—if we pay attention to the cosmic dimension of both solitary prayer and the Divine Liturgy. That, I shall argue, is the case with Dionysius the Areopagite: it is something that springs from the pages of Bishop Alexander Golitzin, whom we are honouring in this symposium, though I shall take a rather different way into this problem than does our revered bishop. Golitzin is, however, almost alone in approaching the Areopagite in a spirit that finds the alleged opposition of individual and community frankly quite puzzling, and the extent to which continental, and especially German, scholarship on the Areopagite stands aghast at the approach of Golitzin (and other English-speaking scholars) has been made evident in Adolf Martin Ritter’s recently published monograph, *Dionys vom Areopag* (though it could be argued that the very title of Ritter’s book, not “*Pseudo-Dionys*,” bears the imprint of the scholarship he affects to despise).¹

Distaste for Dionysius, often revolving round his conception of the Liturgy, is not in the least purely German, but very much present in older English scholar-

¹ Adolf Martin Ritter, *Dionys vom Areopag* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

ship: both Westcott and Inge, for all their brilliance and insight, find Dionysius ultimately intolerable.² Both of them see the way he presents liturgical worship as fundamentally foreign, reducing it to a splendid spectacle, something made worse by what they hold to be his notion of hierarchy, which fragments the Christian community by setting the clergy against the laity, and indeed severing the Christian priesthood itself by introducing rigid notions of rank and authority. For Inge, at least, there is something to be salvaged from the writings of the Areopagite, if one makes central (as much of the Western tradition had been doing for centuries) the *Mystical Theology*, understood as setting out the flight of the individual soul to the hidden darkness of the Unknown God. In a variety of ways, much scholarship in the last century almost systematically misunderstood Dionysius by seeing in his writings a fundamental fissure between the works on the hierarchies and the *Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology* thereby making impossible any grasp of the overall vision of the one who wrote under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite.³ If saved at all, Dionysius is saved by his undoubted place in the development of the Christian mystical tradition, especially in the West. Such a way of viewing the Areopagite has the almost inevitable consequence of devaluing the place of the liturgy in the Dionysian vision, despite the fact that on almost every page he seems to take for granted that this theology has a liturgical context (obvious in the case of the works on the hierarchies; evident from the way in which the divine names are understood as ways of praising, or hymning, God, rather than concepts describing God; for the *Mystical Theology*, see Paul Rorem's seminal article, "Moses as the Paradigm for the Liturgical Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius").⁴ A particularly perverse way of detaching Dionysian theology from its liturgical context is found among not a few Orthodox theologians, who regard Dionysius as having corrupted any genuine understanding of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy by making participation in the Liturgy a matter of "mysteriological liturgical piety," to use the expression of Alexander Schmemmann⁵—"perverse," for such an attitude makes it impossible to make anything the whole tradition of liturgical

2 For Westcott, see his essay, "Dionysius the Areopagite," in Brooke Foss Westcott, ed., *Essays in the Religious Thought in the West* (London: Macmillan, 1891), 142–193; for Inge, see his Bampton Lectures 1899; William Ralph Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1913), 104–122.

3 The most intransigent assertion of this fissure is to be found in Jean Vanneste, *Le mystère de Dieu* (Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959).

4 Paul Rorem, "Moses as the Paradigm for the Liturgical Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius," *Studia Patristica* 18.2 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 275–279.

5 Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (London: Faith Press, 1966), 155.

commentary in the Byzantine world from Maximos the Confessor, through Germanos of Constantinople, to Nicholas Kavalas. Along with such an approach to Dionysius there goes an anxiety about his “Neoplatonism,” to the extent that Dionysius is regarded as introducing into Christian liturgy ideas fundamentally pagan, with little attempt made to understand the religious piety of late antique, “Neoplatonic” paganism, characterizing it in crudely dismissive terms.⁶

What I hope to do in the rest of this paper is explore a way of understanding the vision of the Areopagite in which liturgical and individual piety deepen and reinforce each other. I shall attempt this by looking at two notions on any understanding central to Dionysius’ theology: hierarchy and symbol. This may seem a strange strategy to adopt, given that the detractors of Dionysius almost universally regard hierarchy and symbolism as lying at the heart of the Areopagite’s waywardness.

To understand how these two notions, hierarchy and symbol, shed light on the question of personal and liturgical piety, it is necessary to realize that behind both notions there lies another, namely that of love. That, too, however, is controversial, for the division, mentioned above, between the works on the hierarchies, on one hand, and the *Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*, on the other, can be held to be reinforced by the presence of the notion of love in Dionysius’ thought, absent from all treatises apart from the *Divine Names*. Let us, however, approach this more systematically and start with the question of the unity of the *Corpus Areopagiticum*.

It has often been argued—most forcefully, perhaps, by Jean Vanneste⁷—that the *Dionysian Corpus* calls into two parts: on the one hand, the treatises on the hierarchies, and on the other, the *Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*, a division manifest René Roques’ two important books—*L’Univers dionysien*⁸ and *Structures théologiques*.⁹ On the face of it, such a divide seems implausible. The *Corpus Areopagiticum* is presented as the surviving treatises and letters of a much larger *corpus*, most of which apparently lost. Dionysius (as I shall call their author) makes frequent cross-references to the lost works, giving the impression that they form together a kind of architectural whole. This may, however, be part of the smokescreen of Dionysius’ anonymity and have no real

6 Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 2nd ed. (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014) provides a good corrective to such a dismissal of pagan Neoplatonism.

7 See note 3.

8 René Roques, *L’Univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique de monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris: Aubier, 1954).

9 René Roques, *Structures théologiques de la gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor* (Paris: PUF, 1963).

relevance to the structural unity of the surviving works.¹⁰ It is, in any case, not easy to draw any very firm conclusions from lost works that have left no apparent trace. This question needs to be raised here, for in opposing the treatises on the hierarchies to the *Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*, one is generally opposing a cosmological or metaphysical understanding of the cosmos in terms of hierarchy to a more inward ascent to God that moves from affirmation, *kataphasis*, to negation, *apophasis*, or from a fragmented manifold to mystical union with God, through a process of purification, illumination, and union (though this threefold process is much more evident in the works on the hierarchies). It is further noted that Dionysius' understanding of mystical ascent makes no use of his doctrine of hierarchy—there is no suggestion that the hierarchies are ladders to climb to reach union with God—and, furthermore, that love, which presumably lies at the heart of the mystical ascent, has no obvious role in the doctrine of the hierarchies. Approached lexically, the point about love may well prove too much, for ἔρωσ and its cognates are indeed mainly used in the *Divine Names*, but the contrast is most striking with the *Mystical Theology*, where words for love are used not at all; occasional, but not very striking uses of ἔρωσ and its cognates, are to be found in the hierarchical treatises and a few times in the letters. Other words for love—ἀγάπη, φιλία—are hardly used at all, though φιλανθρωπία, for God's love for us, is not uncommon.

Lexical considerations only take us so far. I want to suggest that, even if the word love is absent or rare in other parts of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* than the *Divine Names*, nevertheless the notion is central. Dionysius discusses the notion of love at length in chapter 4 of the *Divine Names*, devoted to the name of the Good: ἀγαθωνυμία, ἀγαθότης, τὸ ἀγαθόν. This is the first chapter actually dedicated to names of God, as opposed to the names we use in relation to the Trinity, which introduces a series of names, continuing with being, life, wisdom, and concluding with the perfect and the One. To start with the Good in this way betrays Dionysius' fundamentally Platonic affinities: he is well aware of the position the Form of the Good holds in Plato's thought, especially in the *Republic*; the analogy of the sun in *Republic* VI. 507–509, very likely mediated through later writers such as Proclus, lies behind his initial reflections on the Good. Dionysius soon moves on to add to the notion of the Good, τὸ ἀγαθόν, the notion of the Beautiful, τὸ καλόν, or Beauty, τὸ κάλλος. These are not to be distinguished,

10 Hans Urs von Balthasar takes this architectural structure very seriously: see idem, *The Glory of the Lord*, II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984), 154–164. Other scholars are sceptical of the very existence of the lost works.

because beauty is the “cause of the harmony and splendour” in everything; it is a ray pouring forth from a hidden source, says Dionysius, echoing an important insight of Plotinus’—that beauty is essentially to be found not in a quality such as harmony or symmetry, but in transference to higher reality¹¹—shining on everything beautiful, bestowing on it a radiance from beyond. It is because it calls—καλοῦν—everything to itself that it is called κάλλος, beauty. Beauty is not just something pleasing; it lies at the heart of reality:

For beauty is the cause of harmony, of sympathy, of community. Beauty unites all things and is the source of all things. It is the great creating cause which bestirs the world and holds all things in existence by the longing (ἔρωσ) inside them to have beauty ... The Beautiful is therefore the same as the Good, for everything looks to the Beautiful and the Good as the cause of being, and there is nothing in the world without a share of the Beautiful and the Good.

DN 4:704AB

It is because of the Good and the Beautiful (I don’t think Dionysius actually uses καλοκαγαθία) that everything exists and everything relates one to another. Both the harmony of all things and their mutual sympathy, as well as their individual reality, are due to the Good and the Beautiful: Dionysius speaks of the κοινωνία of the opposed, the ἀσσυμμιξία of the united, the πρόνοιαι of the higher, the ἀλληλουχία of like-constituted, the ἐπιστροφαί of the more needy—all of these manifest the rest and repose, protecting and unchanging, that beings have among themselves (704B). Dionysius goes on to speak of the three-fold movement—direct, circular, and spiral—that is to be found among both intellects and souls. From these movements, all inspired by the Good and the Beautiful, comes all the variety and harmony of the cosmos. Such movement originates from the desire, and the love, both ἔρωσ and ἀγάπη, that all things have for the Good and the Beautiful.

This leads into what might appear at first sight to be a digression about the use of ἔρωσ and ἀγάπη. He imagines objections being made to his use of ἔρωσ, as it is not found in the Scriptures. One might wonder why someone writing, most likely, in the early sixth century would see this as a still-live issue, but, of course, Dionysius is pretending to be writing at the turn of the first century and is aware of objections to the use of ἔρωσ in earlier times. Indeed, in his consciousness of his mask, he almost lets it slip, for it is clear (though only pointed

11 See Plotinos, *Enneads* VI. 7. 22.

out fairly recently by István Perczel)¹² that Dionysius bases himself in this section on Origen's discussion of ἔρωσ and ἀγάπη in the preface to his commentary on the Song of Songs. He condenses and misses much of Origen's argumentation, but his argument that ἔρωσ and ἀγάπη have the same meaning—and what matters is the power of what is meant (ἡ δύναμις τοῦ σκοποῦ) and not simply the words—is Origen's as well as most of the citations he uses in support of his argument: Prov 4:6, 8 (LXX: Ἐράσθητι αὐτῆς—“Love her,” spoken of Wisdom), and Wis 8:2 (“I became a lover [Ἐραστῆς ἐγενόμην] of her beauty”), and the citation from the “divine Ignatius”—“my love [ἔρωσ] has been crucified” (*Ad Rom.* 7.2). Just before introducing that quotation from Ignatius, Dionysius remarks that “it appears to some of our writers on sacred matters [ἱερολόγων] that the name ἔρωσ is more divine than that of ἀγάπη.” (*DN* 4.12:709B). One would expect Dionysius to be referring to scriptural writers, though his usual word for them is θεολόγος, not ἱερολόγος, and indeed he goes on to quote Ignatius, but there is a writer who does indeed seem to say that ἔρωσ is more divine than ἀγάπη: and that is St Gregory of Nyssa. In the first Homily on the Song of Songs (PG 44:772) he argues for ἔρωσ in preference to ἀγάπη, and in the thirteenth homily he says that ἀγάπη stretched to intensity (ἐπιτεταμένη) is ἔρωσ (*Or.* 13:1048C).¹³ I am not suggesting that Dionysius would have expected his readers to have picked up the reference—that would have completely blown his pseudonym—but if they thought of Gregory of Nyssa in this context, it would have confirmed the sense that quickly gained ground that Dionysius was a thoroughly Orthodox theologian (and, in the eyes of his readers, a possible source for the notions of love one finds in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa). His teaching on love, *eros*, is summed up a paragraph or two later:

Divine ἔρωσ is ecstatic [a paraphrase of Gregory's ἐπιτεταμένη γὰρ ἀγάπη ὁ ἔρωσ λέγεται?], so that lovers belong not to themselves but to those they love. This is manifest in the providence shown to the weaker by the higher, in the mutual regard for those of equal status, and in the more divine return of the lower towards the first. Therefore also the divine Paul, possessed by divine ἔρωσ and swept up by its ecstatic power, says with divine voice, “I live, but no longer I, but Christ lives in me.” As a true lover, and beside himself, as he says, in God, he is living not his own life, but that life exceedingly longed for, the life of his beloved.

712A

12 See István Perczel, “Le Pseudo-Denys, lecteur d’Origène,” in Wolfgang A. Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg, ed., *Origeniana Septima* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 674–710.

13 See Daniélou's discussion in *Platonisme et théologie mystique* (Paris: Aubier, 1954), 206–208.

And Dionysius goes on to add that

We must dare to add this as being no less true; that the Source of all things Himself, in His wonderful and good love for all things, through the excess of His loving goodness, is carried outside Himself, in His providential care for all that is, so enchanted is He in goodness and love and longing. Removed from His position above all and beyond all, He descends to be in all according to an ecstatic and transcendent power, which is yet inseparable from Himself.

712AB

And says, furthermore, that the divine love shows especially its unending nature without beginning like some eternal circle travelling in unerring revolution through the Good, from the Good, in the Good and into the Good, always with the same centre and in accordance with itself eternally proceeding and remaining and being restored to itself. (712D–713A).

This goes well beyond Aristotle's vision of the unmoved mover, which "moves through being loved" (κινεῖ δὲ ὡς ἐρώμενον: *Metaph.* Λ 7 1072b3): in ecstatic divine love, God moves through all his creation (note that in this section Dionysius is not thinking about God's love in the Incarnation, but simply about his cosmic love),¹⁴ and all love, uniting and preserving, is a manifestation of God's own love (Dionysius' sense that all love is one is perhaps why he can quote the Lord's words to the prostitute in Luke 7:47 in support of his assertion that the divine light awakens love in those who perceive it: *DN* 4. 5: 701A).

There are a few points I want to pick out of this exposition. First, Dionysius' doctrine of love is both cosmic and personal: it is God's love that lies behind everything that is, but the example of the apostle Paul shows that that he is talking about love as experienced by human beings. Secondly, love is essentially unitive: God's love, reaching through the created order, holds it in unity and prevents fragmentation; human love for God seeks union with God—"God's breath in man returning to his birth," to use George Herbert's words. Dionysius' first quotation from his mentor Hierotheos' *Hymns of Love* affirms this concisely:

Love, whether divine, angelic, intelligent, psychic, or natural, we are to conceive of as a certain unifying and blending power, moving the supe-

14 See Catherine Osborne (now, again, Rowett), *Eros Unveiled: Plato and the God of Love* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 195 ff.

rior to providential care for the inferior, those that are equal again to a mutual communion, and finally what is lower to return to what is better and higher.

DN 4.15: 713AB

Thirdly, love, both divine and human, is ecstatic. By that, Dionysius does not primarily refer to love as rapture, though his language in speaking of God's ecstatic love seems to be reaching for some way of expressing rapture in God. Love's ecstasy means making someone else the centre and focus of one's actions: it is ek-static, stepping outside oneself, and in that sense being "beside oneself," by evacuating self, and making someone else—in Paul's case Christ, or God—the centre of one's life and activities.

I think it is clear that such a notion of love is what is being expressed by Dionysius in his doctrine of the hierarchies, especially if we attend to what he says (he did, after all, coin the word, ἱεραρχία) and resist being distracted by the modern sociological understanding of hierarchy as essentially concerned with order and rank and subordination of the lower to the higher. Dionysius' notion of hierarchy is certainly concerned with order: hierarchy expresses the movement from the unity of God through the multiplicity of the created, a movement which is certainly a movement from the higher, which is more united, to the lower, which is more fragmented and dissipated. However, for Dionysius, the central purpose of hierarchy is unitive, drawing the whole created order back into unity with God: he makes this clear in the *Celestial Hierarchy* when he defines hierarchy as, in his view (κατ' ἐμὲ), "a sacred order and knowledge and activity that assimilates to the deiform as far as is possible and analogously leads up to imitation of God through the enlightenments bestowed on it from God" (CH 3.1: 164D). It is through hierarchy that, in Dionysius' view, God's unitive love is manifest in the cosmos. It is self-evidently cosmic, as in his exposition of ἔρωϛ in *Divine Names* 4: his exposition of the ranks of celestial beings, ranked three by three, is an attempt to express a Christian cosmology, made explicit in his calling Jesus τὴν πασῶν ἱεραρχιῶν ἀρχὴν καὶ τελείωσιν, "the principle and perfection of all hierarchies" (EH 1.1.3: 373B).

Love and hierarchy are then, I would maintain, not opposing principles, revealing a fissure in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, but rather the two poles of Dionysius' understanding of the cosmos as a theophany, a manifestation of God's love calling all back into union.

From considering hierarchy, let us now move on to symbol. It is generally recognized that Dionysius the Areopagite provided a theory of symbolism that was immensely influential throughout the Middle Ages, both in the east and in

the west.¹⁵ The term σύμβολον is found throughout his writings, most frequently in his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, but the most careful discussion of the nature of symbolism is found in the second chapter of the *Celestial Hierarchy*, where the primary context is that of how we are to describe and talk about the heavenly beings, though the discussion frequently goes further and talks about the use of symbolism in relation to talking about God himself. It is, however, striking that Dionysius gives his most elaborate account of symbolism in relation to the heavenly or angelic beings, and that is a topic I want to develop later on. First of all, however, let us place Dionysius' discussion of symbolism in the context of Neoplatonism, indeed in a slightly wider context of interpretation.

In this, I am guided for the most part by Peter Struck's—not now all that recent book—*The Birth of the Symbol*.¹⁶ In that book Struck explored the development of symbolism as a way of writing and interpreting poetry, distinguishing it from what he called the rhetorical tradition, associated with Aristotle, and in the Latin world Horace and Quintilian, which focused on metaphor, and saw literature, and poetry in particular, as concerned primarily with communicating ideas to the reader, or audience, and therefore with clarity of conception, and how to communicate with the reader/audience and inspire appropriate emotions for the reception of what was being communicated: fear or pity, delight or wonder. In contrast, Struck was concerned to identify another tradition of writing and interpreting literature and poetry that sought in literature the expression of deep truths in the form of riddles or αινίγματα, that were veiled in a deliberate obscurity and required patient untangling in order to yield their meaning. Struck traced this tradition from Pythagoras, through the Stoics, to the Neoplatonists, and it is with the Neoplatonists and their influence on Dionysius that we shall take up the tale. One advantage of Struck's approach is that symbolism and allegory are not presented as devices for eliciting unlikely meanings from improbable sources, as is the tendency for any literary approach that starts from the rhetorical tradition of classical and late antiquity. Rather, it is an approach to poetry and literature that values obscurity and the need for patient unriddling, and it need hardly be said that it is a tradition that has its own place in the history of literature in many cultures, from Anglo-Saxon riddle poems, to the deliberate veiled obscurity of the poets called “metaphysical” in English literature, to the Romantics, the Symbolists and the Modernists, for all

15 See Ysabel de Andia's illuminating article, “Symbole et mystère selon Denys le Pseudo-Aréopagite,” reprinted in eadem, *Denys l'Aréopagite: Tradition et métamorphoses* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), 59–94.

16 Peter T. Struck, *The Birth of the Symbol. Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

of whom difficulty, obscurity, is a necessary step to the grasp of truths beyond the trivial, and especially to truth that claims to be sacred. As Mallarmé put it: “Toute chose sacrée et qui veut demeure sacrée s’enveloppe de mystère.”¹⁷

Struck’s book ends with Proclus (apart from a deliberately sketchy account of the influence of the tradition he has traced in the Middle Ages—including Dionysius—and the Renaissance). In his discussion of Proclus, he begins with a brief word about Proclus’ ontology, and in particular the way in which his understanding of procession from the One bestows on matter a certain dignity, for matter, in its simplicity, participates more directly in the One than more complex beings such as plants, living beings and even human beings. It is for this reason that, as Struck puts it, “matter now plays a pivotal role in the larger structures of the cosmos.”¹⁸ It is this that makes it possible for symbolism to provide access to divine reality: poets, through their tales and the use of symbols and divine names, sculptors and other artisans through the making of cult statues. Language making, in the hands of the poets, is parallel to the making of cult statues: something is caught in the symbolism of the poetic language that can be traced back to the One itself, and can be a means by which lower beings are drawn up towards the higher. This focuses on the use of divine names. The way this operates, however, is not by words—the divine names—performing some kind of *mimesis*, imitation, but rather by words invoking the divine presence attested by the divine names. The rejection of *mimesis* has an important consequence, which can be seen from this passage from Proclus’ commentary on the *Republic*:

How could one call the poetry that interprets divine matters by means of symbols “imitation”? For symbols are not imitations [μιμήματα] of those things of which they are symbolic. For things could never be imitations of their opposites, the shameful of the beautiful, the unnatural of the natural. But the symbolic mode indicates the nature of things even through what is most strongly antithetical to them.¹⁹

Symbols can function as symbols while being quite opposite to that to which they refer. Symbols have some kind of ontological link, revealed in the divine

17 *Hérésies artistiques*—“L’art pour tous,” in Henri Mondor and Georges Jean-Aubry, ed., *Stéphane Mallarmé, Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 257.

18 Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, 233.

19 Wilhelm Kroll, ed., *Procli Diadochi in Platonis rem publicam commentarii*, 2 vol., *Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899–1901) 1.198. 13–19; translation, Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, 239.

name, and they function by being invoked, not because they resemble the reality to which they refer. The poet, then, functions as what Struck calls a “cog” in the machinery of emanation: the recitation of his poetry sets off a sort of resonance with the divine reality to which it refers and draws the one who recites or listens into a kind of communion with the divine reality referred to by the symbol. In some way, the symbol participates in that to which it refers; there is established a kind of sympathy that draws the worshipper into the divine orbit; the poet passes beyond being a theologian, who says something *about* the gods, rather his words establish a link with them: the poet becomes a theurgist.²⁰

Even from such a bare summary, it is evident that what we find in Dionysius is indebted to Proclus, or his tradition. The only difference seems to be that Dionysius seems to keep divine names and symbols in separate compartments: the divine names are conceptual for the most part—goodness, being, life, wisdom, etc.—while the symbols are drawn from material reality. Symbols in *CH* 2 are presented as necessary props if we are to use material, sensible reality to describe the spiritual realm, whereas divine names are concepts that are used to make some sense of God who transcends intelligible reality. But the distinction is not one that Dionysius maintains consistently: in his discussion in *DN* 1. 6 of how God is hymned “both as nameless and from every name,” he passes seamlessly from divine names such as being, life, goodness, to a list of sensible names (or symbols) such as “sun, star, fire, water, wind, dew, cloud, rock itself and stone, all beings and none of the beings” (*DN* 1. 6: 596C). As Eric Perl points out, the metaphysical basis for his theory of symbols is the same as for his theory of divine names, for God transcends utterly both the realm of the senses and the realm of the intellect.²¹ The parallel between (sensible) symbols and (intelligible) divine names is underlined by the correspondence between apophatic and kataphatic theologies (or ways of naming God) and unlike and like symbolism; in both cases the two opposites are held together and the negative form—apophatic theology and unlike symbolism—held to be more fundamentally true (or less false). So Dionysius’ distinction between divine names and symbols scarcely marks him off from Proclus. To Proclus’ poets correspond Dionysius’ θεολόγοι, the scriptural writers, though these are not the only people who praise God by the divine names, according to Dionysius: that is the special role of the hierarchs, not least the revered Hierotheos, and seems to be the

20 The past few paragraphs are a rather banal summary of Struck’s presentation in his chapter on Proclus: *op. cit.*, 227–253.

21 Eric D. Perl, *Theophany. The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany: SUNY, 2007), chapter 7 (“Symbolism”), 101–109 *passim*.

function of any bishop when celebrating the Eucharistic liturgy. Furthermore, Proclus' understanding of poetry as invocation is perfectly reflected in Dionysius' understanding of the divine names (and by extension symbols) as means by which we do not describe God (which would entail some notion of language as mimetic), so much as praise him: ὑμνεῖν. All that is true. It remains the case, however, that, although Dionysius makes effective use of Proclus' theory of language as invocation, rather than imitation, the tradition of using language as invocatory is something Dionysius inherited from within Christian practice, not something he introduced to the Christian tradition. One only need recall the opening words of the anaphora of St John Chrysostom (which may not be Chrysostom's, but is certainly older than Dionysius): Ἄξιον καὶ δίκαιον σέ ὑμνεῖν, σέ εὐλογεῖν, σέ αἰνεῖν, σοὶ εὐχαριστεῖν, σέ προσκυνεῖν ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ τῆς δεσποτείας σου. Σὺ γὰρ εἶ Θεὸς ἀνέκφραστος, ἀπερινόητος, ἀόρατος, ἀκατάληπτος, ἀεὶ ὢν, ὡσαύτως ὢν ("It is right and fitting to hymn you, to bless you, to praise you, to give you thanks, to worship you in every place of your dominion; for you are God, ineffable, incomprehensible, invisible, inconceivable, ever existing, eternally the same ...") or even, if I may quote, the opening words of the Roman canon missae: *Te igitur, clementissime Pater, per Iesum Christum, Filium tuum, Dominum nostrum, supplices rogamus, ac petimus, uti accepta habeas et benedicas, haec dona, haec munera, haec sancta sacrificia illibata ...* In both cases the use of anaphora—σέ, σέ, σέ; *haec, haec, haec*; and especially the repeated alpha-privative (even enlisting ἀεὶ!) in the anaphora of St John Chrysostom—lend to the prayer an invocatory dimension that goes beyond the meaning of what it said in the words uttered.

But the angels? Angels, or celestial beings (because, for Dionysius, strictly speaking, angels are the names of the lowest rank of celestial beings), seem to fulfil several roles in Dionysius' theology. They are intermediary beings, leading human beings to God, and conveying from God divine enlightenment. Already well before Dionysius' time, the role of the angels had been developed as precisely intermediary between God and human kind: sharing with God the property of being beyond our understanding, and with us the conviction that God is beyond any conception they or we can form of him. Already in his homilies on the Incomprehensibility of God, St John Chrysostom had incorporated the angels into his theology of the transcendent incomprehensibility of God.²² Dionysius, however, goes much further, principally by introducing his notion of

22 See Chrysostom's *Homilies on the Incomprehensibility of God*, 1. 302–327; 3. 53–265, esp. 194–265; 4. 1–315 *passim*, in Anne Marie Malingrey and Robert Flacelière, eds., *Jean Chrysostome, Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu*, sc 28 (Paris: Cerf, 1970).

hierarchy. As Dionysius defines it (and it seems to be his coinage), hierarchy is “in my view” (κατ’ ἐμὲ) “a sacred order and knowledge and activity that assimilates to the deiform as far as is possible and analogously leads up to imitation of God through the enlightenments bestowed on it from God” (CH 3.1; 164D). Hierarchy is not primarily what we nowadays call hierarchy—a system of graded ranks—but a process by which beings are assimilated to God. This involves, as Dionysius unfolds it, his system of ranks of celestial beings ranked three by three—three ranks of three graded beings—where the threefold element expresses and effects the threefold process that leads to union with God or perfection: the process of purification, enlightenment, and union or perfection. It is interesting to note that, whereas mimetic language had been set aside, following Proclus, in his discussion of unlike symbolism, the language of mimesis once again finds a place in Dionysius’ thought: hierarchy leads up ἐπὶ τὸ θεομίμητον, “to imitation of God.” What has happened, I think, is that the “unlike” has been incorporated in the process of purification, enlightenment and union; purification has something of a moral dimension, but its real function is epistemological, to prepare the created mind to receive the enlightenment that leads to union, and part of that, presumably, is recognizing the “unlike” element in symbolism, so as to interpret the symbols in the right way, that is, in the way that enables the symbols to lead one to participation in that of which they are symbols, and furthermore to acknowledge that there is no “objective” revelation in the sense of divinely guaranteed information, but rather revelation as transformative initiation. As Dionysius puts it,

If anyone says that theophanies take place directly and immediately to certain of the holy ones, let him learn, and that clearly from the most sacred oracles, that “no one has seen,” or shall see, the hiddenness itself of God as it is, and that theophanies occurred to the pious in accordance with manifestations fitting to God through certain sacred visions analogous to those who saw them. The all-wise theology naturally calls that vision, which manifests depicted in itself the divine likeness as a shaping of the shapeless, a theophany, from the leading up of those who behold towards the divine as through the divine enlightenment itself that comes upon those who behold, and from their being sacredly initiated into something of the divine.

CH 4. 3; 180C

But this process, as Dionysius makes clear, is not some individual, intellectual process, but something mediated by angels, and also by the community of the Church, primarily, though not, I think, exclusively, the ordained minis-

ters. Chapters 4 to 14 of the *Celestial Hierarchy* explore various aspects of the process of assimilation to the divine mediated by the principle and reality of hierarchy, and then there follows the final chapter 15 which deals in detail with the symbolism used to understand the realm of celestial intelligible beings, and beyond that God Himself. It is striking that in this final chapter all the cautions about the necessity of paying attention to unlike symbolism seem to be set on one side. All the symbols introduced, from fire onwards, are interpreted in what seems to me a mimetic way. So, of fire, he says, “the fiery, therefore, I think manifests that which is most deiform in the heavenly intellects. For the sacred theologians often describe the being beyond being and shapeless in terms of fire, as possessing many images, if one may say so, of the thearchic property, as in visible things” (*CH* 15. 2; 329A). One finds the same in the explanation of how the parts of the (human? animal?) body are applied to God; the principle of interpretation is mimesis.

I haven’t explored Proclus anything like as carefully as I have Dionysius, so I can’t be sure how resolute Proclus is in abandoning a mimetic concept of language in relation to the divine. But my impression is that he remains fairly consistent.

Which leads to a final reflection, which passes beyond Dionysius. Unlike symbolism—for both Proclus, as we have seen, and for Dionysius—is based, metaphysically, on the realization that the material, in its relative simplicity, participates more directly in the One. It is a point Dionysius affirms in his Christian manner when he affirms that “furthermore, it is necessary to understand this, that of the things that are none is completely deprived of participation in the beautiful (*καλῶς*), since, as the truth of the oracles declares, ‘everything was exceedingly good,’” quoting Genesis 1:31 (*CH* 2. 3; 141C). That might suggest that the capacity to use symbolism opens up possibilities of understanding and communion denied to purely spiritual beings, whose knowledge is purely intellectual. The idea that human beings, because they are complex beings of soul and body, and not just simple intellectual beings like the angels, can participate in the divine in a richer way than the angels, even if maybe it is less secure, is an idea that surfaces from time to time in the Christian tradition. The first example I am aware of is in St John Damascene, who features in Struck’s final chapter, “Symbol Traces,” with a couple of lukewarm pages.²³ John developed an elaborate theory of images or symbols, that draws on the conviction that matter is created by God and is therefore in some way capable of disclosing the divine, as well as a belief in the Incarnation in which the Son of God embraced a human

23 Struck, 264–266.

nature and life, not just spiritually, but through the body. This leads John to suggest, in the last and most developed on his treatises against the iconoclasts, that:

The Son of God did not become an angelic nature hypostatically; the Son of God became hypostatically a human nature. Angels do not participate in, nor do they become sharers in, the divine nature, but in divine activity and grace; human beings, however, do participate in, and become sharers of, the divine nature, as many as partake of the holy Body of Christ and drink his precious Blood; for it is united to the divinity hypostatically, and the two natures are hypostatically and inseparably united in the Body of Christ of which we partake, and we share in the two natures, in the body in a bodily manner, and in the divinity spiritually, or rather in both ways, not that we have become identical [with God] hypostatically (for we first subsisted, and then we were united), but through assimilation with the Body and the Blood.²⁴

The notion that, whereas angels, in virtue of their simplicity, possess the image of God more purely, while human beings, because they are twofold beings of soul and body, possess the image of God in a richer way, is found again in St Gregory Palamas,²⁵ though the precise way in which John develops it in relation to human participation in the material elements of the Eucharist seems to be peculiar to the Damascene himself. It seems to me, however, to be a striking development of the recognition of the value of matter, implicit in Proclus' justification of symbolism and an invocatory theory of language.

All this seems to me to illustrate the way in which there is often a convergence between Neoplatonic and Christian themes in late antiquity and the Byzantine period—a convergence that makes it difficult to speak of influence. For John Damascene's striking recognition of the way in which being mate-

24 Bonifatius Kotter, ed., *John Damascene, Against Those Who Despise Images*, III. 26. 44–62. *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* III (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 134; English translation: Andrew Louth, ed., *St John of Damascus, Three Treatises on the Divine Images* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 102–103.

25 Robert Sinkewicz, ed., *Gregory Palamas, CL Chapters*, 62–64. *Studies and Texts* 83 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 154–158. And now see Alexandros Chouliaras, "The Superiority of Humans over the Angels Due to Participation in the Eucharist: Is St Gregory Palamas Based on St John Damascene," *Sobornost* 40:2 (2018): 31–42, and his unpublished Ph.D. thesis: *The Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas: The Image of God, the Spiritual Senses, and the Human Body* (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 2019).

rial offers human beings the possibility of communion with God that would be denied them if they were purely spiritual beings, and is, indeed, denied the purely spiritual angelic beings, is itself based on the Christian doctrine of creation and especially the Incarnation of the Son of God in a human soul and body. Proclus' understanding of the dignity of matter because of its paradoxical closeness to, or sympathy with, the One leads in a similar direction, but has metaphysical roots that bear some, but not really any close, analogy to the doctrine of creation, and none that I can see with the doctrine of the Incarnation. Nevertheless, Proclus' doctrine of symbolism and the related understanding of language as invocatory, rather than mimetic, is clearly something that Dionysius incorporated eagerly into his own doctrine of the symbolism and the divine names, and indeed his understanding of the invocatory nature of prayer, especially in the Eucharist.

This leads to a final observation, relevant to the topic of individual and liturgical piety in Dionysius the Areopagite. The doctrine of symbolism that Peter Struck has identified in antiquity and late antiquity, not least in the tradition that culminates in Proclus, has further entailments. In finding a use of language that does not function simply rationally by conveying and refining a realm of concepts but rather in an invocatory way enabling participation in the realities celebrated, we are opening up a dimension of language that discovers value in the use of words, that goes beyond their role in signifying concepts. Something of this is already implicit in what we have already explored in relation to the apophatic/kataphatic distinction and also the role of, especially, unlike symbolism. Reflection on this leads us to two aspects of human understanding that are often ignored or undervalued: the tacit, and a use of words that is suggestive, lateral, rather than directly significative.²⁶ As Rowan Williams has put it in a recent article,

This way of reading and absorbing includes what is usually referred to as "typological" interpretation (the figures of the Hebrew Scriptures being taken up to illuminate the narrative of the new covenant), but it is not just this: it is a habit of listening for connections, backwards and forwards, of all sorts. And all such interweavings of the sacred text take it for granted that patient immersion in the whole range of scriptural language will uncover connections that are not "decodable" by the usual standards of critical scholarship. But this does not mean that they are arbitrary and

26 Both of these I explored long ago in my *Discerning the Mystery* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), chapters on "Tradition and the Tacit," "Return to Allegory" (pp. 73–95).

fanciful associations; they occur with a shared and continuing practice, and they generate new dimensions for future readings.²⁷

It seems to me that it is precisely this recognition of these further dimensions of language, opened up by their existing in a tradition defined by the repeated use of language and imagery in the celebration of the liturgical offices in the broadest sense, that enables us to grasp the point at which individual and liturgical piety intersect. It is something of which Dionysius seems to have had a profound awareness, even if it is overlooked or denounced by certain canons of supposedly critical scholarship.

27 Rowan Williams, "Aeolian Harmonics: Murray Cox and Geoffrey Rowell," *International Journal of the Study of the Christian Church* 18 (2018): 114–123 at 119.

Ps.-Ps.-Dionysius on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary: The Armenian Letter of Dionysius to Titus

Stephen J. Shoemaker

In the third chapter of *On the Divine Names*, Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite famously refers to an assembly of the apostles, himself included, gathered together to behold “that mortal body, that source of life, which bore God [ἐπὶ τὴν θέαν τοῦ ζωαρχικοῦ καὶ θεοδόχου σώματος συνελθύθημεν]. James, the brother of God, was there. So too was Peter, that summit, that chief of all those who speak of God.”¹ With this notice, it would seem, Ps.-Dionysius provides one of the earliest patristic witnesses to the ancient traditions about the Dormition and Assumption of the Virgin Mary. It is true, one should note, that over the past century a handful of scholars has disputed this interpretation of “the body that bore God” as the body of the Theotokos Mary, at the time of her passing from this world. Perhaps the first to propose an alternative interpretation was Martin Jugie, who argued that the “body” to which the author here refers is most likely the Eucharist, rather than Mary, and only in later centuries did writers (incorrectly, in his opinion) come to identify this body with the Virgin.² Yet as I have noted elsewhere, such an interpretation was undoubtedly determined—indeed, necessitated—by Jugie’s convictions regarding the Virgin Mary’s immortality. This position was effectively mandated by the Vatican’s preparations at that time—largely under his direction—to declare the Assumption of the Virgin a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith on the basis of her lack of Original Sin (according to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception), which would entail her corresponding lack of mortality.³ Much more recently, István Perczel has proposed that this passage should instead be understood as a reference to the Council of Chalcedon and the participation of the

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- 1 Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* III.2 (Beate Regina Suchla, ed., *Corpus Dionysiacum*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite De divinis nominibus*, PTS 33 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990], 141; trans. Colm Luibhéid and Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality [New York: Paulist Press, 1987], 70).
 - 2 Martin Jugie, *La mort et l’assomption de la Sainte Vierge, étude historico-doctrinale*, ST 114 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), 99–101.
 - 3 See Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption*, OECs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9–17.

author of the Dionysiac corpus therein.⁴ Nevertheless, Perczel's hypotheses are quite convoluted and idiosyncratic, and they have not been widely received. Instead of the Theotokos, Perczel would have us understand "the body that bore God" as a term that refers to "the inner contemplation of the Christological mystery," an unlikely reading in my opinion, and Archbishop Alexander's brief summary of Perczel's further arguments makes their improbability quite clear simply in their elaboration.⁵

Despite these exceptions, the interpretation of this gathering of apostles around the body of the one who bore God has long been understood by the majority of scholars as indeed a reference to the Virgin's Dormition and her funeral.⁶ Such a conclusion is certainly warranted by the fact that at the very moment when the Dionysiac corpus was composed, a diverse panoply of traditions about the end of Mary's life was circulating widely throughout the eastern Mediterranean world. Although these Dormition traditions are certainly much earlier, composed in all probability during the third and fourth centuries (if not quite possibly older still), toward the end fifth century, these diverse narratives and the topic of Mary's death and burial suddenly became prominent topics of Christian discourse.⁷ Although Ben Schomakers maintains that the scene from *On Divine Names* should not be identified with Mary's Dormition since such traditions originated only after the production of the Dionysiac corpus, clearly

4 See esp. István Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the Pseudo-Dormition of the Holy Virgin," *Le Muséon* 125 (2012): 55–97.

5 *Ibid.*, 76.; Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, CS 250 (Collegeville, Minn.: Cistercian Publications, 2013), xxix–xxxi. Ben Schomakers, "An Unknown Element of Theology? On Proclus as the Model for the Hierotheos in the Dionysian Corpus," in Danielle Layne and David D. Butorac, eds., *Proclus and His Legacy* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 183–198, 195–197 similarly judges Perczel's hypothesis "speculative and in all cases not convincing." I would bring the same judgment, however, to Schomakers' alternative proposal that the scene represents instead "metaphorical meeting of theologians or theologically inspired thinkers who, though living in different places and even in different periods, were finding each other in discussing the same theme." Tuomo Lankila's article in the same volume as Schomakers' largely follows Perczel and does not add much new to the interpretation of this scene: Tuomo Lankila, "A Crypto-Pagan Reading of the Figure of Hierotheus and the 'Dormition' Passage in the Corpus Areopagiticum," in Danielle Layne and David D. Butorac, eds., *Proclus and His Legacy* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 175–182.

6 E.g., Andrew Louth, *Denys, the Areopagite* (London: G. Chapman, 1989), 102; Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 34; and most recently Byron MacDougall, "Hierotheus at the 'Dormition': Pseudo-Dionysius on his Teacher's Rhetorical Performance in *On Divine Names*," *J ECS* 28.2 (2020), forthcoming.

7 See Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 9–77; Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 100–165.

this is not in fact the case.⁸ To the contrary, these traditions are not only significantly older than the Dionysiac corpus, but they had recently come into vogue, it would seem, just as *On Divine Names* was being written.

Moreover, the origins of these narratives seem to be linked specifically with early Christian Palestine and with Jerusalem in particular, and their oldest surviving witnesses are Syriac manuscripts copied in the late fifth century, which transmit versions that were translated from even earlier Greek models.⁹ In the case of one of the most widely circulated and influential narratives, the so-called *Six Books Apocryphon*, this Palestinian milieu is evidenced by Epiphanius of Salamis, who seems to have encountered this narrative's traditions before moving to Cyprus, while he was still living in Palestine during the first half of the fourth century.¹⁰ Furthermore, the *Six Books Apocryphon* (with help from Epiphanius) additionally bears witness to the observance of three annual commemorations in Mary's honor, presumably among Christians in fourth-century Palestine.¹¹ And although Jerusalem knew a celebration of the Memory of Mary by the early fifth century, this 15 August feast came to be identified as a memorial of her death and burial only somewhat later—sometime before the middle of the sixth century.¹²

8 Schomakers, "Unknown Elements," 195–197: "First is the question whether Dionysius actually staged a 'dormition of the virgin' scene, a scene which has no biblical reference and is somewhat shadowy, perhaps reflecting a tradition originating later than the composition of the *Dionysian Corpus*."

9 Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 32–57; idem, *Mary*, 129, 144, 149, 152.

10 Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Epiphanius of Salamis, the Kollyridians, and the Early Dormition Narratives: The Cult of the Virgin in the Later Fourth Century," *J ECS* 16 (2008): 371–401; idem, *Mary*, 144–165.

11 Shoemaker, "Epiphanius of Salamis"; idem, *Mary*, 130–145; idem, "Marian Liturgies and Devotion in Early Christianity," in Sarah Jane Boss, ed., *Mary: The Complete Resource* (London: Continuum Press, 2007), 130–145; idem, "The Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century: A Fresh Look at Some Old and New Sources," in Chris Maunder, ed., *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Burns & Oates, 2008), 71–87; idem, "Apocrypha and Liturgy in the Fourth Century: The Case of the 'Six Books' Dormition Apocryphon," in James H. Charlesworth and Lee Martin McDonald, eds., *Jewish and Christian Scriptures: The Function of "Canonical" and "Non-canonical" Religious Texts* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 153–163.

12 The 15 August feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos is attested in the Jerusalem Georgian Lectionary, whose contents reflect ritual practice in Jerusalem in the sixth century. Hymns for the feast are also present in the Jerusalem Georgian Chantbook, whose calendar seems to date this collection to the middle of the sixth century. See Stig Frøysshov, "The Georgian Witness to the Jerusalem Liturgy: New Sources and Studies," in Bert Groen, Steven Hawkes-Teeple, and Stefanos Alexopoulos, eds., *Inquiries into Eastern Christian Worship. Selected Papers of the Second International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgies, Rome, 17–21 September 2008* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 227–267, 246–248; Peter

Since the vast majority of scholars agree in assigning the Dionysiac corpus an origin in Syro-Palestine most likely sometime around the year 500 CE, we find that in fact this author's milieu was quite dense with traditions about the Dormition and burial of the Virgin Mary.¹³ Likewise, Archbishop Alexander also proposes that in this setting the author was especially influenced by a range of writings from the Syriac Christian tradition.¹⁴ Therefore it stands to reason that we might find some mention of the Dormition traditions in this corpus, and accordingly this would seem to be the most probable and straightforward reading of *On the Divine Names* III.2 based on the context of its production. It is certainly significant that this interpretation is confirmed by the earliest commentary on the Dionysiac corpus, the *Scholia* on the Dionysian writings by John of Scythopolis. In this commentary, which John wrote sometime between 537 and 543 while bishop of Scythopolis (modern Beit She'an) in Palestine,¹⁵ he notes of the passage in question that "by 'source of life which bore God' [the author] means the body of the holy Theotokos who at that time fell asleep [κοιμηθείσης]."¹⁶ Thus, within a few decades of the *Dionysian Corpus'* initial appearance, we find clear evidence that as the next generation took up these writings, they understood this passage, like most modern scholars, as a reference to the Virgin's Dormition and burial.

This passage from *On Divine Names* provides the literary occasion for the text translated in the appendix below. This brief Dormition narrative purports to be a letter from Dionysius the Areopagite to Titus. Undoubtedly this is meant to be the same Titus who was imagined as the recipient of the pseudo-Pauline

Jeffery, "The Sunday Office of Seventh-Century Jerusalem in the Georgian Chantbook (Iadgari): A Preliminary Report," *Studia Liturgica* 21 (1991): 52–75, 57; idem, "The Earliest Christian Chant Repertory Recovered: The Georgian Witnesses to Jerusalem Chant," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47 (1994): 1–38, 14; Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 120–124.

- 13 See esp. the discussion in Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 9–11. This milieu was first identified by Hugo Koch and Josef Stiglmayr at the end of the 19th century, and it remains effectively the scholarly consensus today: Charles M. Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27. See also Kevin Corrigan and L. Michael Harrington, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite," in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition): <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/pseudo-dionysius-areopagite>.
- 14 Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 324–360, 379.
- 15 Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis*, esp. 39 and 272.
- 16 John of Scythopolis (Ps.-Maximus the Confessor), *Scholia on the Divine Names* 3 (PG 4, 236; trans. Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis*, 199–200).

letter to Titus, since in this letter “Paul” remarks that he had left Titus behind on Crete to complete the establishment of Christianity on the island (Tit 1.5), and our letter’s Titus is identified as the bishop of Crete. Thus, the author of our letter writes in Dionysius’ name in order to elaborate on this tradition from the writings of Ps.-Dionysius, explaining the events of Mary’s departure from this life to his fellow disciple of Paul, Titus, who must have been unable, it would seem, to attend the Virgin’s funeral for himself. The letter was almost certainly composed originally in Greek, although presently it survives only in Armenian translation, where it is preserved in five known manuscripts: one at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, two at the Matenadaran in Yerevan, and two at the Mekhitarist monastery in Vienna.¹⁷ In 1887, Paul Vetter published a German translation of the Paris manuscript, and subsequently the Armenian text from this manuscript was published in a collection of studies edited by J. Dashian.¹⁸ The other four manuscripts remain unedited.

The version translated below, however, is not from any of these five manuscripts but was taken from a sixth manuscript, whose whereabouts are presently unknown. In 1874 Garegin Sruandzteants’ published this narrative along with a variety of other texts in a volume printed in Constantinople.¹⁹ According to Sruandzteants’, he copied the text from a manuscript book called the Theology of Dionysius the Areopagite in 1867 in the monastery of Surb Karapet, located 30 kilometers northwest of the city of Mush (today Muş).²⁰ In the nineteenth century, Mush, which sits some 80 kilometers to the west of Lake Van, and the province of the same name were an important center of Arme-

17 For more information on the original language and these manuscripts, see Simon C. Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption de Marie: Histoire des traditions anciennes*, ThH 98 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995), 337–338, n. 77.

18 Paul Vetter, “Das apocryphe Schreiben Dionysius des Areopagiten an Titus über die Aufnahme Mariä,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 69 (1887): 133–138; Paul Vetter, “Անվաներական Թողթ Դիոնիսիոսի Արիսպագացոյ առ Տիտոս վասն ննջման Մարեմայ (The Apocryphal Letter of Dionysius the Areopagite to Titus concerning the Dormition of Mary),” in J. Dashian, ed., *Հայկական աշխատություններ (Haykakan ashkhatsirut’iwnk’ [Armenian Studies])*, Azgayin matenadaran 17 (Vienna: Mkhit’arean Tparan, 1895), 11–17. The French translation by Barnabé Meistermann, *Le tombeau de la Sainte Vierge à Jérusalem* (Jérusalem: P.P. Franciscains, 1903), 120–125 is clearly a translation of Vetter’s German translation.

19 Garegin Sruandzteants’, “Թողթ Դիոնիսիոսի Արիսպագացոյ (The Letter of Dionysius the Areopagite),” in *Հնոց եւ նորոց պատմութիւն վասն Դաւթի եւ Սովսէսի Լորենացոյ (Hnots’ ew norots’ patmut’iwn vasn Dawt’i ew Movsesi Khorenats’woy [History of the Old and New concerning David and Moses Khorenatsi])* (Constantinople: Tpagrut’iwn E.M. Ntsean, 1874), 110–115.

20 I thank Prof. Sergio La Porta for his help in obtaining this information.

nian culture prior to the Armenian Genocide. Perhaps the manuscript was lost in the devastating eradication of lives and culture from eastern Anatolia in the summer of 1915, although it may possibly yet be located. This manuscript's presence in Mush is interesting, however, since we know that a second copy of this apocryphal letter was also preserved nearby at the Arakelots Monastery, 11 kilometers to the southwest of Mush. This manuscript, now Yerevan Matenadaran MS 7729, is one of the most famous Armenian manuscripts, the Homiliary of Mush.²¹ It would appear that, for whatever reason, this apocryphal letter was relatively well attested in this region.

Although the precise nature of this missing manuscript of the "Theology of Dionysius the Areopagite" remains a bit of a mystery, the other manuscripts transmitting this narrative are, like the Mush Homiliary, collections of readings for various annual liturgical feasts. In these collections the Letter from Dionysius to Titus is presented, unsurprisingly, as a reading for the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, on 15 August.²² It certainly has a typical style for such an occasion: it is brief, the narrative details are limited and to the point, and the discourse is flowery and encomiastic. Indeed, the narrative content can be briefly related as follows. When the time came for Mary to depart from this world, the apostles were gathered to her in Jerusalem. In the presence of the apostles and assembled believers, she handed her soul over into the hands of her son, who took it to the heavenly Jerusalem. The apostles then took care of the appropriate funeral rites and buried her body in Gethsemane, waiting there for three days while angels sang at the tomb. After a while, the angels suddenly stopped their singing. One of the apostles, we are told, was absent from the initial gathering to the Virgin before her departure, and he came only later. He implored the other apostles to open the tomb so that he could behold her body. They did so and discovered that the tomb was empty, realizing that when the angelic singing stopped, Mary's body had been transferred to heaven.

This Armenian letter thus fits into a broader category of early Dormition narratives known as the "late apostle traditions." Although Michel van Esbroeck for some reason assigned all of the various late apostle narratives (with one exception) to the Bethlehem tradition, any points of contact with this group are in fact extremely minimal, and consequently these traditions are best regarded as

21 See Michel van Esbroeck, "Description du répertoire de l'homiliaire de Muš (Matenadaran 7729)," *REArm* 18 (1984): 237–280.

22 See Michel van Esbroeck and Ugo Zanetti, "La manuscrit Érėvan 993: inventaire des piėces," *REArm* 12 (1977), 123–167 at 157; van Esbroeck, "Description du répertoire de l'homiliaire de Muš," 274.

group of independent narratives, often quite different from one another, that share the common theme of the late apostle.²³ According to this literary tradition, one of the apostles was delayed in making the journey to Jerusalem for Mary's Dormition. Consequently, he arrived only sometime after her burial had already taken place. This belated apostle then usually asks to see the remains of the Virgin for himself. At his request, the apostles together reopen Mary's sealed tomb. When they look into the tomb, however, they do not find Mary's body, which is understood to mean that it has been miraculously transferred to heaven. In most of these narratives, the apostles also discover certain relics inside the tomb, initially Mary's funeral robe, and in later traditions, her girdle as well. These garments were, of course, revered Marian relics venerated in Constantinople from the early middle ages onward, and they served as important symbols of Mary's special bond with the imperial capital (at least in the minds of its inhabitants).²⁴ Although the discovery of these relics is not always an element of the late apostle tradition, it would appear that the opening of Mary's empty tomb as described in these legends provided a ready device to explain their invention.

Perhaps the most famous witness to this tradition of the late apostle is the so-called "Euthymiac History," an excerpt from a now lost text, the *Euthymiac History*, which is preserved in John of Damascus' second homily on the Dormition.²⁵ Near the end of this homily, John introduces a citation from "the

23 The late apostle traditions are discussed in Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 67–71. See also Michel van Esbroeck, "Les textes littéraires sur l'assomption avant le x^e siècle," in François Bovon, ed., *Les actes apocryphes des apôtres* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), 265–285, 272–273.

24 Regarding these relics and their early history in Constantinople, see especially Stephen J. Shoemaker, "The Cult of Fashion: The Earliest *Life of the Virgin* and Constantinople's Marian Relics," *DOP* 62 (2008): 53–74.

25 Here I use "Euthymiac History" in reference to the passage cited in John's homily and *Euthymiac History* to describe the now lost larger work from which this excerpt was taken. A critical text of the "Euthymiac History" as preserved in John of Damascus' *Homily on the Dormition* 11 18 may be found in Bonifaz Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5 vols. PTS 7, 12, 17, 22, 29 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969–1988), 5:536–539. Pierre Voulet, ed., *Homélie sur la nativité et la dormition*, SC 80 (Paris: Cerf, 1961), 169–175 is basically a corrected reprint of the text from the *Patrologia Graeca* (PG 96, 748–752). For an English translation of the citation, see Brian E. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 224–226. Note also that the Arabic Dormition narrative edited in Michel van Esbroeck, "Un témoin indirect de l'Histoire Euthymiaque dans une lecture arabe pour l'Assomption," *Parole de l'Orient* 6–7 (1975–1976): 479–491 is not as closely linked with the "Euthymiac History" as van Esbroeck indicates. This narrative is best understood as yet another example of the late apostle tradition.

Euthymiac History, book 3, chapter 40,” which he seems to have taken from a no longer extant *Life* of Euthymios (d. 473), the founder of coenobitic monasticism in Palestine. Despite widespread agreement among many earlier scholars that this passage should be understood as a later interpolation to John’s homily, as I have argued elsewhere, it is to the contrary almost certainly an original element of John’s homily.²⁶ The passage cited from the *Euthymiac History* focuses even more directly on the clothing relics and their invention and transfer to Constantinople than either the late apostle or even the events of the Dormition themselves. John’s quotation begins with Pulcheria and Marcian, who have recently constructed the church in Blachernai. Desiring to endow their new shrine to the Virgin with an impressive Marian relic, they are said to have used the occasion of the Council of Chalcedon to approach bishop Juvenal of Jerusalem with a request for Mary’s bodily remains to be transferred to Constantinople for deposition in the church of Blachernai, where they could protect the imperial capital.

Juvenal responds by explaining that, despite the silence of the scriptures on the matter, according to an ancient and revered tradition, Mary passed from this world in miraculous fashion. The apostles assembled to witness her death, after which they saw to her burial. Yet one of their company was delayed: an unnamed²⁷ apostle arrived three days after her burial but still wished to venerate her holy body one last time. When the apostles reopened the tomb to grant the late apostle’s request, they were surprised to discover that the body was gone: all they found within were her grave clothes (ἐντάφια). The *Euthymiac History* then identifies several of those who were present for these events, citing as its source the famous passage from Ps.-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names* 3.2. After hearing these things, the imperial couple asked Juvenal to send them the

26 Shoemaker, “The Cult of Fashion,” 66–72. The authenticity of the quotation is also maintained in Alexander Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research, 1999), 82.

27 In both the PG and Voulet’s edition (which essentially reproduces the PG), this apostle is identified as Thomas: PG 96, 749A; Voulet, *Homélie sur la nativité*, 170. Nevertheless, Kotter’s critical edition, which I follow here, does not provide a name for the late apostle, and somewhat surprisingly, there is no indication of any name, Thomas or otherwise, in the apparatus: Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5.539. According to Jugie, the apostle is not named in the earliest manuscript, copied in 890: see Jugie, *La mort et l’assomption*, 162, n. 2. Wenger also reports that in the independent version of the “Euthymiac History,” preserved in a Sinai manuscript from the eighth or ninth century, the apostle is similarly unnamed: Antoine Wenger, *L’Assomption de la T.S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VI^e au X^e siècle; études et documents*, Archives de l’Orient chrétien 5 (Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 1955), 137, n. 3.

holy coffer (σορός) containing Mary's funeral garments (ἱμάτια), and when he did, Pulcheria and Marican deposited the relic in the church of the Theotokos at Blachernai.

The *Euthymiac History* and its account of the late apostle are extremely difficult to date, and all that we can be certain of is that they were composed sometime in advance of John's Dormition homilies, which were delivered most likely sometime between 730–750.²⁸ It would appear, however, that the late apostle tradition first entered circulation sometime during the sixth century, as witnessed by an Armenian homily on the Dormition attributed (falsely) to John Chrysostom. Although it is unlikely that this homily is as early as van Esbroeck proposes (the fourth century), there are signs that the lost Greek original probably was composed in the sixth century.²⁹ Another early Dormition narrative including the late apostle tradition is the Georgian *Transitus* of Ps.-Basil, whose liturgical traditions date composition of its Greek original sometime during the seventh century.³⁰ Yet neither of these narratives has anything to say about the fate of Mary's grave clothes after their discovery, nor are there any hints of their veneration. The earliest version of the late apostle tradition, as reflected in these two texts, forged no connections between these garments and either Constantinople or the church of Blachernai. And while both texts identify the late apostle as Thomas, only the *Transitus* of Ps.-Basil refers to the events described in *On the Divine Names* 3.2. Roughly contemporary with Ps.-Basil's *Transitus* is the earliest extant *Life of the Virgin*, a text attributed to Maximus the Confessor that also combines the tradition of the late apostle, whom it identifies as Thomas, with the invention of the Virgin's clothing relics and *On the Divine Names*.³¹ While this *Life's* attribution to Maximus may be false, it seems clear that the text was composed most likely in the seventh century, and the location of its production was in the monasteries of the Judean Desert, perhaps Mar Saba, indeed, the very same context that provided the *Euthymiac History*

28 Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 21.

29 Ps.-John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Dormition* 15, 17. [Michel van Esbroeck, "Une homélie arménienne sur la dormition attribuée à Chrysostome," *OC* 74 (1990): 199–233, 218–219 (Arm) and 231–232 (Fr)]. On the sixth century date, see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 69–70; Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption*, 334–337.

30 Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 71, 132–140. See also Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption*, 315–316.

31 Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 108, 117–118 [Michel van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur: Vie de la Vierge*, 2 vols. CSCO 478–479. *Scriptores Iberici* 21–22 (Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 138–140, 150–152 (Geor) and 94, 102–103 (Fr); trans. Stephen J. Shoemaker, ed., *Maximus the Confessor, The Life of the Virgin: Translated, with an Introduction and Notes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 134–135, 141–142.]

and John of Damascus' "Euthymiac History."³² Nevertheless, this *Life of the Virgin* also does not link the garments discovered through the intervention of the late apostle with Constantinople's relics. This achievement seems to belong to the *Euthymiac History*.

How, then, does our Ps.-Ps.-Dionysiac letter fit into this broader tradition? It shares with what appear to be the earliest witnesses the absence of any connection with Constantinople's relics. Likewise, it joins the homily attributed to Basil and the earliest *Life of the Virgin* in linking the late apostle tradition with the gathering of the apostles in *On the Divine Names* 3.2. Yet in contrast to all of the other late apostle traditions that I have seen, this one fails entirely to mention the discovery of any clothing whatsoever. The reopening of her tomb three days after her burial serves merely to witness to the miraculous removal of her body from this world following its interment. Could it be then that the absence of this element might indicate a particularly ancient version of the late apostle tradition? Perhaps, but at the same time these relics may have been elided for liturgical efficiency in a context where devotion to Constantinople's Marian relics was, for whatever reason, not particularly vigorous.

One of the most peculiar elements of this apocryphon is its elaboration on the miraculous assembly of the apostles with the comment, "where there is decomposition of the flesh, there also the eagles will gather." Certainly, there is nothing surprising in likening the apostles to eagles, but identifying the body of the Virgin, to which they were gathered, as decomposing flesh is nothing short of shocking. Might this jarring comparison suggest a relatively early composition, sometime before ideas of the immaculate purity of the Virgin's flesh gained widespread currency in Christian discourse? Possibly, but that would seemingly require a very early date. Already by the later second century we see in the *Protevangelium of James* that the idea of her unique physical purity had come into circulation. Instead, we should probably view the passage as simply an awkward comparison introduced out of a desire to reference, somewhat obliquely, the related saying of Jesus: "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather" (Matt 24:28). Why the apostles were made into eagles in the adaptation of this saying while the Virgin's body became decaying flesh is certainly a mystery. In any case, without any question this narrative must have

32 See most recently Stephen J. Shoemaker, "The (Ps?-)Maximus *Life of the Virgin* and the Marian Literature of Middle Byzantium," *JTS* 67 (2016): 115–142. See also Stephen J. Shoemaker, "The Georgian *Life of the Virgin* attributed to Maximus the Confessor: Its Authenticity(?) and Importance," in Alexey Muraviev and Basil Lourié, eds., *Mémorial R.P. Michel van Esbroeck, s.J.*, *Scrinium* 2 (St. Petersburg: Vizantinorossika, 2006), 307–328; idem, "The Cult of Fashion"; idem, (Ps?-)Maximus the Confessor, *The Life of the Virgin*.

been produced after the composition of the *Dionysian Corpus* itself. Thus, it was probably written sometime after 550, and we cannot identify a terminus ad quem with any certainty, other than the date of its earliest manuscript (1194).³³

Appendix: The Letter of Dionysius the Areopagite, the First Bishop of the City of the Athenians, Which He Wrote in Response to the Letter of Titus, the Bishop of Crete, Regarding the Dormition of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary³⁴

Let it be known to your brotherliness, O noble Titus, since at the time when the Theotokos, longing with spiritual love, was preparing to go forth from this world and the things of the world, that is, from the earthly Jerusalem, and to enter into the tabernacle of light of the celestial Jerusalem, ever inseparable from us by death, according to the inner humanity, then the company of the holy apostles, according to a sign in the heavens, by the sublime will of God's command, immediately assembled in an instant from all the nations where they had been allotted to preach the gospel of salvation. They found themselves gathered together in unity to the truly holy things—as the saying goes, “where there is decomposition of the flesh, there also the eagles will gather” (cf. Matt 24:28; Luke 17:37)—embracing around the most exalted virginal body. So then at that time the twelve divinely learned, apostolic radiances assembled before it. As all the faithful peoples gathered around, and the holy hosts departed from them all, she reverently and swiftly raised up her most holy and unapproachable hands into the heights with intercession and prayers to God, gazing longingly at the one who was born from her, our God and her son. With great hope she offered as sweetly fragrant incense her all-holy soul into the hands of the Lord. And thus was she raised up to the angelic hosts with great adornment, like a flash of lightening, into the brilliant, everlasting glory of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Now then at that time, with weeping tears of lamentation more than hopeful gladness and joyful noise, the holy apostles and all the faithful crowd who had gathered around adorned the body that received God, which had lived above the ordinary law, according to the rites of the departed, with inspired singing, and were declaring the dwelling place of God with flowery discourse, as was

33 Frédéric Macler, *Catalogue des manuscrits arméniens et géorgiens de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1908), 48–54.

34 Again I thank Prof. Sergio La Porta for looking over my translation and suggesting a number of significant improvements.

appropriate for the circumstances. And singing psalms, the apostles, strengthened by God, raised up with their arms the truly most holy body, the mother of Light and treasure, the source of incorruptible life for humankind. And as a sign for all, the Savior suddenly descended from heaven and inflamed the one tempered by God with sparks of fire. They laid her in the place called Gethsemane, listening for three days to the angelic voices singing psalms over the most holy burial, and then the singing stopped.

Therefore, in the faithfulness of these deeds, a certain one of them, the holy apostles, was found to be missing at the time of their assembly. He came later and persuaded the apostles to show him with his own eyes the impregnable treasury, the sublime body of the most blessed Virgin, obliging them then to fulfill their brother's wish. When they opened the tomb, they found it empty and devoid of the holy body. Then they understood the meaning of this: that when the angels stopped singing the psalms, the holy body had in fact been transferred, supernaturally raised up by the fiery host to a venerable and luminous place of glory, which he alone knows who is the God of wonders, completely hidden from the sensible world. To him be glory unto the ages, Amen.

The “Platonic” Character of Gregory of Nyssa’s Psychology: The Old Canon

Michel René Barnes

1 Scholarly Characterizations of Gregory’s Thought

For more than a hundred years Gregory of Nyssa’s psychology has been the object of much academic attention. Gregory’s general anthropology has been regarded not only the cornerstone of his distinctive soteriology, but also the foundation of his emphasis on personal union with God, that is, his mysticism. The majority of scholars who have treated Gregory’s psychology in particular have been concerned with the sources of that psychology.¹ This concern has not been simply to identify precedents or parallels to Gregory’s thought: the question of philosophical influence upon Gregory’s psychology has been the primary arena for describing the fundamental character of Gregory’s relationship to pagan philosophy overall. The burden of this description has been determining whether Gregory’s doctrines, and whether the theological synthesis he helped author, was “corrupted” by the philosophy he had obviously assimilated. The foundational scholarly questions of Gregory at the beginning of the twentieth century were *To what extent was Gregory’s anthropology Platonic?* and *If Gregory’s anthropology is substantially Christian, what does he give us to work with?* Those questions—with their presuppositions and motives—remain alive today in scholarship on Gregory.

One method has remained constant in all the influential modern accounts of Gregory’s psychology: to characterize or judge the relationship between Gregory’s Christian theology with the philosophy of his day by identifying his pos-

1 Recent scholarship on Gregory of Nyssa’s status as a “Platonist” would include: Enrico Peroli, *Il Platonismo e l’antropologia filosofica di Gregorio di Nissa* (Rome: Vita e Pensiero, 1993); Álvaro César Pestana, “Platao e Gregorio de Nissa,” *Letras Clássicas* 2 (1998): 83–114; John M. Rist, “On the Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa,” *Hermathena* 169 (2000): 129–152; Hubertus Drobner, “Gregory of Nyssa as Philosopher: De Anima et Resurrectione and De Hominis Opificio,” *Dionysius* 17 (2000): 69–101; Maciej Manikowski, “Gregory of Nyssa and the Neoplatonic Philosophical Tradition,” in Agnieszka Kijewska, ed., *Being Or Good?: Metamorphoses of Neoplatonism* (Lubin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2004), 185–197.

sible philosophical sources.² Karl Gronau's suggestion that Gregory was dependent upon Posidonius³ was interpreted by Harold Cherniss⁴ as distancing Gregory from his fundamental Platonism, a Platonism which frequently seemed to Cherniss to take precedence over Gregory's Christianity. Cherniss rejected Gronau's arguments completely.⁵ For Cherniss, the evidence of Plato's near monopoly on Gregory's use of philosophy was a testimony to Gregory's funda-

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- 2 I call these scholars the "Old Canon" because they were the generation of scholars who established scholarship in America on Gregory of Nyssa. They share a common task: to measure Gregory as a philosopher—or as a "classicist" (not unlike themselves). Their principal concern was to determine the identity of Gregory's philosophical sources—which they conceived to be either Platonic, Stoic, or "Posidonian." From a contemporary perspective, the content they attributed to each philosophical source, the identities of possible sources, as well as their methodologies, are no longer credible as scholarly conclusions. Nonetheless, these scholars, working in reputable American universities, made Gregory into a bona fide subject of academic study, and provided the foundation for the explosion of American scholarship on Gregory in the nineteen fifties and sixties.
- 3 Karl Gronau, *Poseidonios und die Jüdisch-Christliche Genesisexegese* (Berlin: Teubner, 1914).
- 4 Harold Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, University of California Papers in Classical Philology 11 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930; reprint: Berkeley: Franklin, 1970).
- 5 The refutation of the claim by Gronau that Gregory was influenced by Posidonius is usually considered to be one of Cherniss' accomplishments in his book on Gregory. However, if one reads Cherniss' work in the light of articles published in the twenties by his director, Roger Jones, Cherniss' own arguments against Gronau take on a different character. Cherniss himself refers to the importance of Jones' work in the introduction to his bibliography, but few scholars seem to have pursued the extent of that influence. Jones wrote three articles taking issue with Gronau's thesis: the first was a review of Gronau's *Poseidonios* book, published in *Classical Philology* 12 (1917): 107–110. Jones is quite critical of Gronau's methods and conclusions: concepts which Gronau thinks are Posidonian Jones finds to be at best generally Stoic, if not simple commonplace. In the course of refuting Gronau Jones offers his own opinions on influences on Gregory: e.g., that Gregory's belief that the nervous system is the seat of the mind is from Xenocrates (p. 109). In "Posidonius and Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* i.17–81," *Classical Philology* 13 (1923): 202–228, Jones attacks the arguments by several scholars (including Gronau) that Cicero's work gives us Posidonian doctrine; Gronau had used parallels between Gregory's *On the Soul and Resurrection* and Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* to show the Posidonian origins of Gregory's doctrines. Finally, Jones wrote "Posidonius and the Flight of the Mind Through the Universe," *Classical Philology* 21 (1926): 97–113. This is Jones' most interesting piece, published four years before Cherniss' book. Again the intention is to refute Gronau's claim that a theme or concept is Posidonian: this time it is the doctrine that the mind is free (or uniquely able) to range through the universe. The connection to Gregory in both Jones' and Gronau's minds is given in the first paragraph of Jones' article: Gronau claims that Gregory's found "support for his theory that the soul remains in all the dispersed elements of the body after death in the fact *that even in this life thought is able to view the heavens and [mentally] reach*" the ends of the universe (p. 97). This latter doctrine, which I have italicized, Gronau claims is Posidonius'. Jones proves that the doctrine is so widespread by Gregory's time that no one source could be found, or expected (p. 98).

mental character as a Platonist. John Cavarnos⁶ did not set Gregory's Platonism up in opposition to his Christianity, but he agreed that Gregory's assimilation of Platonism was complete. Both Hans Urs von Balthasar⁷ and Jean Daniélou⁸ argued against the description of Gregory as a captive to philosophy—whether this charge was offered by Cherniss or Harnack—by offering alternate sources for Gregory's philosophical language (and by containing that influence at the level of language). Von Balthasar and Daniélou emphasized Gregory's use of Stoic and Neoplatonic sources; Daniélou, in particular, explicitly accepted the hypothesis of some Posidonian influence on Gregory within the broader context of a transformed Platonism.⁹ By Daniélou's account, Gregory transformed philosophy by allegorizing it: turning philosophical concepts into metaphors as much as all else in creation was, properly understood, transparent to the Divine.¹⁰

The "Ressourcement" reading of Gregory that Daniélou exemplifies is, I believe, the most widely known and widely influential reading of Gregory: Gregory's appropriation of philosophical sources constituted a "transformation" of the inherent logic of the pagan philosophy, so that while "influence" remains (e.g., in the form of vocabulary) the substance of the Pagan logic has been replaced by a truly Scriptural, truly faith-centered, Christian existential. There are clear scholarly exceptions today to this broad judgment, and the grounds for finding Gregory's "transformation" of his Pagan terminology

6 John Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory of Nyssa* (Ph.D. diss; Harvard University, 1947). While this dissertation remains unpublished in its original form, Cavarnos has published portions of it in other forms. I will be working from Cavarnos' dissertation, but since large portions of the dissertation appear in this last article, I will include the parallel references in this article in parenthesis where possible. An article entitled "Gregory of Nyssa on the Nature of the Soul," appeared in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 1 (1955): 133–141. Cavarnos also published a part of the dissertation as a pamphlet: *St Gregory of Nyssa on the Origin and Destiny of the Soul* (Belmont: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1956); and an extract from the dissertation formed the basis for Cavarnos' paper on "The Relation of Body and Soul in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa," in Heinrich Dörrie, ed., *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 61–78.

7 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Présence et pensée: essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1942), 63–64.

8 Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Aubier, Éditions Montaigne, 1944), 8 and 63–66.

9 Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 67.

10 As Daniélou (*Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 9) put it: "On peut dire, en somme, que Grégoire a tout allégorisé, même la philosophie. Le langage platonicien, surtout celui des mythes, lui offre, en concurrence avec la Bible, un trésor d'expressions parlantes pour ses auditeurs et par lesquelles il décrit le mystère unique dont il parle, de la transformation de l'âme en Jésus-Christ."

varies greatly among contemporary scholarship. In this article my purpose is to reveal the original English-language (American) argument over Gregory's sources and to give an account of how Gregory's "Platonism" was established as a scholarly fact.¹¹ The English-language studies devoted, on the one hand, to Gregory's use of philosophy (Cherniss), and, on the other, to Gregory's psychology (Cavarnos), were emphatic about Gregory's debt to Plato. Under these circumstances, one important, lasting effect of Cherniss' treatment of Gregory has been to enshrine Platonism as Gregory's philosophical language of choice. Cherniss' description of Gregory's Platonic enthusiasm has passed into scholarly literature, but, as I will show, its effect has typically been to lower the standards of the criteria by which Gregory is shown to be a Platonist. My purpose in this article is to show the limitations in these previous accounts of Gregory's psychology, and to provide a different description of the character of that psychology and its relationship to his theology.

2 Cherniss' Methodology

The first thing to be noticed about Cherniss' argument for Plato's influence on Gregory is that it is built upon finding similarities between doctrines in a Platonic dialogue and specific doctrines given by Gregory in, usually, *On the Resurrection and the Soul*, the *Canonical Epistle*, and *On the Making of Man*. Cherniss searches for Plato's influence by laying a text by Plato beside a text by Gregory, and he appears to believe that Gregory read Plato with equal directness and simplicity.¹² There is no discussion of the question of either mediating

11 It is important to note that the most substantial treatment during the twentieth century of Gregory's Christianized Platonism, Daniélou's *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, has never been translated into English. Some scholars undoubtedly read the French edition; some others may have received Daniélou's scholarship through intermediary sources; and perhaps a few scholars know the Anglophone scholarly tradition and project it onto what, it is assumed, were Daniélou's conclusions. In practice, how much American scholarship on Gregory's philosophy depended not upon the scarcely available Continental arguments but upon a potentially independent English-language account?

12 One may compare this neglect of context with, for example, Christopher Stead's "The Platonism of Arius," *JTS* 15 (1964): 16–31. The very title of Stead's article invites methodological comparison with Cherniss' *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, as does the fact that both Stead and Cherniss are scholars trained in philosophy but writing on theological authors of the patristic period. Stead begins his article with this caveat: "[W]e must not pose this alternative: was Arius influenced mainly by Plato or by Aristotle? Among philosophers whom Christians could tolerate, the choice lay between Platonists who accepted, and Platonists who denounced, the contribution of Aristotle or of the Stoics" (Stead, "The Pla-

sources or interpretations between Plato and Gregory, and there is no substantial mention of any possible source other than the Platonic dialogue themselves.¹³ Potential mediating sources such as handbooks are mentioned primarily in a pejorative fashion.¹⁴ When Cherniss argues for Gregory's Platonism, he means nothing less than Gregory's direct knowledge of Plato's texts (in their entirety) and the direct influence of those texts upon Gregory's philosophy.¹⁵

For example, Cherniss offers Gregory's understanding of the soul's ὄρμη or μέρη as a proof that Gregory's psychology was Platonist, and that he had developed his own understanding of Plato by his own reading of the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*, independent of any handbooks and by reading the originals.¹⁶ Gregory's "constant amalgamation" of the ideas in these two dialogues is important evidence that Gregory's psychology was developed through a direct reading of Plato.¹⁷ Cherniss maintains the originality of Gregory's exegesis of Plato even though he admits that the same sense of ὄρμη and μέρη appears in Philo.¹⁸

Cherniss also offers Albinus as an example of how a "student of Plato could" (meaning *would*) "associate the two ideas, the tripartition of the soul and its indivisibility."¹⁹ Since Cherniss never acknowledges the possibility of alternative sources for Albinus he never deals with the possibility that Albinus' asso-

tonism of Arius," 17). Cherniss has no such hesitation: his work presumes the possibility of distinguishing alternative influences; ostensibly the alternatives are Plato or Posidonius, but in fact Cherniss imagines each philosophical school as clear and distinct entities.

- 13 This is Cherniss' attitude towards all Platonic doctrines in Gregory, though Gregory's psychology seems to receive most of the comments to the effect that it is safest to assume that Gregory acquired his notions from Plato directly.
- 14 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 15 and 18.
- 15 Gerard Watson comments on the question of Gregory's knowledge and use of Plato, and on Cherniss' opinion of the same, in his "Gregory of Nyssa's Use of Philosophy," "[G]regory's quotation of Plato even in non-philosophical passages, as Cherniss says [in his book, p. 67], 'establishes a basis for belief that he knew Plato accurately enough to quote him or imitate him without recourse to the writing of Plato himself or to hand-books.'" Watson, "Gregory of Nyssa's Use of Philosophy," 105. In the footnote to this passage Watson adds ("Gregory of Nyssa's Use of Philosophy," 112): "Not everyone would agree with Cherniss on this, but I myself am convinced of the rightness of his view." Watson continues: "That [Gregory's philosophical language] was predominantly Platonist is, I think, hardly controvertible. That it was dependent more particularly on Porphyry is something I am inclined to believe" (Watson, "Gregory of Nyssa's Use of Philosophy," 111–112). This is a much more balanced judgment than Watson's first reference to Cherniss. It is also a more balanced judgment of Gregory's Platonic sources than one can find anywhere in Cherniss, who has nothing comparable to the suggestion that Gregory depended on Porphyry.
- 16 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 20–21.
- 17 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 21.
- 18 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 21.
- 19 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 16.

ciation of the indivisibility of the soul with its tripartition was either the result of influences from other philosophical traditions (e.g., Aristotelian),²⁰ or that the “association” was one of many Platonic options available to a Platonist of the third century C.E. One can refer to Galen, as I will do so in detail shortly, as a Platonist who believed that the point of Plato’s doctrine of the soul’s tripartition is precisely its divisibility.²¹

Cherniss confidently speaks of Platonism in the fourth century, Gregory’s era, as though it were a clear and distinct single entity. No awareness is shown of multiple Platonisms (or multiple Aristotelianisms, for that matter). Cherniss does refer to Albinus,²² as I have just noted, and also to Plotinus.²³ In both cases

20 For example, Alexander of Aprosias shows particular sensitivity for the unity of the soul: “Those distinctions which we do make with regard to soul, based as they are on the differences we discover among these powers, should not be conceived as an attempted to divide the soul into parts that can be separated and joined together again.” *On the Soul*, 1.69:30, Athanasios P. Fotinis, ed., *The De Anima of Alexander of Aphrodisias* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press of America, 1979), 46.

21 Cherniss acknowledges that he has “not touched upon” Gregory’s medical sources. He left this material aside because he felt a superficial survey would be worthless and a detailed survey was outside the parameters of his work at hand. No one can fault a scholar for working within the institutional limits of academic work (again I am assuming that this was his doctoral dissertation). But Cherniss also feels that knowing the sources of Gregory’s medical knowledge “could not even feebly enlighten” his project. It is odd, however, that an alternative Platonic understanding of tripartition, namely Galen’s, should be lost under a rubric of “the useless matter of medical sources.” As I shall discuss below, one source for criticism of both Cherniss’ account of Platonism in the fourth century CE and his interpretation of Gregory’s psychology and anthropology is precisely through knowledge of the medical tradition. (This is, in fact, a large part of Gerhardt Ladner’s argument against Cherniss.) I will be treating Galen’s account of Plato’s psychology below. Cavarnos mentions Gregory’s medical language (with the implication that this use sets him apart from Plato), but uses the fact of this language only for two limited purposes: first, to provide a context for introducing Nemesius into the discussion; and second, to mention Gregory’s use, in the *Canonical Epistle*, of a medical allegory in his discussion of the passions and their “treatment.” Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory*, 61–63 (= “The Relation of Body and Soul,” 71–72).

22 Alternately, others might consider Albinus to be instead an example of the degree to which the Platonism of the era absorbed Aristotelianism. Cherniss’ unequivocal use of Albinus (fl. 149–157 CE) as an example of Platonism pure and simple again reflects his work under Roger Jones, who was actively engaged in a highly visible disagreement with scholars such as R.E. Witt over the origins of Middle Platonic theology. See Reginald Eldred Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 71–75 and 125, note 2. Witt’s is a clear example of the opinion that Albinus’ doctrines show a marked Aristotelian character: see *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism*, 115–126. A more recent account of the relationship of Albinus’ philosophy to both Plato and Aristotle may be found in John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 267–305, especially 276–280.

23 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 24.

he refers to these philosophers to show the unity of Platonic philosophy in Gregory's era; indeed, he uses quotations from both philosophers to prove the obvious, virtually intuitive, content of Platonic doctrine. Albinus says that the tripartition of the soul indicates its indivisibility just as Cherniss says it does; Plotinus thought that the soul is not in the body because the immaterial is not contained by the material, just like Gregory. Cherniss assumes that both these doctrines are unequivocally available in Plato.²⁴

Cherniss continuously argues against any diminution of Plato's influence on Gregory, yet his description of Gregory's relationship to Plato is more than that of primary source for a philosophical language to be laid parallel to the scriptural account of God and being.²⁵ Cherniss repeatedly describes Gregory's relationship to Plato's philosophy in terms of an attachment to, or internalization of, Platonism. For example, Cherniss speaks of Gregory "unconsciously" solving the Platonic problem of the tension between the soul's unity and its trichotomy.²⁶ Gregory's psychology is not only essentially Platonic, "more, his use of it is Platonic."²⁷ In his conclusion Cherniss indulges in the sort of biographical speculation he will later chide scholars for:²⁸ Gregory's conflicted relationships with Christianity and Platonism are dramatized in his own life by the disagreement between his brother Basil and his uncle. Gregory tried to resolve that conflict by forging letters of reconciliation between the two. This, Cherniss suggests, is also how Gregory tried to solve the conflict he felt between Christianity and Platonism.²⁹ The proof-case is Gregory's attitude to the doctrine of the resurrection. Cherniss says of Gregory:

He has so far accepted and insisted upon the pure immateriality of the world of the resurrection that it is impossible for him to explain a physi-

24 The same assumption and attitude towards Gregory's Platonism appears in Cavarnos. There are no references to mediating sources, and little mention of any Christian influences on Gregory.

25 This, essentially, is Gerard Watson's account of Gregory relationship to philosophy in "Gregory of Nyssa's Use of Philosophy," 111. Watson argues for the importance of being to Gregory as a religious theme, and I agree with him. Yet Watson's argument is more damaging—if one were to take the problematic of hellenization seriously—to Gregory than Watson acknowledges. This fundamental concern for being is just what makes Gregory a philosopher (*pace* Stead's judgment in "Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa," in Dörrie et al., eds., *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, 107–125).

26 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 15.

27 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 15.

28 Cherniss, "The Biographical Fashion in Literary Criticism," in Leonardo Taran, ed., *Selected Papers* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 1–13.

29 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 63.

cal resurrection, while to accept the latter on faith means the damnation of his previous argument. But he does accept the dogma and even tries to account for it, although his account comes tottering to the gulf of complete denial.³⁰

Cherniss' conclusion of the fundamentally Platonic character of Gregory's thought passed into the next generation of scholars, where its effect was to lower the standards of criteria by which Gregory is shown to be a Platonist. Werner Jaeger, for example, describes Gregory's supposed idiosyncrasy of postponing full treatment of a problem to a later treatise as a "Platonic" trait.

This [preference for postponement] is the Platonic way, and Platonic was the training of [Gregory's] mind. How often had Plato later expanded a problem briefly touched on in an earlier dialogue!³¹

Jaeger must mean no more than that Plato did not write philosophy in the same systematic fashion as Aristotle since his comment makes sense only in the context of a highly stylized comparison of Aristotle and Plato. One can add that the Neoplatonist Plotinus (c. 204–270) did not write in the same fashion as Aristotle, but the middle Platonist Galen (c. 129–210) wrote systematically, and the Neoplatonist Proclus (c. 411–485) wrote very systematically indeed.³² Jaeger is certainly suggesting the association of Aristotle with dialectic in some Christian literature since he follows the comment on Gregory's and Plato's preference for postponement with a reference to Gregory's criticism of "the technological and formalistic character of Aristotle's method."³³ Furthermore, whatever criticism of Aristotle one may find in Gregory, Jaeger's comment finally depends upon the early twentieth century scholarly tendency to use Plato and Aristotle as contrasting paradigms of opposed philosophical world-views.

A second, more egregious, example of the scholarly tendency to offer trivial "proofs" of Gregory's "Platonism" is found in the work of Cavarnos, whose doc-

30 Ibid., 62.

31 Werner Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), 30.

32 Galen offers a four-part summary of the different philosophical methods he finds in use in his time. He lists them in the order of their truth-value: first, true science, exemplified by the works of Hippocrates, Plato (and Galen himself); second, dialectic, which Galen associates primarily with Aristotle but also with Posidonius; third is rhetoric, which is virtually useless; and finally, sophistry, which is all lies. See *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, 11.3.8–11, 1:111.

33 See Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Literature*, 31, note 1.

torate was directed by Werner Jaeger.³⁴ Cavarnos consistently emphasizes Gregory's debt to Plato and yet the features of Gregory's thought which Cavarnos calls "Platonic" are all general in nature. Cavarnos finds Plato's distinctive influence in most of Gregory's thought, but especially in his psychology. For example:³⁵ (a) "The Platonic notion that in man there are two radically different principles, the material and immaterial, the body and the soul, which interact, left its permanent mark on Gregory";³⁶ (b) "Gregory, like Plato, considers the soul indivisible, and again, like Plato, accepts the classical tripartite division of the soul";³⁷ and (c) "For Gregory, as for Plato, the faculties of the soul have their proper functions"³⁸

A related example of Cavarnos' problematic attitude towards the role of philosophy in Gregory's theology is his description of the role Gregory's psychology played in the development of Christian doctrine. Cavarnos believes that Gregory turned to the subject of psychology because Gregory "felt the need" for the Church "to develop a systematic psychology."³⁹ A systematic psychology was necessary, he says, if Christianity was to explain "the mystery of life." The

34 Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory of Nyssa*. See footnote five for a literary history of Cavarnos' writings. For several decades Cavarnos' scholarship enjoyed a status as the "anglophone writing on Gregory's psychology," but his work has been overlooked in recent scholarship. Of the following recent monographs on Gregory's psychology or anthropology, only Lucian Turcescu, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) cites both Cherniss and Cavarnos; Johannes Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa*, svC 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), Warren Smith, *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2004), and Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) refer to Cherniss but not to Cavarnos.

35 The error of identifying the Platonic doctrine of the soul with these traits exclusively can be indicated by recourse to (among other works) John Dillon's *The Middle Platonists*: on pp. 144ff. Dillon treats Philo's basic doctrine of soul; on pp. 194ff. he does the same for Plutarch; and on pp. 290ff., he treats Albinus' doctrine of soul. Dillon makes clear that while all these psychologies are "Platonic," none of them are exactly the same. A secondary source that would have been available to Cherniss and to Cavarnos in which could have brought some caution to Cavarnos' list of "Platonic" traits is J.L. Stock's "Plato and the Tripartite Soul," *Mind* 24 (1915): 207–221. Stock presents a consistent account of alternative (i.e., Pythagorean) sources for most of the doctrines Cavarnos equates with Platonism.

36 Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory of Nyssa*, 63.

37 Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory of Nyssa*, 64 (= "The Relation of Body and Soul," 73). Cavarnos is not clear whether Plato *accepts* a tripartite division of the soul, or whether he *invented* it.

38 Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory of Nyssa*, 63, where, in note 213, Cavarnos cites the entire *Republic* dialogue as a proof for this doctrine in Plato (= "The Relation of Body and Soul," 73, note 63).

39 Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory of Nyssa*, 1.

proper treatment of psychology had been “delayed so long” because it was a difficult subject that involved extensive knowledge in many fields (Cavarnos mentions theology, philosophy and medicine) as well as “practical experience and keen observation.”⁴⁰ Apparently no Christian had these qualities before Gregory; Tertullian’s *On the Soul* does not even warrant an honorable mention (much less the writings of Clement of Alexandria).

3 Gregory’s Doctrine of a Unified Soul and the Allegorical Reading of the *Phaedrus*

Cherniss’ description of Plato’s psychology emphasizes the unity of the soul: he criticizes Gronau for an insufficient appreciation of the reality of the unity Plato attributes to the soul, namely, that it is “an indissoluble unit.”⁴¹ Cherniss buttresses Plato’s description at *Republic* (611 B) by turning to the *Phaedo* (78 B ff.): there “Plato definitely shows that he bases his belief of the immortality of the soul upon the fact that it is uncompounded. Moreover, even when Plato speaks of the soul as divided into parts, that is when he speaks of an appetitive and a passionate soul, he does not forget to insist that only the reasonable part is immortal and divine.”⁴²

Cherniss frequently refers to Gregory’s use of the chariot image of the soul from the *Phaedrus* in his positive argument for Gregory’s appropriation of Plato’s doctrine of the unitary soul. These references require some comment since Gregory’s use of this image has become a much-used shorthand proof for the Platonic nature of Gregory’s psychology, and the confidence to make such claims seems to derive from Cherniss’ comments to this effect. Cherniss remarks that Gregory uses the *Phaedrus* myth often, sometimes altering it to suit a passage of Scripture he is explaining.⁴³ From this frequent use and

40 Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory of Nyssa*, 2.

41 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 13.

42 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 13. A similar emphasis on the unity of soul in Gregory’s Platonic psychology occurs in Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory*, 23. Cavarnos’ argument in “The Relation of Body and Soul,” is somewhat different than the one he emphasized in the dissertation: in the later article Cavarnos focuses, p. 65, on Gregory’s doctrine of the co-creation of body and soul as an indicator of the partlessness of the soul.

43 Cavarnos is more nuanced about Gregory’s use of this “simile;” he says, for example, “The use Gregory makes of this simile at times is by no means Platonic, but is altered in such a way as to explain some principle he wishes to illustrate vividly, even if that means the distortion of the original figure.” Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory*, 60 (= “The Relation

free alteration, in particular from one instance of the image in *Life of Moses*, Cherniss again argues that Gregory had read Plato's dialogue without benefit of "the interpretations of Stoics or Academics."⁴⁴ It may indeed be the case that Gregory had read the *Phaedrus* in its entirety, but Gregory's penchant for the myth of the Chariot does not prove it.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Gregory's (or Macrina's) enthusiasm for the myth is not as univocal as Cherniss would have it: in *On the Soul and Resurrection* Macrina specifically rejects the Chariot myth as the proper solution to the problem of the passions.⁴⁶ Cherniss is silent about this passage.

It gradually becomes clear in *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa* that the core of Cherniss' argument for Gregory's direct appropriation of Plato's psychology of the unitary soul is Gregory's use of the *Phaedrus* myth. In Cherniss' account the myth is Plato's central means of explaining the unity of the soul in the face of the experience of its parts. Plato does this in the myth not so much through the characterizations of the charioteer and the two horses but by the fact that the soul's partition is described allegorically, and no more than this.⁴⁷ Allegory, in this case, means that Plato does not actually recognize the real existence of these parts in the soul, and that he does not mean to attribute real existence to these parts.⁴⁸ Gregory's understanding that the myth is "allegorical" is con-

of Body and Soul," 71.) On the other hand, Cavarnos, like Cherniss, considers the Chariot story to be Plato's premier account of the tripartite soul, and he prefers it to accounts in the *Republic* or *Timaeus*.

- 44 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 15. Cherniss makes this point again on p. 18.
- 45 Daniélou remarks on Gregory's use of the Chariot myth, but he sees Gregory's use of it to be heavily adapted through the injection of scriptural images. Furthermore, Daniélou thinks that Gregory is following Philo on the use and allegoricalization of this particular myth. See *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 70. Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 15, recognizes the Philonic material only as "the queer perversion of the myth."
- 46 M 49C, English is in volume V:439, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Second Series (hereafter cited as NPNF 2).
- 47 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 13 and 16.
- 48 Daniélou also speaks of Gregory's allegorical interpretation of the myth: indeed, he emphasizes Gregory's habit of allegorizing everything, for this is Gregory's specific Christian genius for him: "On peut dire, en somme, que Grégoire a tout allégorisé, même la philosophie." Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 9. Cherniss thinks that this allegorizing is quintessentially Platonic of Gregory. Cherniss' emphasis on allegory as the definitive Platonic reading of Plato, coupled with Daniélou's obvious enthusiasm for allegory as a method, leads one to wonder whether Cherniss and Daniélou were reacting against either an alternative description of Platonism among their contemporaries (i.e., a literalist reading of Plato), or against ancient interpretations of Plato that were non-allegorical and literalist (e.g., Galen). One is also struck by the total lack of consideration of Origen as a more likely source for any enthusiasm on Gregory's part for allegorical read-

nected, by this account, to his acquaintance and appreciation of those passages where Plato says, apparently without allegory, “that the soul is an indissoluble unit.”⁴⁹ This dual emphasis on allegory as preferred method and the *Phaedrus* as preferred source (for Plato’s psychology) seems designed to support the contention that Plato taught, unequivocally, a unified soul. The rather literal organ (if not parts) language of the *Timaeus*, which might support the idea that Plato taught real divisions in the soul (as Galen thought he did, based on this text), is avoided in favor of an account which is already allegorized—the myth of the Chariot.⁵⁰

Cherniss’ argument from the *Phaedrus* then has two parts: first, that it is Platonic (i.e., Plato’s own unique doctrine) to feel the tension between the unity of the soul and the trichotomus divisions of the soul; and second, Plato resolved this tension by considering the reality of the divisions to be secondary to the reality of the unity. Cherniss’ peculiar judgment that only Plato (and readers of Plato) felt the tension between the soul’s unity and its trichotomus divisions⁵¹ turns into another proof for Gregory’s Platonic psychology in Cavaros’ account: “Gregory, like Plato, considers the soul indivisible, and again, like Plato, accepts the classical tripartite division of the soul.”⁵² Cherniss

ing. Indeed, in the realm of psychology, Gregory’s interpretations are, when compared to Origen’s, considerably more literal (e.g., the role of “animals” as a psychological category).

49 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 13.

50 We may compare Cherniss’ description of what was Platonic in Gregory’s time with Galen’s use of the Chariot myth. Galen faithfully and regularly uses the image of the charioteer from the *Phaedrus* to illustrate the relationship of the three parts in the soul. However, he says that it is not the best image of the soul that Plato offered: Galen prefers Plato’s likening the appetites to a many-headed beast, the temper to a lion, and the rational to a man from *Republic* IX 590A9 and 588C7. See *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* VI 2, 4. 11:369. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, 80, does not distinguish the psychology of the *Phaedrus* from that of the *Republic*, and he refers to the preference of Synesius for this image of the multi-headed beast, relating it to Romans 8:23, on the interior man versus the law of the body’s members. Galen prefers these similes because they convey the radical difference, indeed the essential difference in kind, between each of the three forms, which the Charioteer and two horses images misses. Galen either missed or purposefully lost the second hierarchy—one driver, two horses—contained in the *Phaedrus*’ images. A similar neglect of the rational-irrational dichotomy represented in the *Phaedrus* story, coupled with a preference for the *Republic* IX similes, can be found in Plotinus, *Ennead* I, 1, 7.

51 A similar sensitivity to tension between the soul’s unity and its trichotomus divisions can be found in Alexander of Aphrodisias (i.e., an “Aristotelian”).

52 “The Relation of Body and Soul,” 64. Cavaros’ statements in the article on the Platonic nature of the doctrine of the soul’s unity are actually more emphatic than those he makes in the dissertation: “Gregory, like Plato, desirous of stressing the immortality of the soul by pointing out its simple and uncompounded nature, insists strongly on the indivisibility of

and Cavarnos consider this interpretation of Plato's psychology self-evident. Galen's account of Plato's psychology provides a glaring example of a vigorous counter-interpretation of Plato, which by its very existence defeats Cherniss' assumption of the obvious content of Plato's doctrine on the unity of the soul. However, neither Cherniss nor Cavarnos looked to Galen as a witness to the psychology of the era.⁵³

4 Gregory and Argument from the Role of Δύναμις in Classical Psychologies

One of the important subjects in the controversy over the Platonic or Posidonian character of Gregory's psychology has been over the significance of the use of δύναμις in his psychology.⁵⁴ Δύναμις was used by Plato as a term for different cognitive faculties—i.e., the faculties which correspond to different kinds of knowing.⁵⁵ The term took on broader senses of a variety of psychological faculties in Aristotle, and from Aristotle these volitional-type senses of δύναμις enter (re-enter?) Platonism. Both Cherniss and Cavarnos have the same firm judgment on how δύναμις figures in Platonic psychology and thus how, if at all, Gregory's use of the term would be indicative of his relationship to Platonic psychology as a whole. In short, if the psychologies of Plato, Aristotle, Posidonius and the Stoics can each be distinguished by the different senses they give to

the soul." (p. 23). The assumption here is the same as the assumption in Cherniss: that it is exclusively Platonic to feel the tension between the unity of the soul and the trichotomous divisions of the soul. However, Cavarnos acknowledges Gregory's "inconsistency" on the matter of the soul's divisions more clearly than Cherniss does. See Cavarnos, *The Psychology of Gregory*, 26–27, 59, 65–66.

53 By contrast, see the attention to Galen in Gerhart Ladner "The Philosophical Anthropology of Saint Gregory of Nyssa," *DOP* 12 (1958), 61–94 at 69, 71, and 78.

54 One example of Gregory's use of δύναμις in his psychology may be found in *On the Making of Humanity* VI: "... not even in our own case are the *faculties* [δυνάμεις] which apprehend things numerous, although we are in touch with those things which affect our life in many ways by means of our senses; for there is one *faculty* [δύναμις], the implanted mind itself, which passes through each of the organs of sense and grasps the things beyond: this it is that, by means of the eyes, beholds what is seen; this it is that, by means of hearing, understands what is said; that is content with what is to our taste, and turns from what is unpleasant; that uses the hand for whatever it wills, taking hold or rejecting by its means, using the help of the organ for this purpose precisely as it thinks expedient." NPNF 2 V:391.

55 For an account of δύναμις in early Greek philosophy, see my *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

δύναμις then whatever use Gregory makes of the term indicates his philosophical orientation. Or so the argument runs in both Cherniss and Cavarinos. However, the methodological question that presents itself is whether the psychologies of each school do differ in clear and distinct ways of using δύναμις. What is at stake in such a question is determining whether Gregory's understanding of the soul accords with a Platonic "dualism" or a Christian "unity." (This is the antinomy that Cherniss works with, and however much scholarship may have developed since his time, the notion of a "Platonic dualism" over against a "Christian unity" in human psychology has endured among many scholars).

Galen understood Plato to have taught that the human soul had three parts [μέρη] or forms [εἶδη], which were each located in specific organs of the body. According to Galen, this is the psychology that Plato taught in Books IV and IX of the *Republic*, in the *Timaeus*, and in his other books, such as the *Phaedrus*. Galen suggests that Plato learned this psychology from the works of Hippocrates. Galen does not recognize this three-part psychology as Platonic except in the narrow sense that Plato taught it; the doctrines did not originate with Plato, and he was not the only person to teach them.⁵⁶ Plato's great virtue, in Galen's eyes, was to offer a scientific proof for this tripartite psychology in Book IV of the *Republic*, which Galen cites frequently and in some detail.⁵⁷

Galen's primary description of the soul is that it has three forms, but because each of these forms resides in a part of the body, that is, an organ, the description "three parts" is correct as well.

As Plato holds both that these forms are separated by their location in the body and that they differ very greatly in essence, he has good reason to call them both forms and parts.⁵⁸

56 We have no extant Hippocratic texts that contain this psychology of three parts or forms, but Galen never wavers from his belief that the psychology outlined above was taught by Hippocrates before Plato taught it. There have been scholarly arguments in the last hundred years for the Pythagorean origins of Plato's tripartite psychology: see, for example, Stock, "Plato and the Tripartite Soul," 210–215, where the argument is made that Plato depends upon a Pythagorean fable of the three lives. The original content of this fable seems to have been similar to modern fables like *The Three Little Pigs*, or *The Grasshopper and the Ant*. The political discovery in the *Republic* of the three fundamental psychic parts or functions shows its origins in the Pythagorean fable, except that in Plato's exegesis the three life-choices are interiorized as permanent dramas in the soul. However, contemporary scholarship has abandoned the Pythagorean fable premise.

57 This use of *Republic* IV as the source of Plato's psychology is traditional in the era. At one point Clement of Alexandria seems to be referring to this book as the *Περί Ψυχῆς* of Plato: see *Stromates* I: XV.

58 *On the Doctrines*, VI 2, 5, 1:369. Galen contrasts Plato's doctrines with Aristotle's and Posi-

According to Galen's report, Aristotle and Posidonius believe that at the level of οὐσία the soul is one, and that multiplicity begins only at the level of δυνάμεις (namely, there is one οὐσία with three δυνάμεις), a psychology which Galen regards as nothing like Plato's.⁵⁹ Though the attribution of the heart as the source for these powers is at least a physiological error, as we might call it, the fact that Aristotle and Posidonius attribute the cause of these powers to a single organ serves as an indication of the excessive unity Aristotle and Posidonius attribute to the human soul since for Galen each part is associated with a separate organ. In Galen's account, at the level of οὐσία the soul is three, since each of the three forms of the soul possesses a different essence.⁶⁰ Again, Galen's doctrine that each of these three forms has its origin in a separate organ is a physiological expression of the fundamental multiplicity of the human soul.⁶¹

Cherniss agrees that it was "Platonic fashion" to speak of parts of the soul, but he limits any such Platonic doctrine to "where the soul is being considered as embodied."⁶² This language of parts never intrudes upon the essential unity of the soul, however, although in all of Cherniss' treatment of Plato's psychology he never produces a quotation with the phrase μία οὐσία or μία φύσις (nor

donius', on the one hand, and Chrysippus', on the other. Of the first two he says: "[They] did not speak of forms or parts of the soul, but say that there are powers [δυνάμεις] of a single substance [οὐσία] which stems from the heart." Ibid., VI 2, 5, 2:369. Plato taught that: "[O]ur soul is not simple or uniform in substance [οὐσία] but composed of three parts, each with its own form and each having not one but several powers [δυνάμεις]." Ibid., IX 9, 22. 2:603.

59 If Cherniss were to have judged Aristotle and Posidonius by the description Galen gives of them, then Cherniss would have had to conclude that they teach a psychology that he normally describes as Platonic.

60 This point comes out clearly in Galen's description of the liver, which he believes is the site of the ἐπιθυμητικόν. Galen says: "For the present, let it be called a power, although we shall later demonstrate with more precision that the liver is the source of many powers, and it would be better to speak of a substance [οὐσία] of the soul, rather than a power, enclosed in each of the three internal organs." *On the Doctrines*, VI 3, 7. 2: 375.

61 I do not mean to deny that Galen had a legitimate neurological argument with Aristotle, and to a lesser extent with Posidonius, namely, their erroneous belief that the heart was the center of the nervous system and the seat of the rational function. (A good example of the Aristotelian doctrine of the heart as seat of the intellect may be found in Alexander's *On the Soul*, 2.11, Fotinis, *The De Anima of Alexander of Aphrodisias*, 53). I mean to suggest, rather, that for Galen this argument reflected issues other than simply the neurological errors of Aristotle and Posidonius. I must note, however, that while it is certainly true that Gregory is emphatic that the nervous system is the seat of the mind, when he speaks of those who believe that the heart is the seat he mentions only the Stoics Posidonius and Chrysippus, and not, as one would expect, Aristotle.

62 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 15.

does he evidently feel the need to do so). Cherniss' real argument with Posidonius, as he understands him, is not that Posidonius' teachings infringed upon the soul's unity (though they did do that) but that the unity is accomplished by leveling the soul's different natures into one kind of *part*: a power or faculty (*δύναμις*). If all the *parts* of the soul are powers, including the mind, then all the *parts* of the soul are equally susceptible to change as passion.⁶³ Both Cherniss and Cavaros are emphatic that Gregory never conceived of the soul as truly divided: in particular they deny that Gregory considered the two lower types of soul to be divisions in the intellectual soul, though what they gain by this denial is not clear, except to say that the intellectual soul suffers no change in its essential nature.⁶⁴ Cavaros says that "Gregory does not consider the two lower faculties parts of the soul."⁶⁵ Since Cavaros never considers the conceptual relationship between "faculties" and "parts" he never encounters the fact that, by definition, faculties are not parts.⁶⁶

The origin of the modern American scholarly engagement with the question of the philosophical character of Gregory's psychology begins with the argument Cherniss' director, Roger Jones, had with Gronau over the content of "Stoic psychology." The debate continues. Cherniss and Cavaros reflected

63 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 16. I italicize the word part(s) here to indicate that the use is artificial: Posidonius would not speak of "parts of the soul," his psychology is intended to deny the attribution of parts to the soul.

64 Cavaros, *The Psychology of Gregory*, 24 (= "The Relation of Body and Soul," 64).

65 Cavaros, *The Psychology of Gregory*, 59 (= "The Relation of Body and Soul," 71).

66 Furthermore, Gregory's divorcing of the three psychological distinctions in the soul from the three physical divisions of the body, as he does in *On the Nature of Man* M 44:241C–245D, NPNF 2 v:423–424, is another feature of his thought which is "unplatonistic," both in the sense of the Platonism of the dialogues and of school Platonism. Gregory treats these two causal models, the psychological and the physiological, as wholly separate, never once linking the divisions in the soul with the divisions in the body. After he offers a description of the soul as consisting of three faculties, the nutritive, the perceptive, and the rational at *On the Making of Man*, M 44 144D–176D, NPNF 2 v:393–403, he then offers a parallel description of living organisms (not souls) as also consisting of three faculties, the moist, the hot, and the mixing principle. These three faculties are each associated with an organ or physiological place: the moist is associated with the liver (and blood); the hot is associated with the heart (and respiration); and the mixing principle is associated with the nervous system. Though this latter trichotomy of powers is explicitly associated with specific organs Gregory is emphatic that the three powers of the soul, and in particular the highest faculty mind, are not to be associated with any one organ. Indeed, Gregory's separation of the distinctions in the soul from the divisions in the body distinguishes his psychology from Plato's; in particular this separation means that any use by Gregory of a parts vocabulary must not be taken as obvious proof that Gregory held a "Platonic" psychology.

upon the "identity" of Gregory's psychology within the scholarly context of a debate over the role of δύναμις in Stoic psychology, in particular on the question of whether δύναμις was used in Stoic accounts of the soul, and, if yes, when did this use begin.⁶⁷ Neoplatonists like Iamblichus (c. 242–327) and Simplicius (6th century) did indeed attribute the psychological use of δύναμις to the Stoics, but the new question in recent scholarship is how accurate are these after-the-fact reports of δύναμις as a *Stoic* psychological term? For example, did the Stoics themselves refer to the ἡγεμονικόν as a δύναμις? Did Stoics use the term δύναμις to name and number capacities in the mind? Gronau, Cherniss, and Cavaros (and many other scholars of the time) accepted the later Neoplatonic reports of Stoic psychology at face value, and answered "yes" to questions such as both of these. These scholars not only regarded the use of δύναμις to mean a mental faculty as being Stoic, they attributed the origin of such a use to the influence of one Stoic exclusively: Posidonius. Gronau, for example, took Gregory's psychological use of δύναμις as one proof of Posidonius' influence on Gregory. In his response, Cherniss did not dispute the connection between the psychological use of δύναμις and Posidonius; instead, Cherniss' refutation of Posidonian influence was to deny that Gregory used δύναμις as a significant term in his psychology.⁶⁸ What all these scholars agreed upon, however, was that where one sees the description of mental faculties as δυνάμεις one has found the influence of Posidonius.⁶⁹ However, this judgment is no longer tenable.

67 Posidonius clearly uses δύναμις in such a fashion, but the question is how representative of Stoicism was Posidonius' psychology? More generally put, the question is what is the relationship between Posidonius' philosophy and Stoicism as a whole? This latter question provides a running subtext in the recent *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* [Keimpe Algra et al., eds., *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)], where the question is engaged from a variety of viewpoints. See, for example, pp. 449, 490, 571, 772, 777, and the whole of the "Epilogue," by Michael Frede.

68 Cherniss acknowledges that Gregory uses δύναμις, but only in the limited senses Plato gives the term in some dialogues. See notes #6, p. 67, #12, p. 68, and #15, p. 68. The Platonic use of δύναμις in psychology fails to register on Cherniss as significant, or as indicating a bona fide alternate source for a δύναμις-based psychology.

69 Cavaros never treats "power," "faculty," or δύναμις as a subject. He makes statements like: "[Nyssa's Platonic] division of the soul into three faculties very often differs from the strictly Platonic division in so far as the designation of the faculties is concerned. The words *movement* (κίνησις) and *impulse* (ὄρμή) are used instead of *part* (μέρος) and *faculty* or *power* (δύναμις)." Cavaros, *The Psychology of Gregory of Nyssa*, 70. Furthermore, the history of the distinctions between these words is never described, but more importantly, if Gregory does not use δύναμις (as Cavaros says) then how can Cavaros speak of Gregory's "division of the soul into three faculties" (p. 70.) or "These three faculties ...

Galen, who is always alert for differences between Plato's and other psychologies, does not consider δύναμις to be a peculiarly Posidonian term. Galen distinguishes the relationships of the different schools to δύναμις not according to whether they use δύναμις at all, but according to whether they give a priority to the concept of μέρος/μέρη—*part(s)*. In Galen's schematic both Aristotle and Posidonius use δύναμις, and not μέρη, to describe the divisions in the soul, and in that they err by not taking seriously enough the reality of these psychic divisions. Galen himself speaks of each part of the soul possessing a power, and in his *On the Natural Faculties* Galen describes his schematic for classifying all the organization of all living creatures; this classification runs from the δύναμις to the ἐνέργεια to the ἔργον.⁷⁰ As the title suggests, the primary category in this classification is δύναμις, i.e., the faculties. Cherniss' belief that δύναμις could only belong to a Posidonian psychology blinded him to Gregory's use of the term. Gregory could have believed that Plato taught the unity of the soul in an unequivocal fashion, as Cherniss believes Plato did, but there were other options open to Gregory.

as Gregory states ..." (64). Cavarnos again quotes Gregory: "The power of the soul appears in accordance with the condition of the body" (69). The examples could be multiplied almost indefinitely: "Let us now turn to the faculties of the soul ..." (70); or "For Gregory, as for Plato, the faculties of the soul have their proper functions" (73); or "When Gregory enters the field of medicine ... he sets forth three faculties or powers [governing the body]" (73). A related problem occurs when Cavarnos says "Gregory claims that just as the universe is held together by one power, so the human body is held together by the human soul" (67, speaking of *On the Soul and Resurrection* M 46 28 A). Clearly Gregory does use δύναμις, and Cavarnos must know this since he repeatedly offers citations which include the word (see, e.g., footnotes #38, #39, #66, etc.). Cavarnos made the decision not to give the reader an understanding of the concept(s) of power or faculty. The problem is not so much a matter of the limitations of this decision (since all authors must make decisions about what to say now and what not to say now), but it is a question of the genuineness of Cavarnos' decision when he makes statements such as Gregory does not use δύναμις while at the same time regularly attributing the concept named by δύναμις, i.e., faculty, to Gregory, and providing citations that show that Gregory did indeed use δύναμις. Why should Cavarnos obscure Gregory's use of δύναμις as faculty? Because he thought that such a use was Posidonian in origin, and would thus show—as Gronau had argued—Posidonius' influence on Gregory.

⁷⁰ For my treatment of the role of this language in the Eunomian controversy, see Michel R. Barnes, "Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Hierarchy," in Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams, eds., *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 217–236.

5 Conclusion

The judgment that Gregory's psychology was "Platonic" has passed into scholarship as a commonplace. For much of this scholarship the origins of this judgment are to be found in the writings of a generation of scholars, most notably Cherniss, Jaeger and Cavarnos. My purpose in this article has been to show the origins of that commonplace in one important trajectory of scholarship on Gregory, the limitations in those previous accounts of Gregory's psychology, and to suggest ways in which the past scholarship has hardened into the received horizon for reading Gregory.

My description has placed greater emphasis on the exact context of Gregory's lifetime, in particular, the content of psychologies in Gregory's time, the psychologies Gregory received and read. In my judgment, such psychologies were—seemingly strangely perhaps—both eclectic and polemical, and must be read as such. Descriptions of the origins of Gregory's psychology based solely on direct comparisons with the writings of Plato or Aristotle are in principle useless, since this method inevitably but unconsciously compares Gregory's psychology with an early twentieth century description of the psychologies of both these philosophers, and ignores the mediated character of these doctrines in both fourth-century philosophy and twentieth-century scholarship. Furthermore, none of the scholars examined explain why one should imagine that Gregory had one single psychological language, Platonic or Aristotelian,⁷¹ which he applied with rigorous constancy regardless of the specific purpose (or audience) of a text: both Philo and Plotinus, for example, use different psychologies according to the problem at hand.⁷² There is no reason to assume that Gregory used only one kind of psychology throughout all his writings.⁷³ None

71 For example, in his "Philosophical Anthropology," 72, Ladner is uncomfortable with acknowledging Gregory's Aristotelian psychology, and minimizes the importance of the Aristotelian material by suggesting that Gregory did not "integrate" his Aristotelian terminology with his Platonic.

72 For a description of Philo's different "psychologies," see P.A. Vander Waerdt, "The Peripatetic Interpretation of Plato's Tripartite Psychology," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 26 (1985): 283–302. For similar observations about Plotinus, see Henry J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 21.

73 David N. Bell's judgment on the character of Gregory's psychology is a good example of a more nuanced approach: "Gregory's main psychological analysis, like that of Nemesius of Emesa ... is Aristotelian ... although in other works of Gregory [than *On the Making of Man*] the Platonic scheme is of greater significance" David Bell, "The Tripartite Soul and the Image of God in the Latin Tradition," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 47 (1980): 16–52, at 29.

of these authors explain why their choice of texts exemplifies the fundamental character and content of Gregory's psychology. In particular, the Platonic character that scholars such as Cherniss and Cavarnos found to be Gregory's was based upon readings that accorded an improper priority to some of Gregory's writings over the evidence of other texts, a priority owing in large part to presumptions about genre.

The lack of consideration by Cherniss and Cavarnos of possible Christian sources, which takes the generalized form of a neglect of the Christian context of Gregory's writing, results in an account of Gregory's doctrine of passion in which this doctrine has little relationship to his theology. For example, Cherniss argues that the reason why Gregory is emphatic about the unchangeableness of the soul is because unchangeableness is "the important requisite"⁷⁴ for the argument of the divinity of the soul. But this judgment still leaves us with the question of why Gregory was concerned to show that unchangeability is the image of God in the soul when he otherwise argues *against* a static notion of spirituality.⁷⁵ The answer to that question is to be found only if one considers the theological context of Gregory's psychology: for Gregory divine unchangeability means non-susceptibility to passions or external causes, and this divine property is important in the face of criticism of Nicene "Father" language (since "Father" suggests passion). In short, separating Gregory's psychology (and his philosophy generally) from its theological context not only misrepresents that psychology, it occludes the fact of the plasticity of philosophy in the hands of a deeply speculative theologian.⁷⁶

The question of Gregory's "Platonism" and implications for contemporary appropriations of his mystical theology—especially his theological anthropology—are as decisive as they were in the first half of the twentieth century. The energy sustaining such questions has increased since the opening rounds, and the topic has broadened significantly since the days of Gronau, Cherniss and Cavarnos—e.g., scholarship has moved beyond "Platonism" and "Posidonianism" as the dominant philosophical alternatives faced by Gregory. What has remained as a consistent concern is the question Cherniss put on the table in its modern form: what does Gregory's Platonism—however you map it—mean for Gregory's Christianity? That question matters more now than it did

74 Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, 16. Cherniss correctly points out that for Gregory passion presents the psychological reality of external cause.

75 Gregory introduces his doctrine of a perpetual progress and non-satiation in *On the Soul and Resurrection* and *On the Making of Man*.

76 See my "Divine Unity and the Divided Self: Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology in its Psychological Context," *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 475–496.

for Cherniss or Cavarnos because Gregory's theology has taken on broad and profound significance for many contemporary theologians that have found in Gregory a post-modern fluency with language and symbols of relationship, community, and erotic love.⁷⁷

77 For a useful overview of these contemporary engagements, see Morwenna Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). See also the aforementioned Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa*.

Charioteer and Helmsman: Some Distant Echoes of Plato's *Phaedrus* in Syriac Literature

Sebastian Brock

In the *Phaedrus* Plato provided two different images of the interrelationship of the three parts of the soul and how they need to function together. According to the first image, the *nous* is described as being like a charioteer (ἡνίοχος) holding the reins of two horses harnessed together, the horses representing the spirited (θυμικόν) and appetitive (ἐπιθυμητικόν) elements in the soul.¹ According to the second image, the νοῦς acts like the helmsman, or pilot (κυβερνήτης) of a ship.² Plato returned to the imagery elsewhere, in particular in the *Timaeus* where the three elements of the soul are distributed to different parts of the body, the νοῦς to the head, the θυμικόν to the breast, and the ἐπιθυμητικόν to the abdomen.³

These two images were picked up and adapted in different ways by many subsequent authors. These writers were not so much the professional philosophers, who had different concerns when discussing the soul,⁴ but rather they were people with a practical religious interest in how the soul functioned, such as Philo who employed one or other, or both images together, on a number of occasions. Thus in the following passage of the *Legum Allegoriae*, having provided an etymology (reasonably correct) for the fourth river flowing from Paradise, the Euphrates, he points out that “fruitfulness” symbolically represents the fourth virtue, justice, since it is fruitful in bringing gladness to the mind. He then asks, “When does this happen?,” and immediately he gives the answer:

1 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246a, 253d–254c.

2 Plato *Phaedrus* 247c; cf. *Politicus* 272e, *Republic* 488cd.

3 Plato, *Timaeus* 69c–e. This is picked up and developed by Shemʿon d-Taybuteh in the seventh century: see Alphonse Mingana, *Early Christian Mystics*, ws 7 (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Limited, 1934), 63–66.

4 See, for example, Richard Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 AD. A Sourcebook. Vol. 1. Psychology (with Ethics and Religion)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 182–274, and Carlos Steel, *The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus* (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1978); and for Syriac, Henri Hugonnard-Roche, “La question de l’âme dans la tradition philosophique syriaque (VIe–IXe s.),” *Studia Graeco-Arabica* 4 (2014): 17–64.

When the three parts of the soul act in harmony. Harmony (συμφωνία) for them consists in the rule (ἡγεμονία) of the better—as is the case when the pair, high-spirited (τὸ θυμικόν) and desiring (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) are guided like horses by reasoning (το λογικόν) as the charioteer (ἡνιοχῶνται ... ὑπὸ τοῦ λογικοῦ). It is then that justice occurs. For it is just that the better should always and everywhere rule, and the worse to be ruled. The better is reasoning, and the worse desire and high spirit. Conversely, when temper (θυμός) and desire (ἐπιθυμία) become restive and get out of control, by force of their impetus they will drag down the charioteer—that is, reason (λογισμόν), placing it under the yoke while each passion grabs hold of the rein—and injustice takes hold.⁵

In another work his words remain applicable in the context of modern discussion of the relationship between human beings and the environment. Commenting on the fact that in the account of Creation in Genesis humanity is created last, Philo observes that last is not least,

witness charioteers and steersmen: the former come after their harnessed animals and are positioned behind them, holding the reins and driving them where they wish, at one point letting them fall into a sharp trot, at another, holding them back if they are going too fast. Again, though helmsmen go to the stern, at the rear of the boat, one might say that they are more important than everyone else on board, in that they have in their hands the safety of both the ship and those on board.⁶

Philo, of course, never got translated into Syriac (as he did into Armenian), but his use of Plato's imagery nicely provides an appropriate background to the very similar ways in which certain Syriac authors employed the imagery.

It so happened that both ἡνιοχος and κυβερνήτης had entered Syriac as Greek loanwords already by the mid-fourth century, when both are attested in Aphrahat's *Demonstration* XIV,⁷ and the latter probably earlier in the Peshitta trans-

5 Philo, *Leg.* 1, 72–73.

6 Philo, *Opif.* 88.

7 *Dem.* XIV.3, in a lament series: "People have slept while the Evil One has sown his tares. The waves are lifted up and the storms have become fierce. Charioteers (*henyoke*) have fallen and the chariots are upset. Sailors have dozed off, and their ships have sunk." And *Dem.* XIV. 16, "A helmsman (*gubernita*) who keeps vigil will preserve his yardarm (*esqarya* < ἵσ(το)κεραία), so that his ship does not sink and he lose his merchandise. The wise charioteer will secure his chariot, lest he fall and be mocked." The spelling *gubernita* here, with initial g, not q, reflecting the Greek spelling in some papyri, seems not to be found elsewhere in Syriac; for it, see Aaron

lation of Acts 27:11 and in the Odes of Solomon (16:1).⁸ Both loanwords, but especially *quberniṭa*, turn up quite frequently in subsequent Syriac literature in a literal sense. Neither of the two passages in Aphrahat yet shows any awareness of Plato's use of the two terms. In fact, it may well be that none of the Syriac authors who *do* make use of his imagery were aware of its origin, for it is likely that the usage entered Syriac through some translation from Greek where (as in the two passages from Philo, cited above) there was no mention made of Plato. One possible candidate for such a translation might be Eusebius' *Theophania*, preserved in the earliest dated Syriac manuscript, copied in Edessa in November 411.⁹ At 11.46 Eusebius observes that someone who treats fire, air or water as a divinity "is like someone who is struck with wonder at the skill of a master carpenter but attaches honour to the work resulting from him" or "if one were to call a ship the *quberniṭa*, or the chariot of horses the *henyoka*."¹⁰ Since, however, the imagery is so curtailed in this passage, it is much more likely that it was some other work, with a more expansive use of the images, which served as the bridge over which the imagery passed into the Syriac literary world.

Rather surprisingly, it is in the writings of the Syriac poets of the fifth and early sixth century that one finds the imagery picked up before it entered the consciousness of certain East Syriac monastic writers of the seventh and eighth centuries. At this point it will be convenient to consider each image separately. Before, however, turning to them, mention should be made of a passage in John of Apamea's *Letter to Hesychius* where he advises "Our mind (*mad'an*) needs to be alert all the time, like a helmsman (*quberniṭa*) who is alert for the preservation of his ship."¹¹ John was writing in the first half of the fifth century,

Butts, *Language Change in the Wake of Empire. Syriac in its Greco-Roman Context* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 62, 68, 72.

8 Cf. Michael Lattke, "Die griechischen Wörter im syrischen Text der Oden Salomos," *Aram* 3 (1993): 285–302, here 292.

9 British Library Add. 12,150. The text was edited by Samuel Lee, *Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, on the Theophania. A Syriac Version* (London, Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1842). In the same manuscript is Titus of Bostra's work against the Manichaeans, where two passages are of interest: at 11.7, where the Greek, here surviving, has ἡνίοχος, the Syriac translation renders as ܩܘܒܪܢܝܬܐ; likewise at 111.13, where ἡνίοχος and κυβερνήτης are alternatives, evidently with the *Phaedrus* in mind; Paul-Hubert Poirier and Éric Crégheur, *Titi Bostrensis contra Manichaeos Libri IV*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

10 Compare Paul Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique. Chapitres des Disciples d'Évagre*, sc 514 (Paris: Cerf, 2007), no. 50 (praising the horses in place of the charioteer).

11 Sebastian Brock, ed., *John of Apamea, Letter to Hesychius, Malpanuta d-abahata suryaye d-al ṣlota* (Monastery of St Ephrem, Netherlands, 1988), 32 (section 7), translated in *The*

and would seem to have been someone who was also familiar with writings in Greek, among which very probably the Macarian Homilies would be included. The Greek Macarian corpus includes several passages reflecting Plato's image of the charioteer. Thus, for example in Homily 25 he tells how the nous, trained by reason (logos) is the charioteer in charge of the chariot of body and soul who needs to direct the natural stirrings of the thoughts in accordance with the will of God, the aim being

so that the whole chariot of our soul and body, travelling rationally and by the will of God on the royal road of the Scriptures may be enabled to attain to the supernal city of the saints.¹²

Only a single reference to the helmsman, however, is to be found in the Greek collection edited by Berthold: just as the helmsman is in control of a ship carrying much cargo and passengers, so the heart has the nous as κυβερνήτης, with the conscience (συνειδησις) rebuking (unruly thoughts).¹³ As it happens, in what is extant of the Syriac translation of the Macarian Homilies, it is only the image of the helmsman that is found:

Sound words, as the Apostle says, raise up the intellect (*hawna*) like a good *quberniṭa* from the billows of sin, and brings (his ship) close to God, delivering it from all the storms of the world.¹⁴

As is often the case, there is a lack of exact correspondence with anything in the Greek corpus.

Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 84. In his Letters (ed. Rignell, p. 49) John attests the rather rare secondary formation *kuberniṭuta*, "the role of helmsman."

12 Heinz Berthold, ed., *Makarios/Symeon. Reden und Briefe* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), I, 238 (Homily 25.1.1); other similar passages can be found at I, 126 (Hom. 9.1.4), 166 (Hom. 14.16), and II, p. 28 (Hom. 33.1.4).

13 Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon. Reden und Briefe*, II, 27 (Hom. 33.1.4).

14 Werner Strothmann, *Die syrische Übersetzung der Schriften des Makarios*, Teil 1, *Syrischer Text*, Göttinger Orientforschungen, Reihe; Syriaca 21 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 155 (Hom. 2 of the collection under the name of Macarius of Alexandria). The *hawna* is likewise the *quberniṭa* in the Syriac translation of Nilus, cf. Paolo Bettio, *Gli scritti siriaci di Nilo il Solitario* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste, 1983), 199, 222.

1 *Quberniṭa* in the Poets of the Fifth and Sixth Century

Rather surprisingly it is Narsai who displays a penchant for the Platonic imagery, attesting by far the most references to both the *κυβερνήτης* and (especially, as we shall see) the *ἡνίοχος*. Narsai accords several different identities to the *quberniṭa*. Closest in sense to Greek *nous*, but distinctively Syriac (and ultimately of Jewish origin) is the *yaṣra*, “inclination,” “propensity.” In Hebrew the *yeṣer* is the inclination which can be in either direction, towards good or towards bad. In most Syriac writing *yaṣra*, where it occurs, is a negative term, it is the inclination to what is wrong. Narsai is particularly fond of the term, using it over 120 times.¹⁵ Often he too employs it in a negative sense, but in the two passages where the *yaṣra* is described as the *quberniṭa*, it is neutral.

In *Memra* 13 Narsai offers a profusion of mixed images that is a characteristic of many Syriac writers:

Love of money has battered the soul, like hail,
and the leaves of faith have dropped from mind (*reʿyana*);
like a storm, hateful things have blown on the sea of the intellect
(*hawna*)
and the helmsman, the skilled inclination (*yaṣra mhira*) has trembled in
dismay.¹⁶

In another passage, having stated that half of a person is soul, he goes on:

In it (the half) the intellect (*hawna*) acquires discernment:
it has no limbs to serve as wings in its swiftness;
in it is the *yaṣra*, the skilled helmsman (*quberniṭa mhira*) amidst the
waves.¹⁷

On one occasion Narsai has the divine Will (*remza*), a term which functions like the Homeric *neuma* of the gods, acting as the helmsman. In this passage the ship is nothing other than Noah’s Ark, tossed by storms; at it Narsai exclaims:

15 On the *yaṣra* in Narsai, see also Adam Becker, “The ‘Evil Inclination’ of the Jews. The Syriac *Yatsra* in Narsai’s Metrical Homilies for Lent,” *JQR* 106 (2016): 179–207; and D.G.K. Taylor (forthcoming).

16 Alphonse Mingana, ed., *Narsai doctoris Syri homiliae et carmina* (Mosul: Typis Fratrum Praedicatorum, 1905), I, 212.

17 Mingana, *Narsai*, II, 252.

The depth carried it (the Ark) and surging, it escorted it on its shoulder;
 the waves venerated before it, yielding place for its course.
 O ship that was without oars, which passed over sea and dry land,
 and no (visible) helmsman guided it in the turbulence of the storms.
 O vessel that was carrying the entire world,
 whose voyage had no need of seamen (*mallaḥe*) to take it on its way:
 The (divine) Will (*remza*) was its seaman,
 (its) bidding (*puqdana*) the *quberniṭa*.
 Instead of a star, (God's) Volition (*ṣebyana*) was guiding it to harbour.
 Its course was held fast by the anchor of faith, as Grace resided in it.¹⁸

Although of course there is no direct connection, one might compare Narsai's contemporary, Proclus, who spoke of the Demiurge guiding the *kosmos* like a helmsman, holding fast to rudder and tiller.¹⁹

The image of the helmsman is of course suitable for many other contexts, stripped of any association with Plato. Thus for Narsai in *Memra* 32 it is he priest, as physician (*asya*), who takes on this role:

In the ship of the Church he (the priest) stands and warns night and
 day,
 guarding her from the harms of the wind/spirit (*ruḥa*) of evil men.
 He is the helmsman (*quberniṭa*), greatly skilled amidst the storms:
 he knows how to reach the entry to life (*wa'da d-ḥayye*) without end;
 by means of the oars of the Spirit he guides the ships of rational beings
 (*mliluta*),
 directing their impetus to the haven of Life (*lmen ḥayye*), hidden on
 high.²⁰

Half a century or so after Narsai's death the Acts of the Synod of 554 include a letter urging bishops "to be like wise helmsmen and save their ships from the violent storms and bring them to the haven of peace (*lmen shayna*)"; at the same time they should also look after "the ships of their own souls."²¹

18 Judith Frishman, *The Ways and Means of the Divine Economy. An Edition, Translation and Study of Six Biblical Homilies by Narsai* (Ph.D. diss.; Leiden University, 1992), II, 38–39, lines 509–523.

19 Proclus, *In Cratylum* 71, quoted in Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators*, I, 387.

20 Mingana, *Narsai*, II, 147; in another Homily (46; II, p. 350) Narsai laments "Our human race exists amid the storms of ignorance, there is no helmsman in our race who stills the wrath, nor to pacify the anger of the passions."

21 J.-B. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1902), 97.

Before leaving Narsai one further passage where he uses *quberniṭa* is worth mentioning: in the Homily no. 7, in a passage on “the ship of our mortality,” he prays that God’s compassion (*ḥnana*) may be the *quberniṭa* for the voyage of his life.

In sharp contrast to Narsai, his younger contemporary (and just possibly his former student at the Persian School in Edessa), Jacob of Serugh only very rarely employs the loanword *quberniṭa*, and never in connection with the mental faculties.²² The various texts published under the name of Isaac of Antioch likewise produce a very meagre harvest of passages where *quberniṭa* is used²³—and again, never in the context of Plato’s imagery.

2 *Henyoka* in the Poets of the Fifth/Sixth Century

Again it is Narsai who provides a profusion of references to Plato’s charioteer who is given a number of different identities, often the same as those for the helmsman. Thus the inclination, *yaṣra*, features once more. In Homily no. 15 Narsai describes the activities of “our *yaṣra*” and how it

is the one who rides upon the (soul’s) emotions (*zaw’e*), like the charioteer with the horses; it causes the external senses to race—the eyes, ears and tongue; at its bidding (*remza*) the inner (senses) are harnessed, the outer ones are under its authority. If it wants, they travel in orderly fashion, if it desires, (they do so) in a wild way.²⁴

In another place, in Homily 16, it would appear that our *yaṣra* that is under the control of the angels, who act as the charioteers:

Let them be like charioteers (*henyoke*), (riding) in its back,²⁵
causing the impetus of its course to keep its eyes on the ground.
Let them look upon its course like spectators in the stadium.

22 Among the rare occurrences of the loanword is his *memra* on the Edessan martyrs, Shmona and Gurya, William Cureton, ed., *Ancient Syriac Documents* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1864), 100; there the cross is the *quberniṭa* that guided them. In Paul Bedjan *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis* (Leipzig/Paris: Otto Harrassowitz, 1908), IV, 38, it is the great Mystery (*raza rabba*) which serves as the *quberniṭa* for Noah’s Ark.

23 Paul Bedjan, ed., *Homiliae S. Isaaci Syri Antiocheni* (Leipzig/Paris: Otto Harrassowitz, 1903), 9: “Mark is your *quberniṭa* and he will bring you forth to harbour.”

24 Mingana, *Narsai*, I, 242.

25 The identity of the masculine suffix (“its”) is not entirely clear, but the *yaṣra* would seem to fit best.

In his Homily on the Prodigal Son Narsai provides a lament by the prodigal son on realizing his desperate condition; here, the *hawna*, as charioteer, is closely associated with the *yašra*, *mad'a* and *re'yanā*:

He lamented and wept, accompanied by the sound of grievous groans;
he said to himself, Where are you, *yašra* who is the discerning part in
me?

Where are you, my intelligence (*mada'(y)*) that possesses/owns the wise
(decisions) of discernment?

For you were silent and failed to examine your abject state.

Where are you, my mind (*re'yan(y)*), related to the Wakers²⁶ who are
always alert?

For robbers have entered and plundered your wealth
and you have neither felt it or been aware of it.

Where are you, intellect (*hawna*), charioteer of the body, guider of the
senses?

For your swift course has come to an end and you have lost in the con-
test.

Where are you, soul, the fount that provides the body with the draft of
salvation?

For your wisdom has run dry, and the draft of your rational nature has
dried up.²⁷

In the Homily on the Nativity the *hawna* seems to be the divine *hawna*,²⁸ rather than that of the Magi. Having pointed out that the Magi, on arriving in Bethlehem, did not ask the infant Christ “Where is your crown, and the insignia of your royal authority?,” Narsai explains why:

The divine Will (*remza*) had put bridles of silence on the emotions of
(their) souls,

It kept them in order²⁹ them so that they would not stumble in the
midst of doubts.

26 Or “Watchers,” *'ire* (based on Dan 4:14), a standard term for angels, alongside *mal'ake*.

27 Emmanuel Pataq Siman, ed., *Narsai. Cinq homélies sur les paraboles évangéliques* (Paris: Cariscript, 1984), 39 (11, 78–32).

28 Compare Jacob's use of *hawna rabba* to denote God, e.g. Bedjan, *Homiliae selectae*, 111, 89.

29 The printed text has *w-takkesw* “set in order,” but this could be an error for *wa-tkasw*, “restrained”; the same could apply to some of the other passages below.

They³⁰ raced gently under the charioteer, the Steady Mind (*hawna taqna*),
 they escorted the body on the chariot of King's mount;
 they openly honoured and worshiped Him who was hidden, who was
 despised in (outward) appearance:
 In the embodied one they saw the Spiritual One by means of the emo-
 tions of the soul.³¹

Elsewhere we find the combination of *hawna* (intellect) and *napsha* (soul): first, mention is made of the soul, and then, more specifically, the *hawna* features as the charioteer. The opening line perhaps has the concept of the *yeşer* in the background.

In our soul there are placed the two, the good and the bad, equally;
 the (soul) chooses according to its careful examination:
 the soul rides on the body like the charioteer on the chariot,
 and it guides a person by means of the reins of its hidden emotions.
 The external senses race like horses in the stadium
 while the *hawna* tightens and loosens (the reins) in his hands.
 The body is harnessed and runs all the time to where the charioteer
 desires.

The *re' yana*, which had featured in the Prodigal Son's lament, may also be specifically identified as the charioteer. Thus in Homily 1, after describing God's dire instruction to Abraham to sacrifice his son (Gen 22), Narsai exclaims:³²

O mind (*re' yana*), fully harnessed for laborious tasks,
 which has cast from itself the weight of the passions, as though unhar-
 nessed!
 How the *yaşra* has bridled itself with the bridle of silence
 and has become still and silent from travelling on a perturbed course!
 Has his mind not contemplated, as it is accustomed,
 about what this new matter is that the God of all has asked of me?
 O man who is subject to passion (*hashosha*), who has harnessed his pas-
 sions under his *re' yana*,

30 Evidently their stirrings, or emotions.

31 Frederick McLeod, ed., *Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension*, PO 40.1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), Memra 1, lines 333–338.

32 Mingana, *Narsai*, 1, 19.

It (*re'yana*) has caused them to race in the stadium of his passible condition (*hashoshuteh*).

O sluggish³³ person, who has mounted, like a charioteer,
and has subdued the passions of his body and the emotions of his
soul.

In a number of passages the soul is the *henyoka* and the senses are the horses.

Let us hire contrition as an advocate (*scholastikos*),
and he will introduce our case before the Judge who examines all.

...

Let the senses be like horses for the (soul's) action,
with it (standing) above them like a charioteer on a chariot;
let it cast the bridle of orderliness on the visible senses,
and let them travel well to the meeting place of love and faith.³⁴

The senses are again the horses in a passage describing the life of those who proclaim Christ:³⁵

As upon horses (the preachers') stirrings have rode upon their senses
and they have made orderly the course of the entire person so that it is
not disturbed:

they cast a bit (*qe'ma* < *κῆμος*) of peace in the mouth (of) the horses of
words,

and the soul rode like a charioteer on its back.

In an orderly way they allowed the eyes to look upon what is seen.

The charioteer can also be identified as discernment.³⁶ Here (as elsewhere) the nautical connotations of "haven," "harbour" (*lmena*) are inappropriate and have evidently been forgotten.

The mighty power of discernment (*paroshuta*) rides on (human) nature,
guiding it like the charioteer to where it wants.

The power of our will compels Love by the power of Its will,
and It draws him, acting like a guide, to the haven of peace.

33 Sic!, *matina*.

34 Mingana, *Narsai*, II, 26.

35 Ed. Patriarchal Press, II, 603.

36 Mingana, *Narsai*, II, 267; compare Titus of Bostra, *contra Manichaeos* II.7.

A similar mingling of metaphors is found in another passage where the senses are the horses:³⁷

Like horses, his senses are yoked under (the soul's) authority,
but (the body) does not understand what is the reason for its being har-
nessed.
Like a charioteer does (the soul's) will ride on (a person's) body,
and (the soul) causes the ship of his bodily nature to look in the direc-
tion that (the soul) wants.

The soul's wider responsibility as charioteer is brought out in another passage where it is the "wild world" that needs its guidance.³⁸ The heading for this Homily 39 is "On the excellence of the soul and how it makes provision for the body, its home":

Like a charioteer riding on the wild world,
holding it in order so that it does not run wild under its coursing
(*helkateh*),
the soul has harnessed the whole of creation under (a person's) author-
ity
and it has caused him to sit like a king on a chariot
with the reins of its (the soul's?) stirrings as he holds in his hands
heaven and earth,
and wherever he wishes he directs the will of his position of authority.³⁹

The *henyoka* is also introduced by Narsai into his account of the ascension of Elijah, where it is now the body of Elijah that is the charioteer:⁴⁰

The bodily one was like a charioteer (riding) above the wind:
flesh took hold of the reins of fire, and was not scorched.
O bodily one, who rode the wind and bridled the fire!

In another *memra* the same scene is set, with Elisha as the onlooker:⁴¹

37 Mingana, *Narsai*, II, 246.

38 Mingana, *Narsai*, II, 240.

39 The identity of the various suffixes in this passage is not always clear.

40 Mingana, *Narsai*, I, 192.

41 Frishman, *The Ways and Means*, I, lines 295–299.

A wondrous sight did he see depicted above the earth,
 a sort of fiery chariot racing in the air:
 he saw horses of fire harnessed, along with wheels of fire,
 and above them, standing, was the fiery charioteer:
 he saw fire (standing) on fire, bound by reins of fire!

Not surprisingly, chariot and charioteer likewise feature in Narsai's *memra* on the Ascension. Here we meet again the *remza*, or the Father's Will, as the charioteer:⁴²

The Hidden Will harnessed the Chariot with the reins of the wind
 and It bridled the air for the Royal Rider who had conquered and caused
 (others) to conquer.

It spread clouds of light as coverlets on the chariot,
 and the King took His seat, while the *remza* placed a crown on His head.
 Rational and dumb natures harnessed their voices beneath the chariot
 and escorted the Hidden One in the Revealed One, the (divine) Being in
 the (human) body.

The charioteer directed the horses of wind in the direction of the height
 and taught them how to travel on a path hitherto untrodden.

The path hitherto untrodden is further explicated later in the *memra*: the ascension of Christ's human body brings about salvation for humanity.⁴³

A cloud, like a chariot, carried Him as He ascended,
 the Hidden Will guided it, in place of a charioteer.
 In like manner the clouds of light convey the bodies (of the just)
 at that same bidding which has bridled the air and it escorted His body.

Finally, a surprising new identity for the charioteer is provided by Narsai in a passage describing how David's voice (evidently accompanying his lyre) soothed the disturbed Saul (cf. 1 Sam 16:23, 18:10):⁴⁴

David cast upon the wild (Saul) bridles of love
 and ordered the course of his emotions away from hateful actions.

42 McLeod, *Narsai's Metrical Homilies*, v, lines 67–74.

43 McLeod, *Narsai's Metrical Homilies*, v, lines 257–260.

44 Ed. Patriarchal Press, II, 777.

Like a charioteer his voice rode over all utterances (lit. mouths)
causing them to race along the smooth path of the name of the Creator.
His voice was fair as he proclaimed in the ears of everyone,
“Hear this, all you peoples, and listen to my words” (Ps 49:1).

In contrast to Narsai, Jacob only rarely used the image of the charioteer. Although the *hawna* again features as the charioteer, it is not controlling the senses, but the narrative:⁴⁵

Look how the *hawna*, like a charioteer, controls the bridles of the narratives,
guiding them in an orderly way towards the audience.

Unlike the case in Narsai the senses are no longer the horses, but have themselves become charioteers:⁴⁶

The five senses stand over (the body) like charioteers.

Evidently their failure to control the body on a massive scale led Jacob to exclaim:⁴⁷

Why does wickedness stand on the earth like a charioteer,
directing it where it wants towards evil actions?

In the *memre* published by Bedjan under the name of “Isaac of Antioch,” the image of the *henyoka* features five times. Of particular interest is Homily 33 describing the workings of the “inner person” (*barnasha da-lgaw*). After an extended passage describing the interior “limbs” and their individual roles, Isaac concludes:⁴⁸

Over everything the *hawna* hovers.
the (inner) senses are aware of reason (*melta*) to which they are bound;
the thought process (*mahshabta*) takes its course by means of them,
(acting) like the charioteer on the chariot.

45 Bedjan, *Homiliae Selectae*, v, 290.

46 Bedjan, *Homiliae selectae*, III, 155.

47 Bedjan, *Homiliae selectae*, v, 848.

48 Bedjan, *Homiliae S. Isaaci*, 404. There is an Italian translation of this interesting homily by Giuseppe Furlani, “La psicologia d’Isacco d’Antiochia,” *GCFI* 7 (1926): 241–253.

In Isaac's Homily 65 it is the mind (*re'yana*) which is the charioteer:⁴⁹

Yoked are thought (*hushshaba*) and tongue, and with the recital (of s. 92:1), the understanding: over the four of them—like a chariot—*re'yana* stood as the charioteer.

It is probably again the *re'yana* in another homily, where Isaac emphasizes that in a fast all the members of the body should participate; he goes on⁵⁰

Take a look at the master charioteer (*quberniṭa umana*): as he keeps the harnessed horses
he slackens and tightens the reins so as to guide (the chariot) on an even course.

Once we find the patriarch Joseph described as being like a charioteer:⁵¹

Joseph cast bridles on his limbs, and by his valour he restrained them;
he became like a charioteer who has held the horses firmly by the reins.

3 The Helmsman and the Charioteer in East Syriac Monastic Texts

Serving as a link in time between the poets of the fifth/sixth centuries and the monastic texts, there is an extended passage in Barhadbeshabba Halwan's *Cause of the Schools*. Writing c. 600, Barhadbeshabba combines both images:⁵²

The soul has three cognitive faculties (*hayle yado'tane*): intellect (*hawna*), intelligence (*tar'ita*) and thought process (*maḥshabta*); from these three

49 Bedjan, *Homiliae S. Isaaci*, 819.

50 Bedjan, *Homiliae S. Isaaci*, 159. There is an Italian translation in Elias Chakhtoura, *I mimre 'al Sawmo nel Corpus di Isacco d'Antiochia* (Kaslik: USEK, 2016), 189–198 at 189.

51 Bedjan, *Homiliae S. Isaaci*, 223 (Hom. 19). The other passage with *heriyoka*, on p. 499, compares the person who does not know whether a road leads to the Kingdom or to Gehenna with someone who has harnessed some headstrong horses and appoints a charioteer who has no control over the bridle, and so does not know into what ravines he, along with the horses and chariot, will end up.

52 Addai Scher, ed., *Mar Barhadbeshabba, Cause de la foundation des écoles*, PO 4.4 (1908): 27–28. Another English translation can be found in Adam Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 109–110 (with notes 124–131).

others are born: desire (*reggta*), wrath (*hemta*) and will (*ṣebyana*). The mind (*mad'a*) is above all of them, like a wise charioteer and diligent helmsman, who peers into the distance and steers the ship carrying the treasure away from the rocks of error and the tempests of ignorance by means of that first intellectual part that purifies the cognitive faculties of the soul.

The other main context where the Platonic image turns up in Syriac literature is in certain East Syriac monastic authors of the seventh and eighth century. Nautical imagery is extremely common in monastic literature and in that connection the loanword *quberniṭa* frequently occurs. For our present concerns, however, it is only passages where it is the mind or intellect which is acting as helmsman that are of relevance.⁵³

More or less contemporary with Barhadbeshabba was Babai “the Great” (d. 628), who wrote an extensive commentary on Evagrius’ *Kephalaia Gnostica*. Commenting on Century 5, no. 5, where Evagrius states:

For the passible part of the soul, two great modes of conduct (*dubbare*) purify, the cultivation of the Commandments, and the Intellect’s humility and feeling of suffering (*hashishuta*).

In his comment, Babai introduces the *quberniṭa*:⁵⁴

This part of the soul consists of desire and wrath, which have both become sick through transgression of the law. ... (A person) should recognise his weakness, and like a *quberniṭa*, should be wary in his body and in his soul.

Isaac of Nineveh provides a couple of passages where the mind or intellect are compared to a *quberniṭa*:⁵⁵

53 Thus I exclude the lengthy nautical analogy involving the helmsman in Gregory of Cyprus’ *de Theoria sancta*, ed. Irénée Hausherr, OCA 110 (Rome: Pont. institutum orientalium studiorum, 1937), 60–64.

54 Wilhelm Frankenberg, ed., *Evagrius Ponticus*, Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Kl. NS XI.2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1912), at f. 157^b (p. 320). The image of the helmsman features twice in Evagrius’ *Letters*, published in the same volume, pp. 570 and 600.

55 Paul Bedjan, ed., *Mar Isaacus Ninivita de perfectione religiosa* (Paris/Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1909), 467 (Discourse 66). This is the Greek Discourse 55, Marcel Pirard, ed., *Ἀββᾶ Ἰσαάκ τοῦ Σύρου Λόγοι ἀσκητικοί* (Moni Iviron, Athos, 2012), 694.

For the discerning person, the aim of the valuable cultivation of stillness (*shelya*) is the harbour of the Mysteries, towards which the mind (*re'yana*) gazes out ... Just as the eyes of a *quberniṭa* that gaze up at the stars, so the interior gaze of the solitary during the entire course of his journey, is set upon the aim he took in his mind on the very first day that he gave himself over to travel over the difficult ocean of stillness until he finds the pearl for the sake of which he handed himself over to its unfathomable depths.

The same image appears again in Part II:⁵⁶

When the contender (*agonista* < ἀγωνιστής, that is, the monk) consents to meetings with the (outside) world, the soul immediately becomes weakened. ... Whenever the steersman intellect (*hawna shanoza*) encounters the world, it resembles a helmsman (*quberniṭa*) who was sailing calmly on the sea, with a gentle following wind blowing him towards harbour, when all of a sudden he finds himself on a reef.

In the published texts that are available, the only other monastic author who draws out this image of the helmsman in connection with the intellect is 'Abdisho' in the eighth century:⁵⁷

At the time of prayer the soul is like a ship located in the heart of the sea. The intellect (*hawna*) is like a helmsman standing on the ship, and the emotions, like the winds, lead on the ship. Just as not all winds that blow are useful for the course of the ship, so also with the stirrings that are set in motion at the time of prayer, not all are useful for the ship's journey, to (ensure) that it reaches harbour without any fear and freed from the waves; rather some are, and some are not, in that some (emotions) leave an impression and form on the soul—and these are the ones which hinder the voyage of the ship of the helmsman intellect (*hawna quberniṭa*) as it travels towards the harbour towards which his desire in gazing. But some of the emotions that are stirred (at the time of) prayer are straight-forward: these are the gentles breezes which direct the ship of the soul over the waves to the harbour full of rest.

56 Sebastian P. Brock, ed., *Isaac of Nineveh, "the Second Part," Chapters IV–XLI*, CSCO 554–555 (Louvain: Peeters, 1995), chapter 17, 12.

57 Alphonse Mingana, ed., *Early Christian Mystics*, Woodbrooke Studies 7 (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1934), 272 (translation, p. 163). 'Abdisho' is usually considered to be a name under which Joseph Hazzaya also wrote.

References to the charioteer are, perhaps not surprisingly, much rarer in the monastic literature. Although at one point Isaac describes the soul as the charioteer who needs to be in control of the passions,⁵⁸ elsewhere—appropriately enough for a monastic setting—it is Satan who is the charioteer:⁵⁹

(Spiritual) turbulence should be called the vehicle of Satan: Satan, like a charioteer is in the habit of continually riding on it, taking with him a crowd of the passions, making his entry into the wretched soul with the pitfall of its turbulence.

4 By Way of Conclusion

Both the *quberniṭa* and the *henyoka* receive a number of different identities in our Syriac authors. Thus the *quberniṭa* may be God or his *remza*, the *hawna*, the *re'yana*, the *yašra*, or the idealized priest. The first four overlap with the same identities given to the *henyoka*, but here are several further additions, the soul, discernment and thought process (*maḥshabta*), to which are added divine compassion (*ḥnana*), David's soothing voice, Joseph, and even Satan. There seems to be no trace of any separation between the two terms, following Iamblichus who, according to Hermias in his Commentary on the *Phaedrus*, referred the *kubernētēs* to the soul and the *hēniochos* to the *nous*.⁶⁰

Plato's works, like those of Philo, were never translated into Syriac, and all that does exist in Syriac under Plato's name is not genuinely his.⁶¹ Nevertheless it is pleasing to discover that the influence of this passage in the *Phaedrus* reached certain Syriac writers, and most notably Narsai, in a totally unrecognized way. *Mutatis mutandis*, the process was not dissimilar to that of

58 Bedjan, 285 (Discourse 37). This is Greek Discourse 29, ed. Pirard, *Ἀββᾶ Ἰσαὰκ τοῦ Σύρου*, 500.

59 Bedjan, 383 (Discourse 53). This is Greek Discourse 44, ed. Pirard, *Ἀββᾶ Ἰσαὰκ τοῦ Σύρου*, 624.

60 Paul Cuvreur, ed., *Hermiae Alexandrini in Platonis Scholia*, BEHE 133.2 (Paris, É. Bouillon, 1901), 150 (*ad Phaedrus* 247c).

61 For Plato in Syriac, see H. Hugonnard-Roche, "Platon syriaque," in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et al., eds., *Pensée grecque et sagesse d'orient. Hommage à Michel Tardieu* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 307–322, and Yuri Arzhanov, "Plato in Syriac Literature," in Guido Giglioli and Anna Corrias, eds., *Brill Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); also my "Some Pseudo-Platonic Curiosities," in Rotraud Elisabeth Hansberger, M. Afifi al-Akiti, and Charles S.F. Burnett, eds., *Medieval Arabic Thought. Essays in Honour of Fritz Zimmermann*, Warburg Institute Studies and Texts 4 (London: Warburg Institute, 2012), 19–26.

the influence of Ephrem, totally unrecognized, on the mysterious author⁶² of the *Dionysian Corpus*, as has so admirably been indicated by Bishop Alexander Golitzin in his *Et introibo ad altare Dei. The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Analekta Vlatadon 59; Thessaloniki, 1994), especially pp. 359–371.

62 For a new hypothesis concerning the work's background, see Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi, *Dietro "Dionigi l'Areopagita." La genesi e gli scopi del Corpus Dionysianum* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2018).

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