

The Theurgic Turn in Christian Thought:
Iamblichus, Origen, Augustine, and the Eucharist

by

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List of Abbreviations

<i>Abst.</i>	Porphyry, <i>de Abstinencia</i>
<i>agon.</i>	Augustine, <i>De agone christiano</i>
<i>Ascl.</i>	<i>Asclepius</i>
<i>C.Cels.</i>	Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i>
<i>CMAG</i>	<i>Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs</i>
<i>cod.</i>	Photius, <i>Bibliothecae Codices</i>
<i>commEph</i>	Origen, <i>Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistulam ad Ephesios</i>
<i>commJohn</i>	Origen, <i>Commentarii in evangelium Joannis</i>
<i>commMatt</i>	Origen, <i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei</i>
<i>c.Faust.</i>	Augustine, <i>Contra Faustum Manicheum</i>
<i>Corp.Herm.</i>	<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>
<i>DCMS</i>	Iamblichus, <i>De Communi Mathematica Scientia Liber</i>
<i>DM</i>	Iamblichus, <i>De Mysteriis</i>
<i>De civ. D.</i>	Augustine, <i>De Civitate Dei</i>
<i>De Deo Socrat.</i>	Apuleius, <i>De Deo Socratis</i>
<i>De praescr. haeret.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De praescriptione haereticorum</i>
<i>dial.</i>	Origen, <i>dialogus cum Heraclide</i>
<i>Diogn.</i>	<i>Epistle to Diognetus</i>
<i>div.qu.</i>	Augustine, <i>De diversus quaestionibus octoginta tribus</i>
<i>EH</i>	Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>ench.</i>	Augustine, <i>Encheiridion de fide spe et caritate</i>
<i>Enn.</i>	Plotinus, <i>Enneads</i>
<i>exProv</i>	Origen, <i>Expositio in Proverbia</i>
<i>f.et sym.</i>	Augustine, <i>De fide et symbolo</i>
<i>frJohn</i>	Origen, <i>Fragmenta in evangelium Joannis</i>
<i>frMatt</i>	Origen, <i>Fragmenta in evangelium Matthaei</i>
<i>haer.</i>	Epiphanius, <i>Panarion seu adversus lxxx haereses</i>
<i>in Nic.</i>	Iamblichus, <i>In Nichomachi Arithmetica Introductionem</i>
<i>in Ph.</i>	Simplicius, <i>in Aristotelis physicorum libros octo commentaria</i>
<i>in Prm.</i>	Damascius, <i>in Parmenidem</i>
<i>in R.</i>	Proclus, <i>in Platonis Rempublican Commentarii</i>
<i>in Ti.</i>	Proclus, <i>in Platonis Timaeum Commentarii</i>
<i>Lg.</i>	Plato, <i>Leges</i>
<i>mag.</i>	Augustine, <i>De Magistro</i>

<i>Marc.</i>	Porphyry, <i>Ad Marcellam</i>
<i>mart.</i>	Origen, <i>Exhortatio ad Martyrium</i>
<i>Phaed.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Phaedr.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>princ.</i>	Origen, <i>De Principiis</i>
<i>quant.</i>	Augustine, <i>De animae quantitate</i>
<i>selPs</i>	Origen, <i>Selecta in Psalmos</i>
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement, <i>Stromateis</i>
<i>Ti.</i>	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>
<i>trin.</i>	Augustine, <i>De Trinitate</i>
<i>VP</i>	Porphyry, <i>Vita Plotini</i>
<i>VS</i>	Eunapius, <i>Vitae Sophistarum</i>

Chapter I: Christian Thought and Theurgy

1. *The Problem*

Until fairly recently scholars have regarded Iamblichus' defense of theurgy as little more than a thin apology for the magical manipulation of gods and demons. It was famously termed "a manifesto of irrationalism," a founding charter for every superstition opposed to genuine philosophical reasoning.¹ The theurgic turn in Platonism was to be understood as an aberration symptomatic of decline and decadence, a falling away from the more sophisticated, rarefied philosophy of Plotinus and Porphyry. This view is in keeping with the arguments of Porphyry himself, whose unease with theurgy prompted him to write his *Letter to Anebo* to challenge it, provoking in turn Iamblichus' response in his *De Mysteriis*.² The most recent scholarship has shown that that more contemptuous evaluations of Iamblichus represent in part a misperception, and that his work is more accurately read as a genuine attempt to vindicate material religious rites within the framework of a coherent metaphysics and psychology.³

Because of the historically negative perception of theurgy, the question of its influence on later Christian thinkers becomes a complicated matter. The long-standing prejudice against theurgy as debased superstition infects approaches to Christian writers

¹ E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1973) 287-88.

² Chapter III.1-2 will consider the background of Iamblichus' relationship to his fellow Neoplatonists.

³ Shaw (1999) summarizes the case and catalogs the essential bibliography: Trouillard (1972); Dillon (1973); Larsen (1972); Lloyd (1967); Steel (1978); Smith (1974); Sheppard (1982); Shaw (1985, 1995); Fowden (1986); Athanassiadi (1993).

whose works bear theurgy's clear markings, and whose authors are often considered suspiciously "pagan" as a result. It has long been acknowledged that the works of Pseudo-Dionysius⁴ openly adopt significant language and content from Iamblichus, mediated through the fifth century Athenian school of Neoplatonism. Among some scholars, this state of affairs has often given rise to the question of whether Dionysius, considering his Neoplatonist commitments and theurgic influences, can be regarded as legitimately Christian.⁵ Such scholars often strive to implicate Dionysius in his own "pagan" theurgy, thereby quarantining his "Platonism" from "authentic" Christianity. Specifically, Protestant scholars particularly have often undertaken to sanitize Dionysius' adoption of the theurgic *symbola*, reading them as mere signs of principles to be intellectually apprehended, rather than materially efficacious elements in religious rites.⁶

Such approaches – both those that suspect theurgy itself, and those that suspect Christian authors of theurgic "corruption" – are arguably related, since each sees in theurgy a menace to be contained, the former regarding it as a threat to legitimate philosophical discourse, the latter to legitimate Christianity. Insofar as both approaches attempt such compartmentalization, they are almost certainly both defective. The assignment of theurgy to the category of the merely superstitious has now long been regarded as deficient; likewise, anxiety over theurgic influence on the pseudo-Dionysius has been somewhat diminished, or perhaps finally declared moot. Gregory Shaw, for instance, specifically noting Dionysius' adoption of a Iamblichean triadic ordering of worship, his adaptation of material *symbola*, and his prescriptions for advancement to

⁴ late 5th – early 6th century

⁵ See especially the dispute between Kenneth Paul Wesche, "Christological Doctrine and Liturgical Interpretation in Pseudo-Dionysius" (1989) and Alexander Golitzin, "On the Other Hand [A Reponse to Fr. Paul Wesche's Recent Article on Dionysius in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*....] (1990).

⁶ Rorem, "The Uplifting Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius" (1986) 134, is concerned to avoid tainting sacraments, as conceived by Dionysius, with any idea of material, magical efficacy. Golitzin "The Mysticism of Dionysius Areopagita: Platonist or Christian" (1993) is critical of this tendency. Of Luibheid and Rorem's translation (1987) of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, Shaw (1999) interestingly notes that the translators exclude the term *theurgia* from their text, despite its forty-seven occurrences (including cognates) in the corpus (574, and n. 1).

higher levels of worship, argues for the likelihood that “Dionysius simply adapted the principles and some of the terminology of Iamblichus’ psychology and theurgy to complete his hieratic vision of the Church.” It is difficult, he further argues, “not to see Dionysius as a kind of ‘Christian Iamblichus’”⁷

As useful as such corrections have been, they too suffer from a fundamental problem: the defect of viewing the relationship between theurgy and Christian thought in neatly genealogical terms, founded on the assumption that Iamblichus codified the theurgic turn in Platonism, based on his reception of the *Chaldean Oracles* and other influences, and then transmitted it to his intellectual heirs such as Proclus and the Athenian school. From these sources, Dionysius could adopt theurgic principles as the basis for his mystagogy and his account of Christian liturgy. The problem with this approach is that it offers a line of transmission that is simply too clean, in that it regards ideas as transmitted lineally and genealogically rather than laterally. But in reality, ideas do not exist only in philosophical texts, but are rather negotiated in a broader cultural context, a plain fact that points to the danger in assuming that Iamblichean thought and later theurgy are products of an intellectual tradition that is somehow neatly separable from the culture that shaped major third and fourth century Christian thinkers. It might seem that this insight should be obvious, and more often than not it is at least theoretically acknowledged in scholarship; but even given its recognition in principle, it is often not observed in practice, which results in a tendency to assume that a thinker’s standing as “pagan” or “Christian” excludes *prima facie* his engagement with certain ideas – as if creedal differentiation dictated compartmentalization of thought. Under this flawed construction, while it might be granted that Christian thinkers could adopt the rhetorical tropes and philosophical arguments of higher Greco-Roman culture, they are nevertheless effectively insulated from the putatively negative effects their “borrowings” might have on the substance of their Christianity.

The present argument is premised on a resistance to the easy taxonomy of such a perspective, arguing rather that pagan and Christian thinkers not only speak the same

⁷ Shaw (1999) 585-86.

language, but that they are substantively co-participants in the same culture. The argument therefore starts from the principle that the boundaries dividing the “pagan” from the “Christian” before and after Iamblichus should be seen as largely fictional constructs serving scholarly convenience, and given illusory stability by the rhetorical nature of Christian polemic both ancient and modern. Both Christianity and the traditional religious systems and philosophical schools of the Roman Empire emerge from the same cultural matrix defined by a store of shared ideas, practices and dispositions – one that is already characterized by a constant interaction that defines both Christianity and later paganism. It is not the case that one merely “influences” the other in a lineal fashion, but that they emerge from the same cultural world, and quite naturally manifest analogous traits. With intellectual culture placed in proper perspective, we should not be surprised to find theoretical similarity between Christian and pagan thought, to include the philosophical theorization of ritual practice.

Because this perspective requires that we see ideas as arising within a shared culture, we encounter a special difficulty. Despite a context common to both pagan and Christian thinkers, Christianity poses a distinctive problem in its stance of exclusivity, which required its adherents to adopt a rhetoric of differentiation in order to distinguish themselves from the pagan cults that they understood as inadequate and generally maleficent. Christian thinkers were forced, in other words, to conceal likeness in the interests of defining and maintaining identity. The difficulties that third and fourth century Christian thinkers would encounter in carrying out this rhetorical project are already evident in earlier periods, when Christian thought is first assimilating itself within its Greco-Roman, near eastern, polytheist, and Jewish context. Often the rhetoric employed reflects the consciousness of the somewhat imperiled place of Christianity within the culture and politics of the empire. Different strategies might be employed as circumstances dictated. A philosopher like the apologist Justin in the second century could praise Greek philosophy, subordinating it to biblical wisdom and thereby taming it for Christian use, while the third century North African bishop Tertullian could famously call Plato himself *omnium haereticorum condimentarius*, “spice-supplier to all

heretics," the very source of all doctrinal corruption. These two strategies could scarcely be more different, and yet they are alike in the basic sense that they represent efforts at creating and preserving a Christian identity, whether by the rhetorical plundering of classical culture, or by its vehement rejection. Even Tertullian's case does not leave the question of Christian devotion to the rhetorical and philosophical content of classical culture particularly in doubt. Such rhetorical dissimulations would persist into later times. In the case of both Origen and Augustine, we shall encounter a similar rhetoric of differentiation working to occlude the philosophical kinship of their sacramental thought to the magic and theurgy that they vocally reject.

The basic question that this study is intended to raise concerns the extent to which Origen and Augustine's interrogations of eucharist are indebted to the vocabulary and conceptual apparatus best expressed in Iamblichean theurgy. These two particular thinkers would by no means be considered "theurgic" to the same degree as Pseudo-Dionysius, whose writings do little to conceal their source in theurgic Neoplatonism. Where Augustine and Origen deploy theurgic thought, they do so more subtly – as must be the case especially for Origen, since his death long preceded theurgy's Iamblichean articulation. What unites them is a differentiating rhetoric that veils their own adoption of theurgic mechanisms of sacramental mediation – adoptions that occur, as it happens, in the very midst of their florid rhetorical rejections of the magical and theurgic. In the arguments of Origen and Augustine we can thus discern some very pagan principles at work, masked in each case by the same rhetorical strategies, and reconfigured in their mediating agencies and external ritual forms. Thus it becomes possible, even despite Origen's disruption of a neat chronological sequence, to suggest that in the matter of eucharist, Platonizing Christian thinkers of the third and fourth centuries were already experimenting with a fundamentally theurgic account of ritual mediation, long before Pseudo-Dionysius engaged in his more overt appropriations.

2. Methodology: Approach, Limits of Study, Terminology

A. Approach

The approach of this dissertation stems from the conviction that theoretical ideas about cult cannot be separated from the intellectual culture that forms their thinkers. When we concede the involvement of ideas in culture, it follows that we must always be attentive to the rhetorical context within which ideas are framed, and alert to the ways in which sophisticated Christian thinkers might set about masking their assimilation of pagan ideas. This is especially true in case of the texts that are central to the present study, Origen's *Contra Celsum* and Augustine's *On the City of God*, since in either case we confront vigorous polemic against some of Christianity's most learned opponents – Celsus in the former case, Porphyry in the latter. It follows from the polemical nature of the texts that we must attune our reading to certain dissimulations that the authors may be practicing in the course of their arguments, in order to understand how Origen and Augustine may be re-deploying material in the course of configuring their own eucharistic theories. We must likewise remain focused on the more straightforward intellectual content of the arguments that they reject and advance. Central to the present study is the conviction that both readings are necessary – one that recognizes a rhetoric of differentiation, and one that is sensitive to the conceptual framework within which these early, experimental articulations of eucharistic theory are taking shape.

It follows that a certain portion of this study will be devoted to questions of cultural identity and rhetoric, and that at the very least that such concerns will constitute a subtext throughout. Much of the rest of the study, where all three significant thinkers are concerned, will be focused on questions of metaphysical first principles, the nature and virtue of material reality, and competing hierarchies of mediation – complemented by questions on the nature of the soul and its place within reality thus hierarchically conceived. In all three cases, the intellectual background is complex; but each thinker's work is shaped profoundly by the philosophical concerns of Middle and Neoplatonism,

a fact that is reflected in the obvious indebtedness of their several narratives of “salvation” to the original Platonic story of the soul’s fall and the prospects for its eventual repatriation. All three thinkers, for instance, must formulate an account of what it means to be an embodied soul, or a material rational creature, and devise approaches to the problem of whether the body and material reality constitute primarily hindrances or aids to the process of the soul’s repatriation. All three, then – in a manner that requires the rejection of too pronounced a dualism – endorse the idea that material reality mediates access to incorporeal principles that represent the soul’s proper template, or that stand in a healing relationship to the soul’s inner disorientation, and are willing to embrace language and formulations that can be seen as fundamentally theurgic in their accounts of ritual mediation of the soul’s ascent. For Origen and Augustine, this means that they adopt language and assumptions employed within the very systems of religious mediation that they rhetorically reject.

B. Limits of Study

Although it is reasonable to argue that the study of ancient Christianity can more safely proceed from the recognition of specific communities and their variety,⁸ the present study will work from the assumption that normative Christianity’s engagement with the intellectual culture of the later Roman Empire constitutes a sort of “locality” all its own. For purposes of the present study, I shall argue that we are justified in triangulating the thought of Origen, Iamblichus, and Augustine for a number of reasons. First, as we have already noted, the rhetorical approaches taken by both Origen and Augustine to the problem of magic and theurgy – in which their own subtle appropriations are masked by a differentiating rhetoric, and discussion of eucharist is abruptly intruded in the midst of rejections of pagan rites of mediation – serve to align

⁸ As Hans Dieter Betz argues: “The danger [of falsely positing Christianity and Antiquity as separate, stable entities] is only removed when antique Christianity is firmly regionalized and also considered as constituting different groups with particular identities” (1998) 8.

the two thinkers within a Christian tradition that rejects the magical and theurgic while appropriating their categories. Put simply, the rhetorical strategies of both thinkers are akin, and in each case point directly to an argument for eucharist that derives from a distinctively pagan context.

There are further reasons, related to the matter of intellectual culture, to consider these three thinkers together. Origen, as we shall see in Chapter II, participated in the sophisticated intellectual life of Alexandria, especially as a member of the philosophical circle of Ammonius Saccas. The latter was Plotinus' long sought teacher, a fact that places Porphyry, and subsequently Iamblichus, within the same intellectual tradition of the second century's Neopythagorean Middle Platonism. Iamblichus, furthermore, *may* have been a student of the Alexandrian philosopher Anatolius,⁹ as well as later of Porphyry himself. It is thus that we can see Origen and Iamblichus' views on first principles, materiality, the problem of the soul's embodiment, and material mediation of incorporeal principles as derived from ultimately kindred sources.

Another curious parallel arises from the fact that both Origen and Iamblichus are involved in a polemic with other Platonist thinkers who offer a skeptical rejoinder to their more monist metaphysical positions, where each is concerned to defend the efficacy of materially grounded cult against the claims of more dualist, noetically oriented philosophers attempting to preserve philosophy for an intellectual elite. Where Iamblichus must resist Porphyry's skepticism about theurgy as a legitimate set of material practices for mediating the soul's ascent – and also as a theoretical basis for common religion – so Origen must resist Celsus, who is similarly repulsed by Christianity's embrace of materially grounded incarnation and resurrection, and the broad appeal of its cult to the common run of men. Origen and Iamblichus, then, are thinkers emerging from a common culture of ideas, and sharing a common set of concerns. What divides them is not principle, but rather Origen's need to deploy a Christian rhetoric of identity to secure his Christianity against excessive association with pagan practices.

⁹ Anatolius' career and possible relation to Iamblichus are considered in Chapter II, pp. 44-50.

When we come to the matter of Augustine, we confront a thinker who is to some degree alienated by time and distance, but who is nevertheless a voluntary participant in the third century's debates. In his *On the City of God*, when he openly takes up the question of theurgy, he directly exploits Porphyry's own hesitations over the matter, turning the latter's own ambivalence against him in a kind of literary torsion. Porphyry's suspicions of theurgy, expressed in his *Letter to Anebo* and elsewhere, prompted Iamblichus' elaborate reply in its defense; and Augustine, from some remove, is delighted to adopt Porphyry's more skeptical positions, simply accusing him of failure to take the further step of acknowledging the superiority of Christianity as a system of mediation. The relation of these thinkers might thus be best expressed in terms of a shared resistance to a position on theurgy taken by Porphyry, with Origen and Augustine distinguished from Iamblichus principally by a dissembling rhetoric that enables their retention of core theurgic principles while rejecting *particular* theurgic hierarchies and rites.

Both Origen and Augustine, then, can be seen as not only men of elite education and Platonist disposition, but as direct participants in the very same debate – with Porphyry's anxiety over theurgy serving as something of a tangible link between them. When we add to these considerations the fact that Augustine's response to the claims of theurgy conspicuously mirrors Origen's – to include his rhetorical insinuation of Christian eucharist in the very midst of his rejection of pagan rites – it becomes entirely plausible to view these three thinkers as preoccupied with the same basic problems, and to see Origen and Augustine as, in some sense, Christian theurgists.

No conclusions about the development of a broader Christian sacramental discourse follow from such an assertion, although other Christian practices, such as baptism and the veneration of relics, might be made to conform to the same endorsements of material mediation. Such ambitions exceed the scope of this study, as they plainly lie beyond the interests of Origen and Augustine themselves in the context of their confrontation with the magical and theurgic as they find them in the works of their intellectual opponents. As they develop their responses to pagan rites of mediation

conceived theurgically, they invoke – in strikingly similar ways – precisely the eucharist as the unique solution to the problem posed by the broad system of daemonic mediation posed by pagan tradition. They appear to share a recognition of the implications of the thought that they confront, particularly an insight into the threat that pagan religion poses to the more narrowly conceived system of divine mediation represented by the eucharistic practice of the normative church – the church’s “daily sacrifice,” as Augustine describes it. For Christians, the cosmic temple of theurgy and magic, wherein myriad substances in the world are asserted as mediators of transcendence, could not be allowed to stand alongside the exclusive system of mediation by an incarnate *Logos* seen as continuous with material rites celebrated within the Christian community. Origen and Augustine are thus confronting the same problem, though in different times and places, and they are doing so with by means of the same rhetorical approach, conceived within the very philosophical tradition that produces theurgy itself.

Although the attempt to triangulate the thought of Origen and Augustine with that of Iamblichus may appear inadequately “local” and therefore somewhat arbitrary, it is really defined by the limited ambition of positing a relative similarity between the philosophical and rhetorical responses of two Christian participants in Greco-Roman philosophical culture. Two thinkers of Platonizing tendency are responding to traditional ways of describing the functionality of religious rites – ways that are finally codified, to the extent that such is possible, in the system of thought presented by Iamblichus. It is Iamblichus’ thought, then, and the articulated version of theurgy that it represents, that enables us to perceive that Origen and Augustine are quietly assimilating that from which they distance themselves rhetorically – and which would be more openly adopted in later centuries by Christian thinkers such as Pseudo-Dionysius as part of a systematic explanation of sacramental efficacy.

C. Terminology

Despite the good reasons for using the term “polytheist” rather than “pagan,” I shall use the terms more or less interchangeably.¹⁰ “Polytheist,” as it happens, is not always the perfectly distinguishing term, since in the intellectual conflict over Christianity in the 3rd century, division was not always seen in terms of “polytheism” and “monotheism.” When pagan thinkers inclined to attack Christianity, it was not generally the first principles of Christian thinkers that they targeted. Christian divine hierarchies had come increasingly to mirror those of the Platonism of that time, which were in turn given over to their own variants of what appeared to be trinitarianism.¹¹ To the extent that such nomenclature is required at all – and it obviously is – a certain amount of careful attention for the content of thought can surely excuse the somewhat casual employment of traditional terms.

Theurgy, and especially the claim that major third and fourth century Christian thinkers are quietly assimilating its ideas, is another matter. Iamblichus uses a fairly complicated set of terms to denote the material objects that may be understood to mediate incorporeal principle. *Eikon* designates the visible manifestation, the material surface of any such mediating element. *Symbolon* and *synthema* somewhat interchangeably designate either the invisible principle or form underlying the material element, or the element itself. *Symbolon* as a term designating such “form” is attested in the theurgic *Chaldean Oracles*, though Iamblichus seems to use the term in a double-edged way, indicating both the object of cult attention and the invisible realities to which it supplies a link – a usage that emphasizes the mediating or “bridge” function of the *symbolon* in cult, and making of the *symbolon* both an outward sign and an inward mystery. Origen appropriates this term in the course of rejecting “magical” rites and defending his rather abruptly introduced discussion of eucharist in the course of his argument.¹² That Origen would invoke this term, which would later be central to

¹⁰ The reasons are explained by Fowden (2005) 521-522.

¹¹ See Frede (1997) 228-29.

¹² That Origen does not trouble to distinguish magic and theurgy is no matter; refusal to do so would have been standard procedure for any Christian polemicist, as Augustine’s argument in

Iamblichus' discussion of theurgy, is not in itself an argument that Origen is operating within a theurgic tradition. What compels attention is not a mere philological parallel, but rather the term's rhetorical context. At precisely the moment that Origen declares the illegitimacy of pagan magical practices that invoke any number of objects as *symbola*, employing a sharp, dismissive rhetoric to distinguish illicit pagan practices from acceptable Christian rites, he abruptly adopts the term himself, arbitrarily transferring a key piece of terminology from a pagan to a Christian discourse. Thus, as I have argued above, it is not merely substantive argument, or in this case philological parallel, that should determine our reading of a Christian thinker's relation to magic and theurgy, but rather the rhetorical context of his argument, in which an effort toward differentiation may conceal furtive assimilations.

Augustine presents a curiously similar case, and perhaps the more fascinating one, since as a later thinker he could engage theurgy as a more developed system. Books 8-10 of *On the City of God* are composed with the aim of rejecting pagan systems of *daemonic* mediation, which Augustine identifies with theurgy and magic. Much like Origen, he abruptly intrudes a justification of Christian eucharist in the midst of his dismissal of more ancient mediating hierarchies and rites. The theoretical framework that Augustine applies in its defense centers on the term *signum*, or "sign." It is not adequate to argue that Augustine is merely translating the theurgic *symbolon* into a Latin *signum*, and to suggest on the basis of philological echo that he, like Origen, is a crypto-theurgist; but as in Origen's case, the rhetorical context, where the principal aim is rejection of *daemonic* mediation, suggests strongly that Augustine means to interpolate his own system within a pre-existing pagan template. When we further note how he shifts the meaning of the term *signum* over the course of his argument, moving quietly from a notion of sacrifice as a metaphorical "sign" of transformed inner disposition, to a notion of the eucharistic "sacrifice" as a "sign" in what must plainly be a deeper sense – requiring that the *signum* function as a vehicle manifesting substantive inner realities to

On the City of God makes plain. Even Iamblichus himself would struggle to maintain the distinction against intellectual opposition long after Origen's death.

the votary – then it becomes clear that Augustine, too, is invoking notions of mediation that are characteristic of the theurgic systems he attacks. As before, rhetorical context is the decisive factor in identifying the possibility of analogy in thought.

3. Overview

The aim of Chapter II is to suggest ways of approaching Christian thinkers in the second and third centuries as participants in a world of shared intellectual assumptions – a culture marked by common access to intellectual circles, the same philosophical and rhetorical “schools.” When the intellectual culture of antiquity is so viewed, it becomes possible to see the thought of different thinkers, themselves variously pagan or Christian, as indebted to a common tradition. The crucial point in the argument is that culture itself is shared; Christians do not merely engage in mimicry, but rather participate in intellectual culture alongside traditionalists, such that they are predictably absorbed by the same questions, and unsurprisingly work out solutions to problems described within the same conceptual parameters. Such an understanding is conducive to a proper approach to the thought of Iamblichus, Origen, and Augustine in subsequent chapters. In the course of this argument, we shall consider first some of modernity’s deficient models for defining the relationship between “Christianity” and “Antiquity,” many of which are founded upon an erroneous idea of “origins,” that tended to posit a “pure” Christianity standing prior to the “corruptions” of later periods. Also under consideration will be the relative benefit of making comparisons in analogical rather than genealogical terms. The next section will consider the ways in which Christian apologists of the second century may be fruitfully considered as the earliest instances of a rhetoric of differentiation that struggles to find ways of situating Christian thought within Greco-Roman culture. The approaches of the apologists differ widely, but in each case, whether their intention is opposition or integration, the apologists emerge as definitively Greco-Roman figures, deploying tropes and arguments that reveal them as specimens of classical culture, whether comfortably so or not. The argument will then

proceed to the intellectual culture of the third century, citing evidence for what we know of Christian participation in the sophisticated philosophical culture of Alexandria. Central to this story will be the careers – somewhat speculatively reconstructed – of the peripatetic philosopher and Christian convert Anatolius, who himself may have had connections to Iamblichus and Porphyry, and that of Origen, whose participation in the more elite intellectual circles emerges clearly despite Eusebius’ tendentious hagiography. This cultural picture should inform the way we consult the texts of both pagan and Christian thinkers in our attempts define what, in their several views, accounts for the efficacy of religious rites of mediation.

Chapter III will step away from the lives of Christian thinkers, and focus rather on Iamblichean theurgy. It will begin with some background on Iamblichus’ development of a philosophically grounded theurgy as a studied response to the deficiencies that he perceived in the Platonism of his day, and as a legitimate philosophical outlook founded on a more faithful reading of the Platonic tradition. It will specifically engage Iamblichus’ conflict with the Platonist tradition of his time, especially his opposition to what he sees as distortions of Platonic thought in the work Plotinus and Porphyry on such matters as the “undescended” soul, then proceed to Iamblichus’ own cosmology, in which the material cosmos is a manifestation of transcendent reality, so that the soul’s repatriation may be understood as mediated by a material world conceived in terms of Iamblichus’ fundamental monism. Iamblichus’ metaphysics are Neopythagorean in origin and affirm the goodness of material reality as a manifestation of eternal cosmic proportions. He thereby resolves the Platonic tradition’s ambivalence over the soul’s relation to matter, finally asserting matter as *both* disorienting hindrance and necessary instrument, and asserting that the properly repatriated soul participates in the demiurgic organization of the material cosmos through cult that properly aligns it with the demiurge’s *daemonic* functionaries. Since such an approach vindicates material religious cult, the argument will consider finally the Iamblichean theory of the *symbolon* – as expressed through the complex of terms *symbolon*, *synthema*, and *eikon* – the arcane signs and imprints dispersed through

material nature, serving as the theurgist's portal to the invisible demiurgic world of gods and *daemons*. Iamblichus' thought on these *symbola* is crucial to understanding the links connecting Christian thinkers with a theurgic worldview – links that are strongly suggested in the embrace of such language and concepts by Christians, even when rhetorically dissimulated.

In a way that loosely mirrors the consideration of Iamblichus in Chapter III, Chapter IV will consider Origen's cosmology and spiritual anthropology – his variant on the traditional narrative of the fall of the soul – and his Christian response to the issue of embodiment, which for him, as for Iamblichus, requires the mediation of material cult as part of a remedy. It will advance the argument that Origen, though often handled as if he were a firm dualist, is actually less so than one might think, and that his more monist metaphysics, and his embrace of an idea of the universality of embodiment, prepares the way for a theory of the incarnate *Logos* who mediates divine life for all rational, embodied creatures, and whose rationale is continuous with theoretical justification of material sacrament. Not unlike Iamblichus, Origen undertakes to defend embodiment on traditional Platonic ground, accusing his interlocutor (Celsus) of failing to grasp the vindications of material reality that the Platonic tradition contains. His views of spiritual anthropology and divine incarnation, enable Origen to replace traditional religious forms advocated by Celsus with a Christian variant, parallel in its conceptualization, but conceived as an extension of the incarnation of the *Logos*, whose mediation thoroughly replaces that of gods and *daemons* in the pagan pantheon. In connection with this displacement I shall argue that Origen's explicit rejection of magical and theurgic acts is actually accompanied by the *retention* of much of the intellectual framework attending such acts, as marked especially by the language of *symbolon*, which he appropriates explicitly from a pagan religious context.

Chapter V is intended to function as the Augustinian coda to the argument. It contends that Augustine, too, must confront the question of theurgy and daemonically mediated cult, and that he does so in a manner that can be more precisely observed and measured since he lived long after Iamblichus, in an age in which the claims of theurgy

had long been an object of serious intellectual dispute. Without reconstructing Augustinian first principles and cosmology, still less an Augustinian theory of the soul, it is possible to mark the way that Augustine's argument in *On the City of God* follows some trajectories similar to Origen's. He, too, must dismiss traditional, pagan hierarchies of gods and *daemons*, consigning them to the empty categories of magic, witchcraft, and theurgy, which consist entirely of encosmic manipulations that only entrap the soul more deeply in a shifting, illusory material world. He replaces theurgic / *daemonic* models of mediation with a Christian model that is conspicuously adapted to the very terms of transcendent mediation characteristic of Apuleius' account of the *daemonic*, and that is predicated on the superior mediating capacities of the incarnate Christ, making Christ the precise remedy for the defects identified in the Apuleian system. Augustine likewise must overcome his own penchant for dualism, eventually clarifying his view of matter as a neutral substrate for the mediation of contact with a divine *principium* (the incarnate *Logos*). While Augustine's engagement with theurgy is more direct, his appropriations of its thought and language is somewhat more subtle. Rather than simply appropriating the language of *symbolon*, Augustine applies his own sign-theory of language as a model for explaining cult mediation, developing the idea that a tangible sacramental sign can mediate a substantive participation by believers in the sacrifice of Christ. This argument is initially obscured by the rhetorical distancing of Christian rites from their pagan counterparts, in which the term *signum*, as it applies to cult, is quarantined from association with magic and theurgy; however, as Augustine applies his sign-theory of language as an analogy to cult efficacy, it becomes clear that for him the eucharist is a visible "sign" that conveys in a substantial way the content of the church's invisible "sacrifice" [*sacrificium*] to participating believers. Augustine's engagement with theurgy, then, may be observed to commence from a pretended dualist rejection of matter and *daemonic* worship, and to proceed to an embrace of material mediation in which pagan rites are furtively displaced by Christian practice whose defining difference is the agent of mediation, the incarnate *Logos*, whose healing efficacy is described in terms of a theory of sign. Augustine's approach thus preserves

an idea of material reality as a mediator of transcendent principle, which creates conceptual space for an incarnate Word and material rituals whose “signification” is coterminous with their effects.

4. Summary Observation

At the center of my approach to the problem of the relationship of third and fourth century Christian thinkers to theurgy are several basic governing convictions. First, that the history of intellectual culture shows that the transmission of ideas should not be understood in terms of straightforward lineal descent. A sense of the possibilities for lateral communication of ideas across credal boundaries should be normative in any discussion of Christian thinkers. In a related matter, we should be attuned to the ways in which the rhetoric employed by sophisticated Christian thinkers – or by modern scholars – can actually serve to obscure our sense of lateral transmission. Thus, our grasp of the first point – that pagans and Christians live within the confines of shared tradition – can be impaired by the vigorous rhetoric of exclusion and self-definition that Christian thinkers often apply in their polemics, or by the terms applied by modern scholarship that may isolate Christian thinkers from their pagan contemporaries. The rhetoric of distinctive identity can easily become an obstacle in the way of recognizing the critical appropriations that Christian thinkers make, just as it serves to mask those associations from their pagan interlocutors. In the end, if we scrutinize the engagement with what is essentially theurgic thought in the works of Origen and Augustine, we discern that both thinkers, in surprisingly similar ways, construct provisional systems of Christian sacramental mediation, shaped by a theology of the incarnate *Logos*, and conceptually parallel to the theurgic systems of hierarchic mediation whose validity their work strives to deny.

Chapter II: Pagan and Christian Intellectual Culture

1. *The Problem of Comparison: Christianity and Antiquity*

*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosylemis.*¹³ Tertullian's question remains an expression of the central problem in the study of Christianity in its relation to the intellectual and cultural world of the Greco-Roman world. Perhaps because Tertullian was not the mere anti-intellectual fideist that such rhetoric might suggest,¹⁴ neatly sequestering faith from rational reflection, his question remains particularly important as a specimen of the rhetorical attempt to separate what are assumed to be the neatly separable faith and reason. Plainly, though, the rhetorical posture that Tertullian displays can scarcely conceal now, as it could hardly check then, the broad and significant influence of a Greco-Roman philosophical, rhetorical, and religious inheritance on the formation of normative Christianity. Athens has more to do with Jerusalem than we can easily measure, or than Tertullian may have always been prepared to contemplate. His question ramifies into a host of others, not only on how philosophy affected the shape of theological debates in antiquity, but on how a broad range of cultural, intellectual, and religious habits characteristic of the late Roman Empire influenced and shaped aspects of emergent Christianity – or perhaps *made* Christianity; and in turn, how Christian forms of thought and worship may have exerted influence of their own. In short, the question raises the problems of influence, reception, and comparison, with all of the methodological problems for the study of ancient religion that such terms entail. In the

¹³ *De praescr. haeret.* 7.9

¹⁴ This is often suggested, based on his other notable apothegm, *credibile est, quia ineptum est*. See Sider (1980) 417.

case of Christianity, the problems of reception and comparison are complicated even more by the diffuse nature of the phenomena at issue. The forms of Christianity in antiquity represent more than simple creed and practice that happened to absorb the terms of Greek philosophy; they represent first of all particular cults and communities of considerable variety, which suggests that the categories of “reception” and “influence” must be spacious enough to include a range of cultural and religious assumptions and practices, and that the project of comparison is really open-ended. Such a recognition may even raise the prospect of collapsing the distinction between “polytheist” and “Christian” in some of its aspects, assuming that polytheist and Christian cult draw upon a shared cultural store of religious beliefs, assumptions, and practices, so that a truly full consideration of the relationship of Athens to Jerusalem, of “pagan” to Christian, would entail a virtually open set of cultural factors, philosophical casts of mind, tendencies in literary criticism and exegesis, as well as a variety of religious and cultic assumptions. In short, when considering the polytheist and the Christian in the abstract, there is virtually no space within the intellectual and religious life of the late Roman Empire where the two can be easily extricated one from the another.

The problem is daunting, and perhaps even more so when we focus on particular areas where sharp rhetorical differentiation clearly benefits Christian apologists, as is decidedly the case for Origen and Augustine, who deploy a lively rhetoric of rejection of magical and theurgic practices, while quietly adapting Christian cult to their theoretical norms. The two certainly realize that a rhetoric of self-definition is always more potent when it asserts boundaries clearly, and perhaps the more necessary when those boundaries are more apparent than real, such that rhetoric is directed primarily toward obscuring actual affinities. The project of comparison, then, is rendered more complicated by this rhetoric of difference.

The purpose of the present chapter is to suggest a way of thinking about Christian thinkers in the second and third centuries that will enable a proper approach to the thought of Iamblichus, Origen, and Augustine in subsequent chapters. If we view the world of pagans and Christians as a culture marked by common access to

intellectual circles, within which thinkers of various commitments could resort to the same philosophical and rhetorical “schools” for their formation, then it becomes possible to see the thought of different thinkers, themselves variously pagan or Christian, as indebted to a shared set of assumptions and ideas. The crucial point in this argument is that intellectual culture is *shared*. More sophisticated Christian thinkers do not merely mimic classical rhetorical style, or lift jargon from philosophical handbooks; rather, they participate in intellectual culture alongside traditional polytheists, such that they are predictably absorbed by the same questions, just as they unsurprisingly work out solutions described within the same conceptual parameters. As part of establishing such a view of Christianity and antiquity, the present chapter will survey: (2) the ways in which many modern thinkers, in theorizing ancient Christianity, have proceeded from the assumption of Christianity as an isolated phenomenon in antiquity, essential and unique, and set against an entirely separate “pagan” world whose influences on Christianity were understood to be resisted at every turn. Such an approach is finally rooted in an erroneous idea of “origins,” and derives much of its initial energy from Reformation attempts to posit an original, “pure” Christianity that stands prior to the “corruptions” of later periods – whether characterized in terms of “mystery cult” or Roman Catholicism. Such an outlook tends to see relationships between religious phenomena only in *genealogical* terms, where Christianity is generally shown to be resisting the pernicious effects of “paganism” in the course of its proper organic development. Against this approach, the present argument will proceed rather from *analogical* principles, assuming that various pagan and Christian phenomena develop along similar lines because they are part of a shared culture. Section (3) will consider the second century Christian apologists as early attempts to situate Christian identity within an established Greco-Roman culture. These thinkers adopted various rhetorical postures in their attempts to define Christianity’s difference or to assert its capacity for assimilation into a Roman world. All such cases, whether the rhetorical objective is opposition or integration, point to the conclusion that all the apologists are already definitively and consciously Greco-Roman, as their philosophical and rhetorical tropes

reveal, and that their texts reveal the various postures that one might take in negotiating a position within Greco-Roman intellectual culture, and in asserting what is already a largely Greek intellectual identity. Section (4) examines briefly what we know of the third century peripatetic and Christian convert Anatolius, invoking his case as prelude to thinking about the more advanced Christian intellectual culture of Alexandria at that time. The city of Alexandria, I shall argue in section (5), always the venue of an impressive intellectual culture, provides access to serious intellectual formation for both pagans and Christians. The career of Origen, despite the tendentious suppression and deferral of information characterizing the account of Eusebius, reveals a culture in which pagans and Christians apparently associated freely within some of the city's more elite cultural circles. The career of Origen himself, as well as the careers of his predecessors and contemporaries, bears witness to a common philosophical culture that shaped the thought and identities of pagans and Christians alike. This cultural picture should inform the way we approach the texts of both pagan and Christian thinkers in our attempts define what, in their several views, accounts for the efficacy of religious cult.

2. Christianity and Antiquity: the Modern Problem

For moderns, any consideration of the interaction between Christian thinkers and their surrounding world of beliefs, philosophies and cultural forms, must be marked by the awareness that the dominant tendency on such questions over time, with roots in the religious polemic of early modernity, presumed to locate a stable, well-defined "Christianity," whose "clash" or "confrontation" with a similarly stable pagan antiquity, could be measured and evaluated. As Jonathan Z. Smith has shown, this tendency has the Reformation as an early source, where the dominant rhetorical mode sought historical vindication for a "pristine" Christianity untainted by "Platonism" or

“Popery.”¹⁵ Very often such thinkers employed “Platonism” as a favored term of vilification, finding in Justin Martyr the easiest early target for their disapproval.¹⁶ To be sure, the term “Platonist” is almost infinitely plastic in such contexts, shading into other categories of invective such as “heathen”; however, as Smith notes, this early modern scholarship may perhaps be better taken as

comparing Christianity with itself, or more precisely, with an idealized version of itself (the ‘simple gospel’). Any remainder was considered a “corruption” for which the covering term was, most frequently, “Platonism.”

“Platonism,” rhetorically synonymous with corruption, must be peeled away to reveal the pristine Christianity presumed to lie behind it – the “simple” faith that is straightforwardly posited by these scholars. Remarkably, the influence of this approach does not end with the gradual reduction of overt anti-Catholic sentiment over time. This is among Smith’s more important points: the treasured idea of a “pure” early Christianity untainted by “Platonism,” “paganism,” or “popery” remains intact in much later scholarship, with only the covering language altered. Where “popery” had earlier functioned as a generic category for corrupting influence, serving to isolate and insulate the untainted original (Protestant) “Christianity,” now “late antique religion” would do the same. Scholars shed the animus, but retained the implied method and principles of their more fervently Protestant forbears.¹⁷

¹⁵ Smith’s lectures in *Drudgery Divine* (1990), particularly “On the Origin of Origins,” economically trace the genealogy of the myth of stable Christian “origins,” sketching anti-Trinitarian, anti-“Platonic” thinkers from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In part he summarizes Walter Glawe’s *Die Helenisierung des Christentums* (1912) in tracing this line of thought from Heinrich Bullinger’s assault on “cultic” infiltrations in Catholicism (1528-29) and Mathias Flacius Illyricus’s *Magdeburg Centuries*, with their emphasis on the diabolical wellsprings of “popery,” through Michael Servetus (*Trinity*, 1531) and the more explicitly Unitarian thinkers of the seventeenth century, such as Joseph Biddle (*Confession of Faith Concerning the Holy Trinity*, 1648), who in turn influenced such eighteenth century anti-Trinitarians as Joseph Priestley.

¹⁶ This is true of both Biddle (1648) and Zwicker (1648), and to some extent, N. Souverain, *Le Platonisme voilé: ou Essai touchant le Verbe Platonicien* (Cologne, 1700). Only Souverain seems to recognize Justin’s context, and to distinguish between “Platonism,” conventionally speaking, and its adaptations by Christian thinkers. Cited in Smith (1990) 16-18.

¹⁷ “The same presuppositions, the same rhetorical tactics, indeed, in the main, the very same data exhibited in these early efforts underlie much of our present day research, with one important

Later modern scholarship bears witness to this tendency. The work of the great historian Franz Joseph Dölger (1879-1940) implicitly envisions Christianity as a single, coherent entity or phenomenon confronting the elements of an ambient pagan culture:

With the crossing of the border of Palestine Christianity entered the area of antique and pagan culture..., everywhere there was evidence of profane and religious life which had to be analysed.¹⁸

The language that Dölger uses here and elsewhere suggests confrontation, even “clash” between Christianity and polytheist culture, but for him it is a productive engagement, characterized by both “rejection” and “adjustment” contributing to Christianity’s proper development – a process in which “essential” Christianity was to be found inviolate even beneath centuries of dogmatic development.¹⁹ This position runs sharply counter to the celebrated view of Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) that a pure, original gospel was vitiated by Hellenism from the second century onward, in a process characterized by “the work of the spirit of a decadent antiquity on the soil of the Gospel.” Catholicism itself was, for von Harnack, “the product of the innermost fusion of Christianity with Antiquity.”²⁰ For Dölger, Christianity absorbs, adapts, but nonetheless resists; for von Harnack, it is corrupted. It is perhaps no accident that Dölger was a Catholic and von Harnack a Protestant. Their approaches are thus opposed, but nevertheless share a basic similarity in outlook, in which normative Christianity is constructed as a more or less stable, separate entity that can be qualified over and against ambient paganism:

Harnack contrasted a normatively constructed Christianity as a static entity with a pagan world surrounding it, with the surrounding world

alteration, that the characteristics attributed to ‘Popery,’ by the Reformation and post-Reformation controversialists, have been transferred, wholesale, to the religions of Late Antiquity.” Smith (1990) 34. See especially n.58, where he annotates at great length the scholarly tendency to assign Roman Catholic terminology to phenomena observed in ancient mystery religions, while refraining from doing so to early Christian sacraments.

¹⁸ F.J. Dölger, *Zur Einführung*, AuC 1 (1929), Vf. (V), quoted in Marksches (2006) who notes further that for Dölger “the pagan culture of antiquity divided into numerous individual elements of evidence which a stronger, monolithic Christianity had to analyse” (19).

¹⁹ Marksches (2006) 20-21.

²⁰ A. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte vol 1. Die Entstehung des Kirchlichen Dogmas*, Sammlung Theologischer Lehrbücher II/I, Tübingen 1886, 253f. (= 1909, 346), quoted in Marksches (2006) 21.

dominating the original (ur) “simple” Christianity of Jesus of Nazareth, whereas for Dölger Christianity was inculturated through rejection as well as adjustment and so “the struggle against paganism” continued with no loss of essence....²¹

More recent scholarship has been less inclined to posit fixities from which change can be observed and described. As Hans Dieter Betz puts it, in an attempt to move away from such thinking, “‘Antiquity’ and ‘Christianity’ do not simply stand in opposition to each other as monolithic blocks but as entities subject to mutual historical change.”²² In accordance with this view, the relevant data from the past,

phenomena covered by the concept of ‘antiquity and Christianity,’ appear during the course of history as ever-changing configurations of discontinuity and continuity, destruction and conservation, and retroversion and progress.

This is an appealing fluidity; Betz goes on to say, however, that “phases” in this process can be discerned, each marked by “highly intense encounters between antiquity and Christianity.”²³ Perhaps the requirements of discourse cannot endure a picture of differentiation and flux, and dictate a retrenchment to the linguistic conventions of “Christianity” and “Antiquity” as reasonably fixed quantities that can be observed in “highly intense encounters.” The relatively nebulous “discontinuity and continuity ... destruction and conservation” can quickly become quickly the poles in a balanced dialectic, where Christianity and Antiquity confront us yet again, each with its strange

²¹ Marksches (2006) 22, who goes on to show the vagary that has often attended subsequent attempts to define the relationship between the categories, “Antiquity” and “Christianity.” For Leopold Zscharnack (1877-1955), they are “two basic elements that have freely merged so as to become inseparable” (L. Zscharnack, *Antike und Christentum*, in ²RGG 1 [1927], 378-390 [378]). For Heinrich Kraft, Christianity “experienced a radical change” in its confrontation with Antiquity: “it has itself become antiquity.” (H. Kraft, *Antike und Christentum*, in ¹RGG 1 [1957], 436-449 [436]).

²² Adopting the language of Jacques Fontaine, “Christentum ist auch Antike,” *JAC* 25 (1982) 5-27, he observes that the process of interaction must be understood “not only as *Auseinandersetzung*, that is, as opposition and confrontation between the culture of the Greco-Roman world and Christianity, but also as their *Ineinandersetzung*, that is, as “intraposition,” integration and new creation (1998) 6.

²³ Betz (1998) 7.

insistence on singularity.²⁴ It may be difficult at times to differentiate, on the one hand “merging with” or “becoming” Antiquity offered by some scholars,²⁵ and, on the other hand, Betz’s broad “concept of ‘Antiquity and Christianity’” that seems intent on fusing the two categories. In like manner, it may be hard to distinguish between Dölger’s “rejection” and “adjustment” and Betz’s “destruction and conservation.” But then again, merely to submerge Betz’s thought in that of his forbears may be unfair. Surely he is innocent of positing or assuming a primordial “pure” Christianity susceptible to von Harnack’s corruptions or to Dölger’s constructive engagement, just as he seems to recognize that the notion of Christianity “becoming” Antiquity runs the risk of banality. Certainly Betz can be taken to mean that insofar as we must employ the terms – and we must – we ought to do so in a modest way, guarding against the dangers of “hypostasizing” Christianity or Antiquity as stable entities, and noting carefully where we can discern parallel phenomena, apparent similarity, conscious or unconscious difference; we may see Christianity as a complication that enters into the Mediterranean world, and in part explicable in terms of *Auseinandersetzung* and *Ineinandersetzung*, discontinuity and continuity, destruction and conservation.

Betz does in fact attempt to illustrate something very like this approach, showing that the earliest identifiable Christianity emerges from within a pre-existent engagement of Judaism and Hellenism, where John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth are Jews

concerned about the theological and practical integrity of obedience toward the will of God as revealed in the Torah, concerns heightened in view of the external and internal provocations and challenges by the culture in the heartland of the Jews.

²⁴ This is essentially the critique of Betz offered by Marksches (2006) 23, who sees his approach as fundamentally differing little from that of his forbears. It may be difficult at times to discern the difference between Zscharnack’s “merging with” or Kraft’s “becoming” Antiquity on the one hand, and Betz’s broad “concept” of “Antiquity and Christianity” that seems intent on blending them. In like manner, it may be hard to distinguish between Dölger’s “rejection” and “adjustment” and Betz’s “destruction and conservation.” To be fair, Marksches does acknowledge the ubiquitous need for reducing “the eternal richness of a life lived” to “types for didactical purposes” (32): howsoever conscious of reduction we may be, we will inevitably lapse into using them.

²⁵ Zscharnack and Kraft’s terms, respectively.

In this telling, “Christianity” does not simply appear, and then variously resist or assimilate aspects of surrounding polytheism. The Jews are *already* so engaged with the Greco-Roman world, and the “teachings and activities [of Jesus] occurred as his response to the question of how the kingdom of God could be manifest in the midst of the Roman occupation and under the influence of pagan life in Palestine.”²⁶ To be sure, Christianity rapidly moves beyond a particular rabbi’s contribution to the Jewish engagement with Roman political and cultural hegemony, inasmuch as its focus shifts from such preoccupations to the person of Jesus himself. This much Betz readily grants; but surely valid is his argument that from its shadowy origins Christianity is already a variation on a theme, a phase in provincial response to diverse cultural phenomena that may reasonably be classed as Greco-Roman “Antiquity.” In other words, *pace* Marksches, it is not clear that Betz is as guilty of “isolating ‘Antiquity’ and ‘Christianity’ as two stable and originally independent entities.” His “Christianity” is hardly stable, even from its inception. And perhaps, finally, his approach is not at odds with the admonition that “the danger [of positing Christianity and Antiquity as separate, stable entities] is only removed when antique Christianity is firmly regionalized and also considered as constituting different groups with particular identities.”²⁷ Betz’s intricate, if brief account of a Jewish pre-Christianity in Palestine is surely consistent with such a program; and to such a program there is surely no alternative if we are to do justice to Christianity in all of its local diversity, avoiding excessive generalization.

Whatever construction we choose, we must retain a basic awareness that would isolate Christianity as a “unique” phenomenon tends to paralyze comparison, tainting scholarship with a false notion of what comparison involves. We have already seen how many earlier attempts at comparing Christianity with ambient religions really involved the project of *comparing Christianity with itself*, that is, of comparing it with, and by definition isolating it from, its own later “corrupt” forms, which are themselves either “Catholic” or influenced by “pagan” religious forms. This tendency remains prominent

²⁶ Betz (1998) 8.

²⁷ *ibid.* 30.

in later scholarship, where the primary motivations are no longer anti-Catholic, but where the governing assumptions still work to protect Christianity from association with mystery religions of late antiquity. This modern approach blends an absolute *ontological* claim for the incomparability of the “Christ event,” defined as the “death and resurrection of Jesus,” with an *historical* claim for the incomparability of the Christian *kerygma* itself, a shift described by Smith as an “illicit transfer” of a “theological affirmation of absolute uniqueness to an historical statement that, standing alone, could never assert more than relative uniqueness, that is to say, a quite ordinary postulation of difference.”²⁸ The Protestant polemics are gone, but a genuine comparative exercise is paralyzed by placing not only primordial Christianity, but all of its subsequent articulations, behind a redoubt of “uniqueness” that is essentially a category of incomparability. Identification and assessment of “ordinary,” relative difference is simply swallowed by such assumptions. Within the parameters of such an approach, “the only possibilities for utilizing comparisons are to make assertions regarding dependence,”²⁹ where Christianity is generally asserted *not* to be “dependent” on some other religious form. The central category in this discussion is genealogical relationship, which is posited in order to be denied, so that Christianity may be preserved free from pollution.³⁰ The questions posed are, does Christianity *borrow*? Is it *dependent*? The

²⁸ Smith (1990) 39.

²⁹ *ibid.* 47.

³⁰ An intriguing and somewhat benign example is supplied by Paul Bradshaw’s reading of the liturgical material in the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*. He rejects the argument that the repeated invocations of divine agencies in the *epiclesis* derive from Greek magical formulae, arguing rather that such invocations more likely stem from the Aramaic formula *marana tha*, “Our Lord, come!” attested twice in the New Testament and once in the *Didache*. Bradshaw grants the possibility of magic’s influence, but asserts the Christian formula as “the most likely antecedent” (2004, 126). He cites no reason, though the argument that Christian communities would grant priority to Christian texts is implied; but this gets us nowhere when we consider that Christian texts, too, are in some sense a product of the Greco-Roman religious imagination. The formative influences behind a Christian text – or behind an invocation like *marana tha* – may lie also behind other documents. Bradshaw’s approach arguably reflects the instinctive tendency among many scholars to isolate the “Christian” and the “pagan” from one another, precisely in the interest of protecting Christianity from genealogical association with “influences” that are not Christian. Bradshaw acknowledges that the argument about magic *may* have some merit, but prefers the

answers presume absolute difference, and the singularity of Christianity.³¹ But only the idea of *relative* difference, conceived as part of an approach that regards Christianity as *different* from other phenomena, but which guards against attempts to consign it to the category of “uniqueness,” opens up the possibility of actual comparison.

The aversion to analogical comparison, and the embrace of genealogical comparison – if only to deny its plausibility in the case of Christianity³² – work on the false assumption that comparison is natural, that it works to unfold the “true” relations between things. “Likeness” is assumed to reside within the things themselves, rather than within the mind of the scholar; but as Smith points out, whenever comparisons are made, the observer is always implicitly including a *tertium quid* – a third, *less similar* element that also stands in some relation to whatever may be the scholar’s interest. As he puts it, the scholar never observes truly that “*x* resembles *y*,” as if the elements *x* and *y* subsisted in a vacuum. In fact, since *x* and *y* subsist among many other things, the scholar is really saying that “*x* resembles *y* more than *z* with respect to....” In other words, the drawing together of *x* and *y* in the scholar’s mind is an intellectual exercise determined by an antecedent scholarly interest. *X* and *y* are juxtaposed because certain of their aspects serve a larger theoretical interest, to cast light upon a particular item that is posited as interesting. In the case of theurgic ritual and Christian sacrament, say, we might assert a likeness between certain aspects of the two *not* necessarily because they are genealogically connected, but because they manifest traits that can be taken to support an argument for a gradual legitimization of the idea of material mediation of transcendence in the late third and early fourth century. In respect to such an interest, Christian cult practice in the late third century (*x*) may be more like theurgy (*y*) than the

implied reasoning that anything Christian may be best explained by appealing to safely Christian texts.

³¹ Also interesting is the suggestion that this strategy is “as old as the recorded history of religious comparison. It is the notion of autochthony as present in Herodotus.” There, Egyptian practices constitute a pristine original, indebted to no external source or influence. Greeks borrow from the prestigious Egyptians; Persians indiscriminately from everyone (47-48).

³² As Smith puts the matter, “The thought appears to be that, from the standpoint of protecting the privileged position of early Christianity, it is only genealogical comparisons that are worthy of note, if only, typically, insistently to be denied” (1990) 47-48.

religious theorizing of Porphyry (z) is like theurgy (y) *with respect to the ways in which the divine may be mediated to the human*. Such a comparison asserts nothing causal or genealogical; in fact, one tends to find evidence for the overt adoption of theurgic theory only in much later Christian thought. The claim of likeness works in the service of a larger end, with neither the protection of “pure” Christianity nor assertions of mere “syncretism” (cover language for “corruption”) in view. As Smith puts it, comparison

does not necessarily tell us how things ‘are’ (the far from latent presupposition that lies behind the notion of the ‘genealogical’ with its quest for ‘real’ historical connections); like models and metaphors, comparison tells us how things might be conceived.... A comparison is a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge. It lifts out and strongly marks certain features within difference as being of possible intellectual significance, expressed in the rhetoric of their being ‘like’ in some stipulated fashion. Comparison provides the means by which *we* ‘re-vision’ phenomena as *our* data in order to solve *our* theoretical problems.³³

Such an approach is absolutely necessary if we are to protect ourselves from methodologies with latent tendencies toward attacking or defending Christianity in its various ancient forms. The agenda must be to assert something about cult practice or religious culture in the late antique world, where a matrix of ideas, beliefs and practices give rise to *both* the theurgic strain of Neoplatonism *and* an emergent Christian sacramental system. That is to say, the comparison made must be analogical, where analogy is not seen as a menace to the “uniqueness” of Christianity. In the present case, the purpose of the analogical comparison must be to illuminate the theurgic aspect of late antique intellectual culture that vindicated material cult in the face of philosophical abstraction, and that likewise may have enabled some third and fourth century Christian interrogations of eucharist.

Such an approach does not necessarily require the devotion to particularity that Betz prescribes. There is no doubt that Christianity is characterized by considerable diversity at every point in its early development, but even in light of this fact we are

³³ Smith (1990) 52.

surely not compelled to regard only those studies as legitimate that focus on the archaeology of local communities. There is plenty of evidence, even in the second century, both for a desired unity among Christians, and for a desired assimilation into the intellectual culture of the Greco-Roman world. If there is “particularity” emphasized in this present study, it is to be found in my focus on two particular intellectuals – Origen and Augustine – whose thought cannot be taken otherwise than as a broad engagement with a pagan intellectual world. It is precisely their milieu that may help us to understand their particular rhetoric and arguments. Observations of a general kind about Christian engagement with intellectual culture may thus be made, not so that we may simply level the particular, but rather so that we may understand it in its larger context. “Christians intellectuals in the Roman Empire” is not an illegitimate category, as the pattern suggested by the second century Christian apologists suggests.

The works of the apologists are worthy of summary consideration not simply on grounds of their intellectual content, but rather because their attempts to legitimize Christian thought within the context of pagan learning gives rise to a tension between rhetoric and actuality that will characterize a great deal of subsequent Christian discourse, giving rise to, among other things, Tertullian’s celebrated rhetorical question. This tension emerges as the product of a need to maintain the appearance of difference – of Christianity’s “uniqueness” – while simultaneously laying claim to the intellectual traditions of antiquity. When we move to consider the work of Origen and Augustine, we shall note the same tendency: a strategy of asserting radical difference while quietly developing a theory of eucharistic mediation that functions analogously to theurgy.

3. Christian Thinkers in the Roman Empire: the Greek Apologists

Extensive analysis of the apologists’ indebtedness to forms of Greek thought and culture is here unnecessary. Their texts plainly take their form from Greek rhetorical conventions and their intellectual content from Stoicism and Middle Platonist thought. Of greatest importance to the present argument is their tendency to assume rhetorical

postures that variously assert or conceal their engagement with Greek culture in their attempt to make Christianity a *legitimate* part of a Greco-Roman world. Initially, circumstance might well have dictated a rhetorical strategy emphasizing assimilation rather than difference. Prejudice against Christians had increased in Asia after the reign of Hadrian, and evidence suggests that the Antonine emperors were being urged to revert to the more measured policies of their predecessors.³⁴ Internal and external threats to the empire during the Antonine era perhaps exacerbated the problem. Military instability on the northern frontier, revolt in Egypt, plague, the Bar Kochba rebellion in Palestine, the rise of Montanist extremism in Asia – all created a situation in which Christian thinkers who shared in the empire’s cultural and intellectual heritage would experience a natural enough impetus to work toward Christianity’s normalization.³⁵ Events significant for Christians, such as the martyrdom of Polycarp (c. 156) and the imperially sanctioned massacre of Christians at Lyons (177) would surely have added urgency. The rise of a more integrated intellectual resistance to Christianity was doubtless a further stimulant, with Celsus as its most articulate and thoughtful representative.³⁶

The apologists were thus uncomfortably required to ingratiate themselves with authority while often brusquely claiming a more venerable cultural pedigree for Christianity. Some would exotically claim that the emergence of Christianity was even

³⁴ From a certain practical perspective, a rhetorical strategy emphasizing assimilation rather than difference might seem most reasonable for such men. Prejudice against Christians had increased in Asia after the reign of Hadrian, and evidence suggests that the Antonine emperors were being urged to revert to the more measured policies of Trajan and Hadrian. Justin’s mission, in part, was to persuade the imperial authority to revert to former policies, which were somewhat less prejudicial to Christians. For the classification of Justin’s first *Apology* as just such a piece of deliberative rhetoric, see Keresztes (1965).

³⁵ Norris (2004) 40.

³⁶ Celsus is devoted to the accusation that Christians may constitute a serious threat to the stability of the Empire’s social and political order. Were others to follow the Christians’ anarchic lead, “there would be nothing to prevent [the emperor] from being abandoned, alone and deserted, while earthly things would come into the power of the most lawless and savage barbarians, and nothing more would be heard among men either of your worship or of the true wisdom” (*C.Cels.* 8.68. Trans. Chadwick [1953] All subsequent translations of *Contra Celsum* are Chadwick’s unless otherwise noted). Text cited in Norris 2004 (41).

providential for the empire, while others combatively rejected Greek philosophical and literary culture as exhausted and moribund, asserting the superiority of a barbarian wisdom – all while remaining indefatigably within a Greek idiom. But whatever rhetorical stance we encounter, such thinkers are always engaged in the formulation of a place for Christianity within the Greco-Roman cultural topography. Whether one argues that Christianity represents the intellectual apogee of Hellenistic culture, or the entirely appropriate rejection of that culture, one is really doing the same thing, since for this set of thinkers Christianity is already incorrigibly Greek, and manifests itself as a function of the Roman world. This conclusion is true regardless of thinker and regardless of locale, whether Melito of Sardis or Tatian of Assyria. In either case, we confront the enlistment of a Hellenistic rhetoric in the cause of Christian self-definition, accommodationist in the former case, rejectionist in the latter, but finally an assimilation of Christianity to Hellenistic culture for both.

The earliest figures traditionally grouped with the second century apologists fall roughly in the reign of Hadrian, who had inherited Trajan's difficulties with Christians in the province of Asia.³⁷ Associated with this period are Quadratus and Aristides.³⁸ The argument of the latter is of greater interest, since he is concerned to place Christians alongside Jews and pagans as a third *genos*.³⁹ He criticizes pagans for their worship of

³⁷ His rescript to Minicius Fundanus, governor of the province in 122/123, suggests his desire to continue a moderate, disciplined approach to the problem, primarily emphasizing the avoidance of mob action and false accusations moved by malicious informers. Justin quotes the letter at *Apology* 1.68; Eusebius at 4.9. Melito of Sardis also appealed to it, a fact known to us only through Eusebius (4.26.10). Melito also claims to have letters from Antoninus Pius ordering the continuation of the same cautious policies. (Grant [1988] 34-35).

³⁸ The *Chronicle* of Eusebius mentions the two apologists in the context of Hadrian's visit to Eleusis. Allegedly he was presented with works of these two men while in Athens. Though precise motives are difficult to discern, there was perhaps an interest in extracting further concessions from an emperor already concerned to retain the moderate policy of his predecessor. Grant (1988) 135. Only one fragment of Quadratus survives, concerned with the reality of the savior's miracles (*EH* 4.3.2).

³⁹ A Greek text, and some Armenian fragments, are defensibly dated to the reign of Hadrian; a longer Syriac version is addressed to Antoninus Pius. A superscription in the Syriac text identifies the author as Aristides, "an Athenian philosopher." The work is initially occupied with a concise exposition of some middle Platonist theology; but the author's more pressing concerns, which will occupy him for much of the work's length, quickly emerge. He posits four races of

idols and the elements, ridicules the immorality of the gods in conventional manner, and undermines pagan attempts to find transcendent unity beneath the violent surfaces of myth. Jewish monotheism is a better option, as is Jewish morality; Jewish deficiency lies in their complicity in Jesus' execution.⁴⁰ The assertion of Christian superiority is curiously based on adherence to a moral code that is, in fact, profoundly Jewish, as if Christians are upright people *who are not Jews* – perhaps an important point considering the Jewish revolts across the empire (114-117) quelled at the beginning of Hadrian's reign. No harm could thus follow from asserting superiority to Jews, and as for pagans, the apology's dismissive tone might class it as a conventional attack on traditional pagan myth and piety, and therefore not especially offensive – especially in the cultural context that produced a series of works in ancient comparative religion, such as Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris*, and Pallas' lost *On the Mysteries of Mithras*.⁴¹ Viewed thus, Aristides' apology appears tantamount to a claim to good citizenship based on an argument for superior tribal affiliation.⁴² Aristides' Christianity is a third *genos*, a new race that can stand alongside others, claiming a genealogy much as they do. Such a positioning of Christianity enables the placement of its founder alongside other, traditional "founders" of pagan and Jewish religious culture as a parallel case within a familiar web of ideas.

A generation later, Justin Martyr makes a considerably more elaborate attempt at claiming a share of Greek culture for Christians.⁴³ Openly assuming the posture of a

men: barbarians, Greeks, Jews, and Christians. The Greek text reduces the taxonomy to three races, essentially pagans, Jews and Christians, with the pagans further subdivided into Chaldeans, Greeks, and Egyptians (Grant [1988] 35-37).

⁴⁰ Included also is the interesting claim that in many of their observances the Jews worship "angels" rather than God, a point that Aristides does little to explain.

⁴¹ Grant (1988) 37.

⁴² In its peroration, the Syriac text does make reference to those who "utter vanity and harass the Christians," though it may be difficult to situate such a reference in the reign of Hadrian. In any case, the Syriac text is addressed to Antoninus Pius, and internal references may reasonably place it during that later reign (Grant [1988] 38-39).

⁴³ He himself was of Hellenized background in the eastern part of the empire, Flavia Neapolis (Shechem) in Samaria. His apology, divided in the manuscript tradition into a "first" and "second" that do not appear to correspond neatly to the two apologies noted by Eusebius, was probably written in Rome around 156 or 157 (For a defense of this dating, see Grant [1988] 52-53), and may have been occasioned by the martyrdom of Polycarp at Smyrna. The mob action

philosopher, he addresses himself to Antoninus Pius and his two adopted sons, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, addressing the latter two specifically as “philosophers,” a gesture predicated on the assumption of shared culture.⁴⁴ Like Aristides, Justin supplies the conventional rebuke to pagan worship, given force by means of a litany of farcical examples.⁴⁵ He argues that evil demons are to blame for the prosperity of such beliefs, as for the persecution of Christians, who promise to commit no injustice, and are not atheists as some philosophers scandalously are. Blaming *daemonic* powers for persecution is perhaps a way of deflecting censure from rulers whom he is ready to regard as “pious philosophers” and “guardians of justice.”⁴⁶ However much he may attack traditional culture or decry the irrationality and injustice of Roman legal practice,

attending Polycarp’s summary trial and execution could have prompted an apologist’s response, particularly one urging a return to the more measured and judicious policies of Trajan and Hadrian. The *Martyrdom* indicates that the old man had been the target of a search, and the victim of mob action – both of which practices were repudiated by previous emperors (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 6-7; 12. Cited in Grant [1988] 53-54). That the opening chapters of the *First Apology* present a direct claim against Roman judicial abuses, particularly the condemnation of Christians on other charges merely because they confess to the *name* of Christian, suggests that such tendencies were troubling Christian communities. (*First Apology* 1-4).

⁴⁴ Athenagoras’ work, an *embassy* or *plea*, (προεσβεία), is addressed to Marcus Aurelius during his co-rulership with Commodus, (Schoedel [1972] x). Imperial titulature – Ἀρμενιοὶ and Σαρματικοί, conquerors of Armenia and Sarmatia (Mommsen and Schwartz proposed Γερμανικοί for the former. [Schoedel (1972) xi.]; is secondary to the emperors’ pre-eminent standing as philosophers (τὸ δὲ μέγιστον φιλοσοφίαις). Athenagoras himself is described in the work’s title, much like his predecessor Aristides, as an Athenian philosopher. In antiquity, only Methodius knows his work (*De Res.* I.36, 37); Epiphanius appears to know it only through Methodius. (Schoedel [1972] ix). Like Melito of Sardis, he protests the loyalty of Christians as citizens of the Empire, and often with florid rhetoric: *Legatio* 1.1-2; 2.1-3; 2.6; 6.2; 16.2; 18.2; 37 (Schoedel [1972] xvi). Principally, though, he is concerned to exonerate Christians from the charge of atheism, arguing that although they reject much that was conventional in Roman religion, their thought draws deeply upon philosophy. He argues that insofar as Christians embrace monotheism, they can claim a serious intellectual pedigree and form a meaningful part of the intellectual tradition of the empire. At the very least they should not be singled out for abuse in an empire that could boast more than enough distinctive religious forms (*Legatio* 1).

⁴⁵ “...we consecrate ourselves to the unbegotten and impassible God, who, we know, never descended with sexual desire upon Antiope, or other such women, or Ganymede; nor was he liberated by a hundred-handed giant whose assistance Thetis obtained; nor was he solicitous, in return for such aid, that Achilles, the son of Thetis, because of his concubine Briseis, should slaughter so many Greeks. We feel sorry for those who believe these things....” (*First Apology* 25, Falls trans.)

⁴⁶ *First Apology* 2.2

his entire defense must rest upon the assumption of shared intellectual culture and idiom. Imperial “philosophers” must be co-participants in this shared civilization. Such a posture is sensible given Justin’s primary assertion of Christianity as both *source* and *culmination* of Greco-Roman intellectual tradition.⁴⁷ It culminates the tradition, since Christ is the latter day manifestation of the *Logos* of Greek philosophy; it precedes that tradition, inasmuch as the Hebrew prophets – of greater antiquity than Greek thinkers⁴⁸ – foretold Christ, grasping the *Logos* before any Greek philosopher had approached it.⁴⁹ Plato comprehends the workings of God only through Moses and the other prophets, through whom the *Logos* and the “prophetic spirit” originally speak.

Appropriation of the Greek philosophical tradition is further evident in Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*. The dialogue is already a normative literary form, and here Justin exploits it by assuming the familiar posture and rhetorical gesture of a philosopher, casting himself in the role of a philosopher who is approached by Trypho, a Hellenized Jew, who greets Justin out of deference to his philosopher’s *pallium*. In response to Trypho’s respect, Justin asks why he, as a Jew, cannot see that his own tradition’s “lawgiver and prophets” are superior to what competing schools of philosophy can offer.⁵⁰ Justin then recounts his own conversion in terms of a passage through Stoic, Peripatetic, and Pythagorean schools until his exposure to a Platonist teacher, probably at Ephesus, proved enormously fruitful.⁵¹ His daily advance in studies led him finally to “perception of incorporeals” and the “contemplation of ideas” that “gave wings to his soul.”⁵² He converts to Christianity after an exchange with a

⁴⁷ See Norris (2004) 39.

⁴⁸ *First Apology* 44.

⁴⁹ The *Logos* works through the prophets – “our teachers” – to inspire later philosophical reflection: “So that you may understand that it was from our teachers – I mean from the *Logos* speaking through the prophets – that Plato took his assertion that God made the world by working upon formless matter, listen to the actual words spoken by Moses, the first prophet ... and older than all of the Greek writers, through whom the prophetic spirit revealed how and from what God first crafted the world.” (*First Apology* 58.1).

⁵⁰ Asserting the priority of the Hebrew tradition, as in the *First Apology* (*Dialogue* 1).

⁵¹ The pattern of moving from one “school” to another, until a satisfying truth is found, can also be discerned in Galen and Lucian. See Grant (1988) 51.

⁵² *Dialogue* 2.6, with language plainly derived from *Phaedrus* 249D.

Christian holy man, who elucidates the failures and internal contradictions of Platonism,⁵³ and touts the Hebrew prophets as “blessed men who were just and loved by God ... [who] alone knew the truth and communicated it to men.” Whoever reads them rightly “will profit greatly in his knowledge of the origin and end of things, and of any other matter that a philosopher should know.”⁵⁴ As in the *Apologies*, Judaism stands as the source of wisdom, prior to Greek elaborations of philosophy – a claim vindicated by the evident holiness and accuracy of the prophets.

Beyond the substantive claims of philosophy, Justin’s *Apologies* implicitly invoke the canons of rhetoric, presenting his arguments in the appropriate, conventional idiom of a *prosphonesis*,⁵⁵ as befits a venerable, shared intellectual culture. This rhetorical genre is explained in detail by the rhetorician Menander in the late third century.⁵⁶ Justin follows such tactics as Menander would later prescribe, suggesting that a failure to address injustices against Christians might undermine imperial claims to probity, tainting the authorities with charges of “violence and tyranny,”⁵⁷ the qualities opposite those designated for praise in the rhetorical tradition. Justin will elsewhere employ different rhetorical terminology, referring to his work as an *enteuxis*, “petition,” and to

⁵³ Justin contends that corruption and degeneration have tainted the development of philosophical schools; otherwise different “schools” never would have emerged. Properly conceived, philosophy is a pristine whole that has fractured only because of disloyalty to an initial deposit or tradition (*Dialogue* 2). This principle finds its probable roots in the lost work of Numenius, *On the Infidelity of the Academy toward Plato*, a fragment of which asserts that Plato’s successors “did not hold to the primitive heritage but rapidly divided, intentionally or not” (Frg. 24 Des Places = Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelica* 14.5.1. Cited in Grant [1988] 51). Justin himself would produce a work in the soon to be very popular genre of heresiology, with his principles derived in part from this pagan source. Christianity appeals to Justin as a way of transcending such problems – though ironically, the rhetoric of censure represented by Numenius’ tract would be borrowed by apologists like Justin and other, more systematic Christian thinkers, and would mark them as co-participants in their own world of competing “schools.”

⁵⁴ *Dialogue* 7.

⁵⁵ *First Apology* 1.1. Eusebius also terms it a *logos prosphonetikos* (EH 4.18.2). See Grant (1988) 54-55 for references and discussion.

⁵⁶ Menander’s model recommends that praise of the subject’s actions should fall under the categories of “wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage.” Under the heading of justice, he urges: “you should include humanity to subjects, gentleness of character and approachability, integrity and incorruptibility in matters of justice, freedom from partiality and from prejudice in giving judicial decisions....” *Menander Rhetor*, Russell and Wilson (1981) 167.

⁵⁷ *First Apology* 3.2.

portions of it as *exegesis*, “explanation,” and *apodeixis*, demonstration” – all familiar nomenclature for a dicastic speech.⁵⁸

Justin, then, as a self-described philosopher and a practiced rhetorician, as a man who never rejected the *pallium* that he donned at the time of his first conversion to philosophy, seeks openly to assimilate Greek culture within a Christian vision, appropriating even the iconic Socrates, for whose death evil demons are to blame. Socrates employed reason (*logos*) to dissuade people from belief in false gods, just so the *Logos* itself, having assumed the form of a man, did the same for non-Greeks.⁵⁹ Justin is urgent to align the Christian *Logos* with the *logos* of pagan learning, that he will even assert that many ancient thinkers were in point of fact Christians prior to the incarnation of the *Logos*:

We have been taught that Christ was the first-begotten of God and we have indicated above that he is the Word of whom all mankind partakes. Those who live by reason are Christians, even though they have been considered atheists: such as, among the Greeks, Socrates, Heraclitus, and others like them.

Those who “lived by reason” include “Abraham, Elias, Ananias, Azarias, Misael, and many others....”⁶⁰ The prophets and sages of Hebrew tradition, then, are the primordial possessors of the *logos*; Greeks, such as Socrates and other sages, are their epigones; Christians are those who have embraced the latter day form of what those prophets and philosophers always knew: the *Logos* of God, now made flesh. Justin’s assertion of the universality of the *Logos* enables the rhetorical gesture of assimilating both Jewish and Greek sages into a Christian pantheon. The hallmark of this strategy is that an apologetic assertion of difference – indeed, of superiority – is also integrative. Christianity is cast as the superior wisdom tradition simply by asserting its priority to Hellenism.

⁵⁸ See Keresztes (1965).

⁵⁹ *Dialogue* 5

⁶⁰ *Dialogue* 46.

Justin's pupil Tatian, a Christian of Assyrian origins, adopts a far more combative position than his master.⁶¹ His particularly hostile tone may derive from the imperially sanctioned slaughter of Christians at Lyons in 177.⁶² At times his surviving apologetic work, *Address Against the Greeks* (πρὸς Ἑλληνας) suffers from what seems an excess of invective against Hellenism, a scornful litany with designs on persuasion merely by dint of cumulative force. Here is the obviously Hellenized man who becomes an alien to *both* mainstream Christianity *and* the intellectual traditions of the empire – a religious extremist, in short, a Hellenized barbarian turned fringe zealot. Going far beyond Justin's treatment of the problem of diversity and disagreement in philosophy, he indulges his contempt for tradition in a parodist's treatment of philosophical hypocrisy:

What are your philosophers doing of any significance or note? They leave one shoulder bare and wear their hair long and grow beards, sporting the nails of wild beasts. And they say they have no needs, but in fact like Proteus they want a leather dresser for the wallet, a weaver for the cloak, a woodcutter for the stick, and for gluttony rich men and a chef. You, sir, behave like a dog, you have no knowledge of God and have sunk to imitating irrational creatures!⁶³

For Tatian, Hellenistic culture is defunct, and serious truth-seekers should look elsewhere. Such an approach is anything but ingratiating, and Tatian's tactics seem not to have earned him friends, except perhaps on the boundaries of religious culture; but his tactics are revealing insofar as they represent one of the many postures that one

⁶¹ Tatian is perhaps best known for his harmony of the gospels (*Diatesseron*), though perhaps more interesting for his final separation from Christianity's normative schools and his association with the radical ascetic *Encratites*, who rejected marriage and the consumption of meat, and who may have assimilated a number of Valentinian beliefs as well. See Whittaker (1982).

⁶² Grant (1988) 112ff.

⁶³ On other occasions he directs his ire toward competing schools and inner contradictions. After cataloging the moral outrages of Diogenes, Aristippus, Plato, Aristotle, Heraclitus, Zeno, Empedocles and others, he asks: "Who would not rather stop his ears to such arrogant and crazy talk, and turn to a serious quest for the truth? So do not be swept away by the august crowds of those who love noise rather than wisdom. They express views that contradict one another, and each say whatever comes into his head. And there are many causes of friction between them, for each one hates his fellow and they hold different views, each taking up an exaggerated positions out of self-importance." (*Oratio ad Graecos* 26.18-26; 4.10-17, trans. Whittaker).

might assume: that of the Hellenized barbarian rhetorically rejecting Hellenism, and doing so, inevitably, in a familiar Greek idiom, a “consciously mannered style that reflects the rhetorical tastes of his era and the sorts of learning it valued.”⁶⁴ At times Tatian appears to be arguing for cultural assimilation, noting, for instance, his willingness to pay taxes and “perform service,”⁶⁵ but this is weak protest. At its heart his apology is more a rhetorical attempt to define Christianity as distinct from its Hellenistic context. If other apologists were concerned to show that one could be Greek and Christian, Tatian seems to embrace his cultural alienation.⁶⁶

But Tatian is incorrigibly Greek. Numerous scholars have attempted to place his *Address* within a particular genre, some suggesting that it should be viewed as a kind of inaugural address for his school at Antioch – a *logos eisiterios* – and others that it falls within the more general category of epideictic oratory as a specimen of vituperation.⁶⁷ Speculation abounds, with emphasis on modes of invective – or deliberate inversion of categories of praise.⁶⁸ Even Tatian’s abuse of philosophers has a clear Greek context

⁶⁴ Norris (2004) 43.

⁶⁵ *Oratio ad Graecos* 4.20-25: φόρους τελεῖν ... δουλεύειν ... καὶ ὑπηρετεῖν.

⁶⁶ In a sense, Tatian’s non-integrative approach may be viewed as a more extreme version of the standard trope associated with other apologists, such as Aristides, who designates Christians as a “third race” (γένος) alongside Jews and Gentiles, a notion that also occurs in the *Κήρυγμα Πέτρου* (“Peter’s Message”) a document quoted by Clement of Alexandria. In like manner, a certain Miltiades and Apollinaris of Hierapolis (both lost to history but for Eusebius) seem to have written in conformity with a *contra gentes / contra Iudaeos* program, with Christians emerging distinctly as a third party. See Norris 2004 (37; 40-41). The same pattern holds for the *Epistle to Diognetus*, in which Diognetus is systematically urged to reject the practices of Greeks, on the one hand, and Jews on the other. The author commends Diognetus’s interest in Christians, who “neither [give] credence to those thought to be gods by the Greeks nor [keep] the superstition (δεισιδαιμονία) of the Jews”; he similarly commends his inquiry into “just why this new race (καινὸν τοῦτο γένος) or new way of life came into being now and not before...” (*Diogn.* 1, Ehrman 2003 trans.) Theophilus’s *To Autolytus*, of late Antonine date, uses the same argumentative scheme. See Norris (2004) 43.

⁶⁷ Kukula (1900); Alfonsi (1942), whose views are noted by Grant (1988) 115-116.

⁶⁸ Robert Grant locates the work within a category described by Menander Rhetor as a “leave-taking” address, in which, for Tatian, the praise for the city that one is departing is obviously replaced by venom. He is, quite literally, saying farewell to Greek culture, as the first chapter of the address shows (as does chapter 35, in which he states explicitly that he is abandoning the Greeks for a philosophy that they regard as “barbarian” [35]. See Grant [1988] 115.); but the conventions later described by Menander – that a city be praised for its various political, aesthetic

with an ample supply of precedents. Anecdotal slurs against philosophers were commonplace material from Lucian, Athenaeus, and Diogenes Laertius.⁶⁹ Even where rhetoric of alienation is at its sharpest, we seem to be confronting a sort of cultural pout – an exasperated outpouring of frustration at the rejection of Christianity by a broader intellectual culture.

Other texts are more subtle in their insinuations of Greek culture. The *Epistle to Diognetus*⁷⁰ presents rejection in stark terms, while furtively insinuating a great variety of traditional philosophical ideas. The author urges the pagan Diognetus:

... Come, purge yourself of all the notions that previously constrained your understanding, leave behind your misguided habit of thought, and become as it were a person made new (καινὸς ἄνθρωπος) at the beginning, one who is about to hear a new teaching (λόγου καινοῦ), just as you yourself have admitted.⁷¹

In insisting on the “newness” of this “word” (λόγος), the author seems intent on stripping it of any of its philosophical genealogy. Here is an apparent commitment to establishing distance between the “new” teaching and the erroneous theological speculations of the philosophers.⁷² The author’s complaints align to some degree with

and intellectual achievements – are quite simply reversed by Tatian, whose address might therefore be read as a kind of obverse to Aelius Aristides’ *Panathenaic Address*, in which Aristides celebrates Athens as a redoubt against barbarism, praising Athenian attributes that Tatian elects to scorn. In much the same vein, Tatian’s work can be located squarely with a tradition of Greek satire, and seems to be drawing upon Lucianic material at various points, as may be suggested by his references to grammarians who “set the letters of the alphabet at war,” and his fondness for accumulating proverbial examples (Grant links Tatian’s alphabetic interests to Lucian’s *Consonants in Court*, and finds in chapters 26 and 27 proverbial material of which Lucian was demonstrably fond).

⁶⁹ See Grant (1988) 120.

⁷⁰ This work is traditionally included in the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers, but long acknowledged to be of second century provenance. For the various arguments over precise dating, see Tanner (1984) 495-96. Reasonable grounds for dating it roughly in the middle of the second century are provided by Ehrman (2004) 127.

⁷¹ *Diogn.* 2.1. trans. Ehrman.

⁷² “For what person had any conception of what God was like, before he came? Or do you accept the vain and ridiculous teachings of those specious philosophers, some of whom asserted that God was fire (where they themselves are about to go this is what they call God!), and others water, and others one of the other elements created by God? ... But these ideas are illusions and the deception of tricksters” (*Diogn.* 8.1-2,4. Ehrman trans.)

those of Tatian. Philosophers are “tricksters” with fanciful ideas, men who can agree on nothing. The letter’s rhetoric of difference can become rather heated, but its reliance upon some fairly stock philosophical assumptions and terms gradually becomes evident. Just when the writer is attempting to insulate Christianity from the corruptions pagan philosophy, and to locate the content of Christian revelation *beyond this world*, he lapses into a rather worldly terminology. He claims that the new revelation is no “mortal idea,” no “administration of merely human mysteries;” that it is the “truth and the holy wisdom from heaven, which cannot be comprehended by humans.”⁷³ But despite this claim to uniqueness, the author claims that God conveyed this revelation through

the craftsman (τεχνίτης) and maker (δημιουργός) of all things himself, by whom he created the heavens, and by whom he enclosed the sea within its own boundaries ... by whom all things are set in order and arranged and put into subjection.

The passage seems to posit a blending of the Stoic πῦρ τέχνικον and the Platonic demiurge, hardly an originally conceived agent of mediation.⁷⁴ It appears that the new revelation will employ some old forms. A similar reliance on the familiar can be seen in his handling of Jewish religious practices. Although the Jews are superior to the Greeks in their acknowledgement of the “one God,” they are fools to believe that their sacrifices afford him anything that he requires.⁷⁵ Plato shares the same convictions about divine impassivity, and in any case, long before the *Epistle* such insights had become a Pauline trope.⁷⁶

⁷³ θνητῆ ἐπίνοια ... ἀνθρωπίνων οἰκονομία μυστηρίων ... ἀπ’ οὐρανῶν ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ὁ λόγος ὁ ἅγιος ἀπερινόητος ἀνθρώποις

⁷⁴ Later in the document, interestingly, God *himself*, rather than his envoy, is called “master and creator (δημιουργός) of all” (8.7).

⁷⁵ “The one who made heaven and earth and all that is in them, and who supplies all of us with what we need, is himself in need of none of the things that he himself provides to those who suppose that they are giving them.”

⁷⁶ “The God who made the world ... does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything.” (*Acts* 17:24-25, RSV). Cf. Euthyphro’s question, “Why you don’t suppose, Socrates, that the gods gain any advantage from what they get from us, do you?”

The Pauline connection, moreover, provides an entry into deeper more subtle allusions, some suggesting the possibility that the *Epistle*, in addition to its loose appropriation of stock philosophical vocabulary and argument, also conceals a playful exchange between two philosophically learned men.⁷⁷ The *Epistle's* opening, κράτιστε Διόγνητε, possibly echoes the κράτιστε Θεόφιλε that commences the Luke-Acts narrative. In *Acts*, Paul's speech at the Areopagus employs a quotation of the very popular – and frequently translated – *Phaenomena* of the Stoic poet Aratus, τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμὲν, “for we are indeed his offspring” – where the quote itself likely hearkens to Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* (ἐκ σου γὰρ γένος ἐσμὲν) – making of the speech a presumptive appeal to Stoic listeners. The *Epistle* echoes this Stoic-biblical language of *genos* with its adoption of the trope of Christians as a third *genos* – “this third race.”⁷⁸ Drawing further upon Stoic interest in amphibolic lexis, the author urges Diognetus to be “born again” into a *new race*, “becoming as it were a person made new at the beginning, one who is about to hear a new teaching, as you yourself have admitted.”⁷⁹ “Diognetus,” who is “Zeus-born,” *i.e.*, of Zeus' *genos*, is to become like a “new person,” that is, by a new birth that would supply a new *genos* in a Christian lineage – by becoming a hearer of a “new *logos*.” Diognetus is to become the descendent of an entirely different god: “Diognetus is being exhorted to cease being *Dio*-gnetus in order to be reborn in baptism as *Christo*-gnetus.”⁸⁰ But the conversion of name (and religion) is predicated on another amphiboly connected the teaching that will constitute the “new *logos*.” The “new word” may be read plainly as λόγου / καινοῦ, or as λόγου / καὶ / νοῦ. What Diognetus has thus conceded, in assenting to a “new *logos*,” is that he will engage in dialogue, that he will accept an account that is in accord with *argument* and *rationality*,

⁷⁷ The following observations on the Stoic / Platonic content of the letter summarize the treatment of Tanner (1984).

⁷⁸ καινὸν τοῦτο γένος. This resonates with Aristides claim that Christians are a third γένος descending specifically from *Christ*, while other traditions claim their descent from other, less important figures.

⁷⁹ γενόμενος ὥσπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς καινὸς ἄνθρωπος, ὡς ἂν καὶ λόγου καινοῦ, καθάπερ καὶ αὐτὸς ὡμολόγησας, ἀκροατῆς ἐσόμενος.

⁸⁰ Tanner (1984) 499.

to which the author's witty riposte is that in order to do so, he will need to adapt himself to a *new argument*, a *new logos* – *logos* and *nous*. The appeal, then, might be read as that of one Stoic to another, based playfully on the presupposition that “homonymy in language corresponds to real association in nature.”⁸¹ Stoic material that follows in the rest of the *Epistle* supports such a reading.⁸² What is striking here is that the author couches his rhetorically overt rejection of philosophical tradition in terms of an almost playful philosophical banter. To heed a “new logos” becomes merely a matter of approaching an older *logos* with fresh eyes.

The *Epistle to Diognetus*, like Tatian's *Against the Greeks*, finally conceals its Hellenism only rhetorically; but for our purposes the *posture* is just as important as the content, where alienating rhetorical approaches insist on Christianity's singularity by means of a strong differentiating posture toward Hellenistic and Roman Culture.⁸³ In

⁸¹ Tanner (1984) 499.

⁸² The risk associated with pagan idols, which are simply the inert artifacts of human craftsmanship, and as such lack psychic *pneuma*, is that one can become assimilated to them, a claim rooted in the Stoic doctrine of assimilation, *oikeiosis*. If one is so assimilated into false worship, psychic *aesthesis* can be damaged. Tanner (1984) 501-504, further suggests that the term εἰδωλεία as employed at 4.1 requires Chrysippus for its proper exegesis (S.V.F Chrysippus 630), and that the Christian polity envisioned in section 5 has roots in Zeno and Panaetius. Chapter 6.2 ff., with its analogy between Christians who are “scattered” (ἔσπαρται) through the world as the soul is through the body, thought by Marrou (1951) to be Stoicizing, he argues as more likely indebted to Plato, *Phaedo* 65c-d, and Plutarch *de Anima* (fr. 178 Sandbach); R. Joly (1973) locates it within an Orphic-Pythagorean context. The argument of 6.3 that Christians are to the world as the soul is to the body is reminiscent of the σῶμα / σῆμα distinction of *Phaedo* 62b, just as Christians taken as the world's “soul,” opposing the fleshly (world = σὰρξ, 6.5) desires of the world, might be read in the context of the second primary impulse of Stoic ethics, love of self. The “truth and holy word” of 7.2 (τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τὸν λόγον τὸν ἅγιον) recall “the Neoplatonist Logos or ‘second god’ who has become man in Jesus Christ,” the *logos* that is already well-developed in Numenius.

⁸³ Other apologists, such as Melito of Sardis, would take precisely the opposite rhetorical position, asserting that the empire's prosperity could be attributed to Christianity's rise. Likewise Apollinaris of Hierapolis, who famously attributed the salvation by thunderstorm of a Roman army on the Danube to the prayers of Christian soldiers. *EH* 4.26.7-10; 5.5.4. See Norris (2004) 41. Melito, in what Eusebius describes as his “book to the emperor,” pointedly refers to Christianity as a “philosophy,” which, though barbarian in origin, experienced a flowering exactly contemporary with the growth of a “great and splendid” Roman power. He also notes that the emperor's predecessors had honored it “in addition to the other cults” (πρὸς ταῖς ἄλλαις θρησκειαῖς). Only Nero and Domitian are exceptions to this beneficent attitude, which was resumed by Hadrian, whose particular good offices are noted, along with those of Antoninus

large part, the approaches of both Tatian and the *Epistle to Diognetus* are shaped by the fact that neither is addressed to persons of authority, an important distinction. Aristides, Justin, and Athenagoras, who addressed themselves to emperors, could afford little in the way of vitriol; but their rhetoric, too, insists on deploying a series of appropriations to define Christianity as a distinctive and superior option. No thorough treatment of the second century apologists is intended here; merely a summary look at the rhetorical postures that they employed in attempting to manage the problems raised by their struggle to assimilate themselves and their communities to the ambient Greco-Roman world. What unites them is that regardless of stance, their persistently Greek context and content is inescapable. In these texts we are always confronting the contorted process of Christians struggling with their position in the established intellectual culture of the empire; or, to put the matter more precisely, we are confronting Greek – or Hellenized barbarian – thinkers becoming Christians, and attempting to negotiate the retention of their prior intellectual traditions in the process.

4. *The Case of Anatolius and Alexandrian Intellectual Culture*

In the seventh book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius mentions a certain learned Anatolius as the successor to the episcopal see of Laodicea in Syria:

[He ... was] by race an Alexandrian, who for his learning, secular education and philosophy had attained the first place among our most illustrious contemporaries; inasmuch as in arithmetic and geometry, in astronomy and other sciences, whether of logic or of physics, and in the arts of rhetoric as well, he had reached the pinnacle.⁸⁴

Pius. Melito claims to know even that Marcus' attitude is even more "philanthropic" and "philosophical" than that of his predecessors. He vigorously assimilates Christianity into its Greco-Roman religious and philosophical context and calibrates his remarks for imperial consumption.

⁸⁴ ...γένος μὲν καὶ αὐτὸς Ἀλεξανδρεὺς, λόγων δ' ἔνεκα καὶ παιδείας τῆς Ἑλλήνων φιλοσοφίας τε τὰ πρῶτα τῶν μάλιστα καθ' ἡμᾶς δοκιμωτάτων ἀπενηνεγμένος, ἅτε ἀριθμητικῆς καὶ γεωμετρίας ἀστρονομίας τε καὶ τῆς ἄλλης, διαλεκτικῆς εἴτε φυσικῆς, θεωρίας ῥητορικῶν τε αὐτῶν μαθημάτων ἐληλακῶς εἰς ἄκρον (*EH* 7.32.6. trans. Oulton) His

Because of his learning he was deemed worth by the citizens of Alexandria to establish a school in the Aristotelian tradition.⁸⁵ As evidence of this learning Eusebius quotes a lengthy passage from a treatise on Pascha, then catalogs other works, to include an *Introduction to Mathematics* consisting of ten whole treatises, as well as other “indications of his learning and great experience concerning matters divine.”⁸⁶ Eusebius’ account provides a glimpse of a polymath whose credentials were sufficient to attract the attention of Theoctenus, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, who ordained him to the episcopate, intending to place him as his own successor upon his death. Eusebius relates that Anatolius leaves Caesarea only when summoned to the Council of Antioch (268), and that he was pressed into service as bishop “by the brethren” at Laodicea, where he was passing after the conclusion of the council. Eusebius invokes Anatolius’ extraordinary learning, as well as alleged wartime heroics in Alexandria (272)⁸⁷ to support his claim that Laodicea was to receive the finest of men as bishop. Despite Eusebius’ confused chronology, his narrative reveals much about the fluidity that might attend the career of an intellectual turned Christian in the late third century. His account supplies no hint that the ordination of an accomplished peripatetic philosopher

output as known to Eusebius was sufficient to reveal “his eloquence and his great erudition.” τὸ τε λόγιον καὶ πολυμαθὲς (EH 7.32.13).

⁸⁵ Though Anatolius hardly could have “established” the peripatetic tradition at Alexandria. Ample evidence points to teaching by peripatetics at the Museion 60 years earlier. (Dio Cassius 77.7.3) Cited in Grant (1970) 141.

⁸⁶ δείγματα τῆς περὶ τὰ θεῖα σχολῆς τε αὐτοῦ καὶ πολυπειρίας (EH 7.32.20).

⁸⁷ EH 7.32.20-21. The council concerning Paul of Samosata at Antioch was in 268. If Anatolius was dragooned into episcopal service after the council, it would likely have been difficult for him to perform the wartime exploits at the siege of Brucheion in Alexandria that Eusebius describes (273). As often, chronology is not Eusebius’ strength. Dillon (p. 867) is inclined to reject Eusebius’ claim that Anatolius settled in Laodicea immediately after the Council of Antioch, arguing rather for 274 or later, based on Eusebius’ *Chronicle*. He attributes Zeller’s proposal of 270 for the assumption of the bishopric to excessive confidence in the compressed narrative of EH VII.32.21, where Anatolius’ selection as successor to Theoctenus, his ordination, the joint-presidency at Caesarea, his attendance at the council at Antioch, and his recruitment as bishop of Laodicea are handled in a manner that makes reasonable dating impossible. Dillon’s reading, though supportable, is likely also prompted by the appealing idea of having Anatolius in Caesarea for a while, to assume, if for a brief time, the role of a minor Origen, to whom aspiring students might repair.

to the episcopate was in the least strange, but implies rather that such a change could be regarded as normal and legitimate, suggesting that a Christian leader's credentials were even burnished by association with traditional intellectual pursuits.

Eusebius possibly even suppresses Anatolius' philosophical attainments in the interest of a more carefully hedged account, perhaps motivated by the need to deflect the charge of *excessive* devotion to pagan philosophical pursuits. Alexandria in the second century displays a pronounced tendency toward philosophical syncretism, a state of academic affairs that a Christian hagiographer might want to mute. There and elsewhere, philosophers could begin to term themselves "eclectic."⁸⁸ Numenius, for one, was called a Pythagorean by both Origen and Clement.⁸⁹ Porphyry implies that Ammonius Saccas, master of both Plotinus and the Christian Origen, trained his pupils in a curriculum of Neopythagoreans such as Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus, and Nicomachus.⁹⁰ We also know from Eusebius that when Origen turned to Ammonius Saccas for instruction, Heraclas, another Alexandrian Christian and later bishop, had already been his student for five years – a period that perhaps mirrors the five-year silence imposed as part of Pythagorean instruction.⁹¹ Perhaps also, the preliminary schooling said to have been offered in later years by Origen at Alexandria – in "geometry and arithmetic and other preliminary subjects" – reflects what Justin Martyr identifies in the previous century as the Pythagorean preliminaries for study: music, astronomy, and geometry.⁹² As for other intellectuals, apart from Gnostic movements, even Pantaenus, the first Alexandrian Christian teacher granted orthodox status by Eusebius, and sequenced as Clement's predecessor in the "school" succession, was termed Pythagorean by Philip of Side. Some scholars speculated that Pantaenus was "a

⁸⁸ *Diogenes Laertius* 1.21; *Strom.* 1.37.6. Texts cited in Grant (1970) 136.

⁸⁹ Grant (1970) 136: *Strom.* 1.150.4; *C.Cels.* 1.15, 4.51, 5.38, 57.

⁹⁰ Porphyry quoted in *EH* 6.19.8. Cited in Grant (1970) 139.

⁹¹ Grant (1970) 139.

⁹² *EH* 6.18.3; *Dial.* 2.4, cited in Grant (1970) 139. Justin, in the course of his conversion narrative, recounts how a Pythagorean had asked him whether he had studied these subjects, prerequisite for drawing the mind away from "objects of the senses" and rendering it fit for the intellectual, "in order that it may contemplate what is good and beautiful."

great synthesizer of Stoic and Pythagorean ideas on a Christian foundation.”⁹³ Clement himself, for that matter, plainly regarded his own thought and methods as akin to the Pythagoreans in some ways, and his work shows a fairly open engagement with some aspects of their thought, and a certain willingness to adopt some of its approaches as his own.⁹⁴ Origen’s program of teaching later implemented in Caesarea, as described in the panegyric written by his pupil Gregory Thaumaturgus, seems also to conform at times to what might be read as a Pythagorean pattern. By Eusebius’ account, the headship of the Alexandrian catechetical “school” could be traced back from Origen to Clement and Pantaenus, it is not without reason that modern scholars have concluded that “Neopythagoreanism or Middle Platonism constitutes the milieu which gave Origen his philosophical formation.”⁹⁵

Eusebius would have little motive for emphasizing the particular formation a figure like Anatolius might have received in such an environment. His narrative hagiographical is contrived to allow for certain intellectual appropriation by conspicuous Christians, while preserving a safe distance between their orthodoxy and their pagan intellectual background. Eusebius is surely pleased to have a distinguished peripatetic in his camp – and he can by no means conceal his pleasure that an important philosopher embraced the superior path of Christianity – but his rhetoric also struggles with the tension between praising Anatolius for his attainments while insulating him from poisonous associations.

Eunapius of Sardis, on the other hand, the fourth century hagiographer of philosophers and sophists, would have no such motive. He names an Anatolius, who “ranked next after Porphyry,” as the teacher of Iamblichus, who is said to have studied with him prior to himself becoming the student of Porphyry.⁹⁶ Under Anatolius’

⁹³ A Theory put forth by H. Langerbeck, *JHS* 77 (1957), 71-73. Cited in Grant (1970) 137.

⁹⁴ Grant (1970) 138.

⁹⁵ *ibid.* 138, citing Crouzel (1962) 49.

⁹⁶ *VS* 457.

instruction, he “attained to the highest distinction in philosophy.”⁹⁷ Many scholars have posited an identity between the Anatolii described by Eunapius and Eusebius. I have no intention to decide the issue, but if we assume their identity for the moment, we can see how Eusebius’ account conforms to Eunapius’ impressive claim that Anatolius “ranked next after Porphyry” among philosophers of the time. The mathematical treatises attributed to him by Eusebius actually survive; they are in fact a Neopythagorean numerological interpretation of the first ten numbers. Likewise, the contents of his *Canons on Pascha* reveal the sort of astronomical learning required in a Neopythagorean curriculum. If the identity is accurate, then Anatolius could very well be a product of the Alexandrian intellectual milieu, and Eusebius could be muting his philosophical attainments, or least privileging his Christianity.⁹⁸ The young Alexandrian Anatolius could plausibly have met Porphyry in Athens where both were pupils of Longinus – a possibility supported by Porphyry’s later dedication of his *Homeric Questions* to an Anatolius. It is not unreasonable to suppose that he later became a teacher in his own right at Alexandria, subsequently embraced Christianity, then removed to Caesarea in the years after the war in Alexandria, before accepting the job in Laodicea. The devastation of Alexandria, combined with the prestige of Caesarea as a center for scholarly activity in its own right, might have prompted such a man to resettle, and the result could well have been that he accepted a position in society similar to that adopted by Origen 40 years earlier.⁹⁹ If a rough lifespan of c. 240-325 is accepted for Iamblichus, which would make him old enough to have studied in Palestine before Anatolius assumed his episcopal office, he could have been a student in Caesarea before his later

⁹⁷ The phrase “ranked next after Porphyry” – *ta deuthera pheromenos* – may also be rendered “was Porphyry’s deputy,” where the phrase is translated in the manner of Photius *cod.* 181. See Clarke, *et al.*, (2003) xxi. Much of the disagreement of Clarke, *et al.*, with Dillon’s theory as here set forth is based upon reading this phrase in the manner of Photius, where Anatolius is “Porphyry’s deputy” at a school established presumably at Rome. This “school” is unknown, and the authors find it implausible that Iamblichus, even as a well-heeled provincial, would have attended it, but they give no reason for reading the phrase in the manner of Photius.

⁹⁸ Grant (1970) 141.

⁹⁹ Dillon (1987) 867.

departure, perhaps to Rome, to study under Porphyry.¹⁰⁰ Under this admittedly controversial construction, the career of Anatolius is linked to those of Porphyry and Iamblichus, a state of affairs that would lend credibility to the argument that Eusebius might want to mute the secular chapters of Anatolius' career, insulating him from the menacing anti-Christian Porphyry, as well as from the devoted pagan Iamblichus. Such balancing acts are part of Eusebius' method – his way of laying claim to a substantive intellectual culture while maintaining a rhetoric of differentiation. If the picture of Alexandrian intellectual culture that has begun to take shape is accurate – regardless of the precise identification of the assorted Anatolii – then we should not be surprised to find Eusebius sheltering other Christian thinkers from the implications of their own education, suppressing the particulars of their philosophical attainments, and tending to reduce the traditional curriculum to a preparation for the gospel, a set of mental exercises that prepare the young scholar for the tasks of scriptural exegesis. We must read through this rhetoric if we are to grasp accurately the extent of Christian and pagan interaction. As Dillon rightly notes, in the second century, except in times of active persecution, the particular religious practices of any philosopher would have been of little consequence to his students, so long as he was of acknowledged expertise. Whether or not Iamblichus' teacher, the philosopher-bishop of Laodicea, and the dedicatee of the *Homeric Questions* are the same man, speculation on the question reveals an intellectual culture characterized by a great deal of open association and mutual influence, and open to the kind of fluidity of career we see in the case of Eusebius' philosopher bishop.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Dillon (1987) 865-67. The traditional date of the birth of Iamblichus is 265-80, a determination based largely on the fact that Suidas locates his *floruit* in the reign of Constantine. Bidez (1919) and Cameron (1968) are invoked by Dillon against Eduard Zeller (1868) and Gustav Wolff to support an earlier dating for Iamblichus's birth. Their arguments seem to have gained wide acceptance.

¹⁰¹ Much of the disagreement of Clarke, *et al.*, with Dillon's argument as here set forth is based upon reading the phrase "second to Porphyry" in the manner of Photius, where Anatolius is "Porphyry's deputy" at a school presumably established at Rome. This "school" is unknown, and the authors find it implausible that Iamblichus, even as a well-heeled provincial, would have

The case of Anatolius thus becomes an illustrative paradigm for thinking about Christian and polytheist interaction outside of the clear boundaries implied in the narratives of polemicists like Eusebius, who display a tendency to decontextualize Christianity, constructing it as a single, *sui generis*, coherent phenomenon struggling to purify its own precincts of the baleful pagan and heretical influences. Figures like Anatolius, Clement, and Origen constitute ample evidence for the already vigorous enculturation of Christianity in a Greco-Roman context. The present discussion will offer no decisive argument for the identification of all these Anatolii; it will rather attempt to establish the credibility of the underlying premise that the boundaries separating the world of traditional philosophy from Christian thought and practice were more permeable than we might be accustomed to think – even when we *acknowledge* that Christianity is an inescapably Hellenistic phenomenon early on.

The career of Origen supports this hypothesis. Since his view of Christian eucharist, which derives from his own theory of ideal mediation, but takes much of its shape and substance from a dispute over the efficacy of *pagan* rites, will be central to the present argument, it is worth considering how his outlook was shaped by his participation in the shared intellectual culture of Alexandria.

5. A Third Century Christian Intellectual: Origen of Alexandria

The account of Anatolius' career¹⁰² may be speculative, but its plausibility depends on what we know to be true of the intellectual culture of Alexandria in the third century. It is well known that as home to a number of centers of learning in the empire, Alexandria was exemplary in offering men of learning opportunities to associate

attended it. They are certainly right to suggest that the theory is speculative. See Clarke, *et al.*, xxi. Others, such as Grant (1970) p. 141, seem to take the identification more or less for granted. ¹⁰² It is possible that Eusebius's sketch of Anatolius's career is based on the template of Origen's. For Anatolius to have functioned as a kind of philosopher-theologian-cleric alongside bishop Theotecnus in Caesarea would make him almost another incarnation of Origen, presiding in like manner over the same seat of learning in the East. See Dillon (1987) 867.

in a number of contexts, regardless of their creeds and convictions.¹⁰³ Many Christian thinkers obviously became men of culture, and there is no reason to suppose that they did so otherwise than by attending the same schools of rhetoric and philosophy attended by others.¹⁰⁴ In one sense, it is simply obvious that Christian thinkers draw upon the rhetorical and philosophical terms of Hellenistic culture.¹⁰⁵ Origen's own work, without reference to the culture of which he was a part, bears the obvious markings of considerably philosophical influence.¹⁰⁶ What requires constant emphasis is that such characteristics of their work are the mark of shared culture, and not simply imitation or literary affectation. Despite the frequent outbursts of violence throughout the city's history, often between religious communities, it is clear that Alexandrian Pagans and Christians were not always defined by the terms of a religious polemic, but that they were also co-participants in shared economy of ideas, and bearers of the imprint of a common culture.¹⁰⁷

Eusebius's account of Origen's career should be read against this background. It works obviously within the conventions of hagiography,¹⁰⁸ and his intellectual attainments are therefore presented under a distinctively Christian aspect. Eusebius cannot suppress Origen's devotion to philosophy, but he does engage in a kind of rhetorical appropriation of philosophy's terms, and an subordination of classical learning to a Christian rule of faith – as well as narrative deferral in certain instances

¹⁰³ For a thorough sketch of the history of the Royal Library, the Serapeum library the *Mouseion* – with interesting attention the latter's relation to the Athenian model of a philosophical school – see Watts (2006) 145-151.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* 154, and n.68 for Alexandria's importance as a venue for rhetorical study in the second and third centuries.

¹⁰⁵ Clement's *Paedagogus* is the perfect example. Written to enjoin certain habits of life upon Christians, it draws extensively on classical rhetorical conventions and philosophical ideas in so doing. See R. Lane Fox (1986) 305-06, Lilla (1971) 96-97, as cited in Watts (2006) 154-55, n. 69.

¹⁰⁶ See Chadwick (1966) 66-95, Rist (1981).

¹⁰⁷ For Alexandria's reputation (often deserved) as a place prone to civic violence, see Watts (2006) 151-52. Noteworthy also are his arguments on the facts of social and economic life that would have tended to unite people from across the creedal spectrum, especially in the form of professional *collegia* (152).

¹⁰⁸ On the biography of Origen imbedded in *EH*, see Cox (1983) 69-101; Grant (1977) 635-49; Nautin (1977).

where critical information reveals much about the degree of Origen's involvement in the intellectual life of Alexandria. Thus, even from this tendentious account we may obtain some accurate notion of how a thoroughly Hellenized Christian not only employed the tools of philosophy, but even quite openly taught others – with decidedly Christian aims, of course – working from the conviction that no contradiction attended being both a philosopher and a Christian.

Eusebius' account of Origen's early formation reveals clearly his strategy of differentiating the Christian from the pagan by subordinating a traditional pagan educational curriculum to religion. We are told that his father urged biblical learning upon him, "exact[ing] from him each day learning by heart and repetition" – a discipline enjoined "in addition to the customary curriculum."¹⁰⁹ The narrative emphasis falls on scripture,¹¹⁰ which is prioritized *before* "Greek learning,"¹¹¹ but Eusebius is quite clear that the categories do not exclude one another. Origen's father is concerned with "memorizations and repetitions,"¹¹² and is amusingly chagrined to discover his son's evident dissatisfaction for "the simple and obvious meanings of the texts", and his penchant for the "deeper contemplation"¹¹³ of scriptural obscurities, and for vexing his elders with his constant seeking after "the inner meaning of the inspired scripture."¹¹⁴ Eusebius's account is obviously fanciful anachronism, depicting the youthful Origen already performing elaborate allegorical exegesis, but it does reflect Eusebius' concern to show from the beginning that Origen's intellectual attainments were always guided by the church, and subordinated to the church's theological project of exegesis. Even in this amusingly anachronistic bit of narrative, we can see what, in Eusebius' view, is

¹⁰⁹ πρὸς τῆ τῶν ἐνγκυκλίων παιδείᾳ (EH 6.2.7-8).

¹¹⁰ θεῖαι γραφαί

¹¹¹ Ἑλληνικὰ μαθήματα

¹¹² ἐκμαθήσεις καὶ ἐπαγγελίας

¹¹³ τὰς ἀπλᾶς καὶ προχείρους τῶν ἱερῶν λόγων ἐντεύξεις ... βαθυτέρα θεωρία. The whole scenario is perhaps best viewed as an amusing conflation of the procedures of the earliest stages of Greek education and the far more sophisticated modes of critical exegesis employed by Origen in his career as a theologian. For a detailed treatment of the approaches and techniques of the former, see Cribiore (2001) 160-84.

¹¹⁴ τὸ τῆς θεοπνεύστου γραφῆς ... βούλημα. EH 6.2.8-9.

philosophy's proper place,¹¹⁵ and within what safe framework Origen's father is to be praised for later having *furthered* his son's secular, philosophical studies, which Origen is said to have pursued even more vigorously after his father's death. Though deprived of his father's aid, and impoverished by the confiscation of the estate, he lived by the patronage of an unnamed wealthy woman, he attained finally to such a degree of education that he was able to earn his own living, finally displaying such intellectual aptitude that he was eventually appointed head of Alexandria's "catechetical school" by the bishop Demetrius.

Eusebius' narrative compresses a number of years, and tellingly suppresses any account of Origen's involvement with circles of pagan intellectuals, but his brief description of the unnamed woman's household presents a fascinating picture of the encounter between a Christian culture and the other "schools" of thought that characterized Alexandrian intellectual life, and further reveals Eusebius' insistence on a rhetorical definition of boundary even within a world of diversity. In this instance, the "other schools" in question are comprised of heretical Christians. In an atmosphere suggestive of an intellectual salon, Eusebius notes that "heretics" and "our people" regularly assembled together, drawn by the persuasive rhetoric of a certain heretic of Antioch named Paul, who happened also to be the adopted son of the hostess.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ In addition to insisting on philosophy's subordination to a rule of faith, Eusebius also engages in a deliberate appropriation of the terms of a philosophical life. His fortitude in the face of the persecution of Aquila exemplifies "the right actions of a most genuine philosophy" (EH 6.3.6). When he resigns his teaching position and sells his precious books, embracing a life of radical asceticism, Eusebius describes such gestures as follows: "For many years he lived in this manner as a philosopher (φιλοσοφῶν) ... persevering as much as possible in the most philosophical life (βίω ... φιλοσοφωτάτω)," fasting and sleeping on the floor. His behavior was a "proof" (ὑπόδειγμα) of a philosophical life so genuine that many consequential people were persuaded to follow his example, drawn from the unbelieving gentiles (ἄπιστοι ἔθνα) and those devoted to "learning and philosophy" (παιδεία καὶ φιλοσοφία). Eusebius' strategy appears to entail both the subordination of philosophy to a rule of faith, and an appropriation of the meaning of terms of philosophy. Where philosophy is subject to the norms of biblical exegesis, and repeatedly presented strictly in terms of disciplined asceticism, it has been adequately sanitized for Christian use.

¹¹⁶ EH 6.2.12-15. People attracted to Paul "because of his apparent skillfulness in speech" (Oulton), διὰ τὸ δοκοῦν ἰκανὸν ἐν λόγῳ. The Greek text emphasizes more effectively Eusebius' point: Paul's *seeming*. As a rhetorician or dialectician he is all surface, all charm. Origen, on the

Eusebius insists that Origen is not tainted by this contact, though his anxious characterization of Paul would suggest that many were. Great numbers of both heretics and orthodox come to hear him, but Origen resists his wiles, “[giving] clear proofs of his orthodoxy, at that age, in the faith,”¹¹⁷ evidenced principally by his refusal to pray with Paul. Eusebius is careful to maintain this boundary, which enables him to depict Origen as *in* a certain world, but not *of* it. He can engage a non-Christian culture – and the even more perilous culture of heresy – and still engage in the learned disputes required of a successful philosopher and man of letters, distinguishing between Paul’s *seeming* ability in “logos” (τὸ δοκοῦν ἰκανὸν ἐν λόγῳ), while perfecting his own mastery of “logoi” under spiritually perilous conditions.

Origen’s progress in intellectual pursuits is said to correspond perfectly to his time in his patron’s household, where he “applied himself wholly with renewed zeal to a literary training, so that he had a tolerable amount of proficiency in letters.”¹¹⁸ Eusebius thus depicts him as rather neatly completing his education in much the same way that he began it, by subordinating Greek learning to the correct formulation of Christianity – to the “orthodox faith” and “the rule of the church.”

Eusebius grants us a limited glimpse into the world of Alexandria, which in the third century was composed of many independent communities with fairly permeable boundaries. Even the notion of an Alexandrian “catechetical school” should be seen in such a context.¹¹⁹ Eusebius argument that such a “school” existed, and that it was neatly

other hand, is alert to his wiles, preserving throughout their accidental association “orthodox faith” in accordance with the “rule of the church,” κανὼν ἐκκλησίας.

¹¹⁷ τῆς ἐξ ἐκείνου περὶ τὴν πίστιν ορθοδοξίας ἐναργῆ παρείχετο δείγματα.

¹¹⁸ τῇ περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἀσκήσει ὅλον ἐπιδοῦς ἑαυτὸν, ὡς καὶ παρασκευὴν ἐπὶ τὰ γραμματικὰ μετρίαν ἔχειν....

¹¹⁹ *EH* 6.3.1-3. The question of the “catechetical school” is complex, especially its relationship to the emergence of a monarchical episcopate in this period. Most persuasive, as Watts (2006) notes (p. 162, n. 107) is Scholten’s argument (1995) that the “catechists” worked more or less as independent scholars who under the auspices of hierarchy. Origen may have codified the approach of this rather loosely conceived organization, imposing a curriculum that mirrored that of Platonic philosophical schools, where preliminary training would normally have been followed by study of the Platonic dialogues. Origen replaced the dialogues with scripture, thus

subordinated to monarchical Episcopal authority, is almost surely anachronism. For all that he insists on succession as the guarantor of legitimacy,¹²⁰ we see the beginnings of a monarchical episcopate at Alexandria probably only with the return of Demetrius after the persecution under the prefect Aquila,¹²¹ and his attempt to bring Christian instruction under the bishop's control.¹²² It was only at that time that Origen could have been appointed head of the school, precisely when it may have been coming under stricter management, and even then it is by no means clear how successfully Christian teaching was subordinated to the bishop's authority. When we discount Eusebius' soothing myth of episcopal management, intellectual life in Alexandria looks rather more anarchic, marked by encounter between conflicting sects and schools, many of which might come in to open conflict or collusion in purely private contexts.

Much the same claim might be made about Origen's own career as an intellectual, as becomes clear in the light of information that Eusebius occludes in the earlier chapters of his hagiography, deferring it until his later account of Origen as the established *Christian* teacher. The program of instruction offered by Origen within his circle points strongly to an emphasis on traditional philosophical training, and suggests the likelihood that Origen himself was regarded as a serious thinker regardless of his creed – a significant influence on heretics, other philosophers, and educated people in general. After an account of his conversion of a Valentinian Gnostic, we are told that other cultured persons (ἄλλοι δὲ πλείους ἀπὸ παιδείας) seek him out “to make trial of

establishing a kind of Christian philosophical school (Watts [2006] 162-3). See also Le Boulluec (1987), van den Broek (1995), van den Hoek (1997).

¹²⁰ Demetrius assumes the episcopacy from a “Julius” of whom nothing is known (EH 6.2.2), and Origen himself is said to occupy a place in a similar “succession” of teachers after Pantaenus and Clement.

¹²¹ EH 6.3.3

¹²² Behr (2001) 164-5. Eusebius's fractured narrative, characterized, as often, by frequent suppression and deferral of information – generally in Origen's favor – may obscure here the conflict between Origen and the bishop Demetrius. The precise nature of the conflict is uncertain, but it may be a result of the strains that might well arise between the institutional authority of a monarchical bishop and the intellectual authority of Christian thinkers who may have been schooled in a time of less consolidated leadership.

[his] sufficiency in the sacred books" (ἱεροὶ λόγοι). In Eusebius's judgment, one might justly claim that the many who have sought him out were educated by him in secular philosophy (τῆς ἕξωθεν φιλοσοφίας) as well as in matters sacred.¹²³ It seems plain that Origen's approach to teaching heavily emphasized philosophical training, and in this he mirrors the Alexandrian tradition before him.¹²⁴ The result was a rising reputation as a philosopher:

For he used to introduce to the study of philosophy as many as he saw were naturally gifted, imparting geometry and arithmetic and the other preliminary subjects, and then leading them on to the systems which are found among philosophers, giving a detailed account of their treatises, commenting upon and examining into each, *so that the man was proclaimed as a great philosopher even among the Greeks themselves.*¹²⁵

Origen thus seems to have offered a fairly substantive curriculum. Comments by his own student, Gregory Thaumaturge, tend to support such a claim. In his panegyric *Address to Origen*, he provides substantial insight into the content of the curriculum, and particularly into Origen's subordination of philosophical teaching to the study of scripture.

Such an approach is famously what Porphyry found intolerable, as Eusebius notes. Porphyry found Origen's application of Greek modes of criticism to biblical texts absurd, refusing to grant any standing to biblical texts:

Origen, a Greek educated in Greek learning, drove headlong toward barbarian recklessness; and making straight for this he hawked himself and his literary skill about; and while his manner of life was Christian and contrary to the law, in his opinions about material things and the Deity he played the Greek, and introduced Greek ideas into foreign fables.¹²⁶

¹²³ μυρίοι δὲ τῶν αἰρετικῶν φιλοσόφων τε τῶν μάλιστα ἐπιφανῶν οὐκ ὀλίγοι διὰ σπουδῆς αὐτῷ προσεῖχον, μόνον οὐχὶ πρὸς τοῖς θείοις καὶ τὰ τῆς ἕξωθεν φιλοσοφίας. (EH 6.18).

¹²⁴ Pantaenus particularly seems to have drawn heavily on his Stoic doctrines in the course of his Christian teaching in Alexandria. See Watts (2006) 161-2, and n. 106.

¹²⁵ EH 6.19.1. In the works of these unnamed philosophers, we find "frequent mention" (πολλὴ μνήμη) of Origen; he was also, it seems, a frequent recipient of book dedications.

¹²⁶ EH 6.19.6-7. See Watts (2006) 158.

Eusebius' purpose in citing Porphyry is to defend Origen against his charges, a task at which he spectacularly fails, neglecting ever to address the problem of whether biblical texts constitute the proper subject of serious philosophical or even literary study. What he does accomplish is to expose the extent of Origen's learning, acknowledged in the otherwise contemptuous texts of Porphyry, where we learn that Origen did not simply "play the Greek," but rather wasted a perfectly good classical education:

For he was always consorting with Plato, and was conversant with the writings of Numenius and Cronius, Apollophanes and Longinus and Moderatus, Nicomachus and the distinguished men among the Pythagoreans; and he used also the books of Caeremon the Stoic and Cornutus, from whom he learnt the figurative interpretation, as employed in the Greek mysteries, and applied it to the Jewish writings.¹²⁷

Eusebius supplies no substantive answer, insisting only that Porphyry, "for lack of argument ... turned to deride and slander the interpreters [of scripture], and among these Origen especially."¹²⁸ He suggests that Porphyry indulges in character assassination, "at one time accusing [Origen] as a Christian, at another describing his devotion to philosophy."¹²⁹ What strikes one about these passages from Porphyry, though, is his genuine exasperation that a pupil of the legendary Ammonius Saccas, "who had the greatest proficiency in philosophy in our day," and who was prudent enough to reject the Christianity of his upbringing in favor of the philosopher's life, would have the temerity to embrace Christianity, though himself "a Greek educated in Greek learning."

Origen's involvement with the circle of Ammonius Saccas is surely of the greatest significance for his intellectual formation.¹³⁰ This was the famous teacher of Plotinus, the teacher with whom he spent eleven years after first vainly seeking out the

¹²⁷ *EH* 6.19.8.

¹²⁸ *EH* 6.19.2

¹²⁹ *EH* 6.19.4f.

¹³⁰ Schroeder (1987) has catalogued the modern scholarship on Ammonius, but see also Edwards (1993).

lectures offered by other Alexandrian teachers.¹³¹ It is known that his circle admitted both prominent pagans and Christians in the third century. He left no literary output, so that the nature of his school and his teaching can only be inferred from the perspective of his students. It seems furthermore that his school may have functioned outside the traditional group of established Alexandrian institutions, making him something of an outsider to mainstream intellectual culture, as is suggested by Plotinus' having made the rounds of other teachers before finding him; nevertheless he seems to have been highly regarded.¹³² Numerous factors also suggest that Ammonius' school may have consisted of both an inner and an outer circle, with certain participants admitted to a higher level of training and even required to teach the more casual members.¹³³ The debate over whether Origen was a member of the inner circle, or a more casual participant – or whether such a distinction may properly be said to have existed – has been considerable; however, taking as a starting point Porphyry's claim that Origen was a "hearer" (ἀκροητής) of Ammonius – a term generally indicating more peripheral involvement – it seems reasonable that Origen may not have been one of the inner initiates.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, there is no doubting his involvement and the degree of learning to which he was able to attain. It is also unlikely that Origen's Christianity was the factor limiting his participation. A letter of Origen quoted by Eusebius, written after his final departure from Alexandria, suggests a great deal about Origen's formation, and reveals also the extent to which even Christians in positions of leadership might have been elite

¹³¹ *VP* 3.7-13, 20.36-39. Texts quoted in Watts (2006) 155-56.

¹³² So asserts Longinus, as quoted by Porphyry (*VP* 20.36-39). Longinus claims to have participated in Ammonius' circle, and regards him, and the pagan Origen, as men "who surpassed their contemporaries in their knowledge." Text quoted in Watts (2006) 156. On the outsider status of Ammonius, see Dillon (1977) 381-82. For the clearly separate identities of the pagan Origen said to have been part of Ammonius' circle and the Christian Origen, see Watts (2006) 159-60.

¹³³ For the arguments on this point, and the suggestion that Plotinus and the pagan Origen were "inner circle" participants, while Longinus was something of a less formal member, see Watts (2006) 156-67.

¹³⁴ For the debate over this question, and the status of the term ἀκροητής, see Watts (2006) 160, n. 99.

participants in philosophical circles, and might have retain conspicuous philosophical devotion, as well, even in their positions of clerical authority:

But as I was devoted to the word, and the fame of our proficiency was spreading abroad, there approached me some heretics, sometimes those conversant with Greek learning, and especially philosophy, and I thought it right to examine both the opinions of the heretics, and also the claim that the philosophers make to speak concerning truth. And in doing this we followed the example of Pantaenus, who, before us, was of assistance to many, and had acquired no small attainments in these matters, and also Heraclas, who now has a seat in the presbytery of the Alexandrians, whom I found with the teacher of philosophy, and who had remained five years with him before I began to attend his lectures.¹³⁵ And though he formerly wore ordinary dress, on his teacher's account he put it off and assumed a philosophic garb, which he keeps to this day, all the while studying Greek books as much as possible.

Origen appears to be defending himself against charges of some sort, and he has hit upon the menace of heresy as justification for his own cultivation of philosophy. Since the heretics themselves are “conversant in Greek learning, *and especially philosophy,*” philosophical training is thus required to counter them. Origen regards it as obviously necessary “to examine ... the heretics, and also ... the philosophers,” and he cites precedent in the person of Pantaenus, the predecessor to Clement who had animated his Christian teaching with Stoic principles.¹³⁶ But even more interesting is his invocation of his contemporary Heraclas, whose importance Eusebius suppresses earlier in the narrative, likely in the interest of inflated claims on behalf of the young Origen. There, he is a mere teacher of neophytes, while Origen is charged with instructing the advanced students as head of the “catechetical school.” Here, however, he turns out to have been “with the teacher of philosophy,” Ammonius Saccas, for five years before Origen's arrival, and to have assumed fully the philosopher's life, which he later saw no reason to renounce before entering “the presbytery of the Alexandrians.”¹³⁷ This is

¹³⁵ *HE* 6.19.12-14.

¹³⁶ *HE* 5.10.1, cited in Watts (2006) 162.

¹³⁷ The fifth century Philip of Side informs us that the apologist Athenagoras “became a Christian while he wore the philosopher's cloak and was at the head of the Academy.” (Epiphanius, *haer.* 64.20-1; Photius *cod.* 234. Texts cited in Schoedel [1972] ix.)

especially noteworthy given that Heraclas is earlier said to have been among the first pagans to approach Origen for instruction in Christianity, and that he was ultimately to be Demetrius's successor as bishop at Alexandria.¹³⁸ Still later, we learn that Julius Africanus, author of "five books of *Chronographies*," had traveled to Alexandria specifically "because of the great fame of Heraclas; who, as we have stated, was greatly distinguished for philosophy and other Greek learning, and was entrusted to the bishopric of the church there."¹³⁹ The intriguing possibility is that Heraclas may have been a member of Ammonius' inner circle, and that he remained in good standing after his conversion to Christianity by Origen; and that even later, after assuming his high profile clerical role, he appears to have retained considerable devotion to philosophy.¹⁴⁰

Even without ordination, the standing of such a man in the church could evidently be quite high, as Eusebius' brief reference to an episode in which the "ruler" of Arabia summons Origen for an interview, having written both to the bishop Demetrius and to the "eparch" of Egypt. After the consultation, Origen moves on to Caesarea, where the bishop tasks him with preaching. Eusebius here quotes a letter, in which Alexander and Theotecnus, bishops in Palestine, cite a number of precedents to defend this practice of lay preaching against Demetrius's claim that such activity was unwarranted. The juxtaposition of these episodes suggests something of the status a philosopher-teacher might have had in Christian communities.

The case of Origen, and perhaps more importantly the case of his contemporary Heraclas, makes it quite clear that persons seriously given to the study of philosophy could enjoy access to Alexandrian intellectual discourse at a high level, and that they could likewise be Christians, or even Christians of important standing, while still retaining that access. Origen's letter, cited above, openly asserts the consistency between the life of the philosopher and the life of the Christian thinker, already exemplified in the lives of apologists such as Justin and Athenagoras in the second

¹³⁸ *EH* 6.3.2

¹³⁹ *ibid.* 6.31.2

¹⁴⁰ Watts (2006) 161.

century. Despite Eusebius' need to differentiate orthodox purity from its heretical and pagan environment – a need that gives rise to various suppressions and deferrals, his narrative does nevertheless present a glimpse of an intellectual culture in the third century in which pagan and Christian thinker should be regarded as co-participants. Such a culture might be viewed simply as a more developed version of what we already see limned in the second century, when the first generations of apologists attempted to claim – or to claim by histrionically rejecting – the culture of ideas that constituted the matrix giving rise to their particular religious convictions.

This idea of a shared culture should always be kept in focus, when confronting either ancient or modern texts that may be motivated by a need to insulate Christianity from its ambient world. The important point is that Christian thinkers operating in such a world should *not* be viewed as mere imitators affecting the style of their pagan forbears and contemporaries, but rather as bearers of a common culture. As we turn to questions of theurgy and eucharist, the same insight should govern the inquiry, prompting an awareness that where issues of cosmology, the soul's ascent, and the material mediation of transcendence are concerned, thinkers such as Iamblichus, Origen, and Augustine do not emerge from mutually isolated contexts. As co-participants in philosophical culture to varying degrees, they should almost predictably be concerned with the same questions, just as they should very likely be working out solutions described within the same conceptual parameters.

Chapter III: The Iamblichean *Symbolon* and the Metaphysics of Theurgy

1. Introduction: A Dispute over Theurgy and the Soul's Ascent

Since it is plainly right to view Christian thinkers of the third century as part of a larger Greco-Roman intellectual culture, and not merely as the products of a Christian culture that variously embraced or rejected pagan "influence," then it is proper to ask to what extent their theories of sacrament emerge from an aggregate of ideas shared with the pagan world. Whether or not the pagan Iamblichus studied under a converted Anatolius, the fact that figures such as Origen and Heraclas could study under Ammonius Saccas underlines the plausibility of such arrangements. For our purposes, such personal associations, even if not actualized, point to a reality in which pagan and Christian thinkers were occupied with many of the same questions, even to the point of attending the same "schools." Christian thinkers operate within the intellectual traditions of the empire – and often strive to advertise a legitimacy gained thereby. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that their thought on the efficacy of religious rites draws from this shared substance of thought.

It is not the aim of the present argument to supply an exhaustive consideration of theurgy.¹⁴¹ The central issue here is the theory of the cult *symbolon* as Iamblichus

¹⁴¹ The term itself appears to arise from the tradition of the *Chaldean Oracles*, which offered their own theurgic approach to mending the soul's fallen condition. It seems clear that the term constituted a deliberate alternative to "*theologia*" – talk, or rationalizing about the gods – as well as to *theoria*, the contemplation advocated by other Neoplatonists. It is clear that at its most basic level the term refers to *activity* over inactive contemplation – activity that is furthermore *divine* work, as Iamblichus frequently insists, though there is certainly precedent (in *Corp.Herm., Ascl.* 23-24) for understanding it in terms of "making gods" or "making gods of men." Wallis (1972) 107. For the term's origins in the *Chaldean Oracles* see Lewy (1978) 461-66, Saffrey (1981) 218-19.

develops it, deploying already extant philosophical ideas in a way that had already been and would continue to be appealing to Christian philosophers concerned with sacrament. Nevertheless, in the simple interest of avoiding an arbitrarily narrow approach, and of defining Iamblichus' outlook in terms of the late third century controversy that gave rise to his extensive defense of theurgy, it would perhaps be useful to approach the matter first in broader outlines.

Modern scholarly reception of Iamblichus' thought on theurgy, expressed principally in the single text known since the Renaissance as *De Mysteriis*,¹⁴² has varied considerably. There has been an pronounced trend from the famously dismissive posture adopted by E.R. Dodds, for whom the *De Mysteriis* was a "manifesto of irrationalism"¹⁴³ toward a more moderate position that recognizes in Iamblican thought a serious attempt at fusing Neoplatonist theory and religious practice.¹⁴⁴ This modern scholarly trend has tended to take Iamblichus seriously as a plausible systematic thinker concerned to defend his thought precisely against such charges of irrationality, and to assert theurgy as a coherent set of understandings that finally serve the ultimate end of philosophy: the re-ascent of the soul to its origin.

¹⁴² The title *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians* (*De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, Assyriorum*) was supplied by the 15th century Neoplatonist thinker Marsilio Ficino, who produced a Latin paraphrase of the work. Scutellius devised the ten book division for his own 1556 Latin translation. It was known in antiquity and the middle ages as *The Reply of the Master Abamon to the Letter of Porphyry to Anebo, and the Solutions to the Questions it Contains*. (Ἀβάμμωνος διδασκάλου πρὸς τὴν Πορφυρίου πρὸς Ἀνεβῶ ἐπιστολὴν ἀπόκρισις καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπορημάτων λύσεις), placing it firmly within the ancient literary genre of "Problems and Solutions," in which Porphyry's own *Homeric Questions* are classed (Clarke, *et al.* [2003] xlvi). Proclus attributed the work to Iamblichus (*in Ti.* I.386.9-13), a judgment approved by Psellus in a scholion heading his own eleventh century MS, as well as the two codices (Vallicellianus F20 = V = Sodano's A, c.1460; Marcianus Graecus 244 = M = Sodano's P, c.1458) which constitute the "hyparchetype" MSS for modern editions. See Sicherl (1957) 22-37, 90-97; Sodano (1952); Clarke, *et al.* (2003) xiii-xvi, xxviii. While there have been occasional disputes over authorship (with Derchain [1963] 220-226, a peculiar outlier in his insistence that the Egyptian priest Abamon, the authorial persona, was a real person) the attribution to Iamblichus seems secure among most modern scholars. See Clarke, *et al.* (2003) xxviii.

¹⁴³ Dodds (1951) 287; See Clarke, *et al.* (2003) xxvi-xxvii. The sentiment is also occasionally echoed by Iamblichus' modern editor Édouard des Places (1996), whose remarks sometimes betray the same sense of theurgy as a decline from dialectic to decadence.

¹⁴⁴ See Clarke, *et al.*, (2003) xxvi, who note especially Larsen (1972); Nasemann (1991); Shaw (1995).

This scholarly turn is fortunate, since it takes Iamblichus at his word when he asserts that theurgy, informed by the ancient practices of Chaldea and Egypt, is actually a coherent philosophical system conducive to the very ends that his opponents strove to claim as their own. The *De Mysteriis*, framed in the literary tradition of “problems and solutions,” sets out to establish the credentials of theurgy against a host of objections raised by Iamblichus’ own former teacher, Porphyry, who stands in for the kind of skepticism concerning religious rites and practices that is characteristic of third century Platonism with its emphasis on a more dualist, exclusively noetic philosophical discipline as that means of the soul’s ascent. That Porphyry would address his often strident objections to the Egyptian “Anebo” – regardless of whether such an individual might have actually existed¹⁴⁵ – underscores his intention to defend a more “cult-free” understanding of the soul’s ascent against what he perceives as dangerous, delusive intrusions into intellectual circles by magic, astrology, and other forms of pseudo-philosophical chicanery. Given the nature and tone of the attack, that Iamblichus would respond in the person of “Abammon” is a perfectly coherent move, suggesting his intention to defend Egyptian “wisdom” against what he rightly takes to be a frontal attack. Put simply, Iamblichus intends to take up Porphyry’s challenge directly, asserting the venerable wisdom traditions of the ancient Near East, especially Chaldea and Egypt, as both source and perfect expression of philosophical insight. Iamblichus thus understands himself not as a defender of innovation, but rather as a defender of *tradition* – a point underlined by his implied embrace of the ancient practice of pseudonymous authorship as a useful way of effacing specific authorial claims and pointing to the more prestigious sources of the wisdom conveyed.¹⁴⁶ What is more, that

¹⁴⁵ Sodano (1958) is a reconstruction of the letter from fragments drawn from the *De Mysteriis* as well as other sources. The existence of “Anebo” is question that has been taken up by a number of scholars over time. See Clarke, *et al.*, (2003) xxix.

¹⁴⁶ As Clarke, *et al.*, (2003) point out, Iamblichus obviously grasped that the Hermetic, Pythagorean and Chaldean traditions within which he understood himself to be working all supplied a wisdom whose *origin* was with some ancient sage – a Hermes Trismegistus or a Pythagoras – but whose *mediation* was effected by anonymous or pseudonymous commentators (xxxi-xxxii). Iamblichus is thus simply performing his hieratic role in accordance with long

Iamblichus would make his reply to Porphyry in the person of “Abammon” – the “master” (διδάσκαλος) who claims “Anebo” as a mere pupil (μαθητής) – effectively raises the stakes, asserting an even more distinguished religious pedigree than Porphyry may have been betting on, and perhaps teasing him as well, since Iamblichus’ former “master” is now seated at the feet of Master Abammon.¹⁴⁷ Whether an etymologically informative meaning for the name may be derived has been widely disputed, with the focus, as one might expect, on arguments over interpreting the name as “Father of Ammon.”¹⁴⁸ Clarke, *et al.*, prudently cutting through such disputes, take the rather modest position that “Abammon” is likely little more than a Graeco-Egyptian proper name,¹⁴⁹ which – if correct – serves to re-locate emphasis in the proper place: away from etymologies and spellings and toward the simple acknowledgement that in the person of “Abammon” Iamblichus clearly intends to defend and intellectual fusion of the Egyptian and the Greek, making the Greek, as was entirely conventional, genealogically dependent on the former. In fact, one might argue that the assertion of such harmony is in some sense the central project of the *De Mysteriis*. Iamblichus’ wry address to Porphyry at *De Mysteriis* I.1, in which the latter is cast as a pupil coming to learn from an Egyptian scribe (ἱερογραμματοεὐς¹⁵⁰) would lose its force entirely without the explicitly

established rules. Fowden (1986) writes of a “continuity of inspiration” that any given author might be interested in preserving by attributing his work to the divine sage, and notes further that Iamblichus himself adopts the position that “since Hermes was the source of all knowledge, it was only natural that the ancient Egyptian priests should render him homage by attributing their writings to him” (187). See also Sint (1960).

¹⁴⁷ See Clarke, *et al.*, (2003) xxx.

¹⁴⁸ Saffrey’s (1971) attempt at reading the name as a compound of the Semitic *aba*, “father,” and the Egyptian god “Ammon,” thus fusing Iamblichus’ actual Syrian and adopted Egyptian identities, where the name would bear the significance of a formal theurgic title, evident in other writings as θεοπάτωρ (234 ff.). Clarke, *et al.* (2003) neatly summarize his argument, noting that it falters on the complete absence of the term θεοπάτωρ in any surviving Iamblichean text, and the relative unimportance of the god Ammon in the *De Mysteriis*. The theory is further undermined by the fact that Abammon / Αβάμμωνος is a seventeenth century conjecture of Thomas Gale against the Ἀβάμωνος / Αβάμμωνος spellings of the MSS (xxxiii-xxxv).

¹⁴⁹ (xxxvii).

¹⁵⁰ This reading of “scribe” (rather than the “sacred writings” of the MSS) is supplied as a marginal conjecture in the 17th century MS of Isaak Vossius = B⁵, presumably on the reasonable grounds that it better parallels “teachers” (διδασκάλων) later in the passage. Later, in the course

stated understanding that this is what learned Greeks had always done:

For it would not be right for Plato and Democritus and Eudoxus and many other of the Hellenes of old to have been granted suitable instruction by the scribes of their time, but for you, in our time, who have the same purpose as they, to fail of guidance at the hands of those who are accounted public teachers now.¹⁵¹

Iamblichus is thus quite open about his intention to vindicate Egypt as a principal source of Greek wisdom – an argument that embraces the claim that Egyptian *religion*, too, constitutes an element of the ancient wisdom embraced by Pythagoras and Plato before him. If “Egyptian” is construed as embracing a set of practices as well as whatever *gnosis* was imparted to the early Greek sages, then it follows that such practices – reflecting as they do the perfect wisdom of Egypt – may be defended on their own merits against charges that they are merely *magic* – debased, encosmic manipulations. As Iamblichus puts the matter elsewhere, directly addressing

of dismissing as unimportant precisely *who* Porphyry’s interlocutor is to be – whether Anebo, Abammon himself, or any other competent Egyptian – Abammon implicitly classes himself as an Egyptian “prophet.” The deployment of such scribal / prophetic terminology seems entirely in keeping with the invocation of Hermes at the document’s very opening sentence, where Iamblichus seems to elide Hermes “the god who presides of rational discourse” (Θεός ὁ τῶν λόγων ἡγεμῶν) and “common patron of all priests” (ἅπασι τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν ... κοινός) with the Hermes Trismegistus – the “cosmopolitan, Hellenistic Hermes, Egyptianized through his assimilation to Thoth” (Fowden [1986] 24). This is the peculiar, late antique, Greco-Egyptian hybrid: “he who presides over true knowledge about the gods,” (ὁ δὲ τῆς περὶ θεῶν ἀληθινῆς ἐπιστήμης προεστηκώς) to whom prior Greek sages “dedicated the fruits of their wisdom, attributing all their known writings to Hermes” (τὰ αὐτῶν τῆς σοφίας εὐρήματα ἀνετίθεισαν, Ἑρμοῦ πάντα τὰ οἰκεῖα συγγράμματα ἐπονομάζοντες), a semi-divine sage who absorbed the various functions of Thoth-Hermes, to include presidency over “sacred rituals, texts, and formulae” (Fowden [1986] 22). Iamblichus is here communicating his intention to align himself not only with a system of revelation mediated by scribes and prophets, but with one that was a distinctive fusion of the Hellenistic and the Egyptian – a posture perfectly calibrated for the argument of the *De Mysteriis*, where the derivation of Greek from Egyptian wisdom is asserted.

¹⁵¹ Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν εἴη πρέπον Πυθαγόραν μὲν καὶ Πλάτωνα καὶ Δημόκριτον καὶ Εὐδοξον καὶ πολλοὺς ἄλλους τῶν παλαιῶν Ἑλλήνων τετυχηκέναι διδαχῆς τῆς προσηκούσης ὑπὸ τῶν καθ’ ἑαυτοὺς γιγνομένων ἱερογραμμάτων, σὲ δ’ ἐφ’ ἡμῶν ὄντα καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκείνοις ἔχοντα γνώμην διαμαρτεῖν τῆς ὑπὸ τῶν νῦν ζώντων καὶ καλουμένων κοινῶν διδασκάλων ὑφηγησέως (*DM* 2.8-3.4). Testimonia supporting this altogether commonplace idea are numerous – both for the claim that Greek thinkers profited from Egyptian wisdom, as well as the belief that many of them visited the priests and scribes of Egypt. See Clarke, *et al.*, (2003) xxxiii, n.66; 5, n.5.

Porphyry's charge that such preoccupation with Egyptian practices represents the most gullible capitulation to charlatanry:

Far better to understand this: that since the Egyptians were the first to be granted participation with the gods, the gods when invoked rejoice in the rites of the Egyptians. It is not then, that "all these things are sorcerer's tricks." For how could things most especially linked with the gods, which join us to them, and which possess powers all but equal to theirs, be "imaginary forgeries" when no sacred work could happen without them?¹⁵²

Under such a construction, it is figures like Porphyry, with their stiff resistance to ritual practices as aids to the soul's ascent, who may be classified as heretics – as disloyal to the *whole* tradition of wisdom imparted to Pythagoras and Plato by ancient Egyptian wise men.

In the *De Mysteriis* Iamblichus sets out to defend just such an idea of tradition, and to suggest in the course of so doing that thinkers like Porphyry had lost track of the sources of their own knowledge, and that they had thus lost the *means* of achieving philosophy's ultimate goal. Far beyond magic, theurgy represented a set of understandings crucial for proper engagement with the material and non-material cosmos. The proper approach to the soul's ascent could not be merely the arid, theoretical discipline of Porphyry; it was rather theurgy, whose ends Iamblichus insistently claims as fundamentally the same as those of philosophy:

But come now, you say, is not the highest purpose of the hieratic art to ascend to the One, which is supreme master of the whole multiplicity (of divinities), and in concert with that, at the same time to pay court to all the other essences and principles? Indeed it is, I would reply; but that does not come about except at a very late stage and to very few individuals.¹⁵³

¹⁵² ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐκεῖνο ὑπολάμβανε, ὡς Αἰγυπτίων πρώτων τὴν μετουσίαν τῶν θεῶν διακηρωσαμένων, καὶ οἱ θεοὶ χαίρουσι τοῖς Αἰγυπτίων θεσμοῖς καλούμενοι· οὐδ' αὖ γοήτων ἐστὶ ταῦτα πάντα τεχνάσματα· πῶς γὰρ ἂν τὰ μάλιστα συνηνωμένα τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ἡμᾶς πρὸς αὐτοὺς συνάπτοντα καὶ μόνον οὐχὶ τὰς ἴσας δυνάμεις ἔχοντα τοῖς κρείττοσι, φανταστικὰ ἂν εἴη πλάσματα, ὧν χωρὶς οὐδὲν ἱερατικὸν ἔργον γίγνεται; (*DM* 258.2-8).

¹⁵³ Τί δέ; οὐχὶ τὸ ἀκρότατον τῆς ἱερατικῆς ἐπ' αὐτὸ τὸ κυριώτατον τοῦ ὅλου πλήθους ἐν ἀνατρέχει, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἅμα τὰς πολλὰς οὐσίας καὶ ἀρχὰς συνθεραπεύει; καὶ πάνυ γε,

Here we already see hints – with “all the other essences and principles” – of the broad cosmic vision that grounds Iamblichus’ embrace of materiality; we also see a willingness to approve a certain kind of philosophical elitism (“a very late stage and to very few...”), even within a system that embraces all manner of “common” religious practices. More crucial for the moment, though, is the succinctly expressed argument that sacred material rites function to facilitate the soul’s ascent to its divine source – which is the very goal of Neoplatonist philosophy. As Clarke, *et al.*, point out, Iamblichus insists on describing this reality in consistently transcendent terms, precisely as “supernatural,” while the flaw of which he often seems to stand accused – and which he obviously regards as a confused caricature – is that his thought is too immured in a “natural,” *i.e.*, physical world of magic and tangible religious rites. As an instance, at the beginning of Book 9, vexed with what he describes as Porphyry’s tendency to “[drag] down the more perfect type of worship to the merely human level,” Iamblichus distinguishes carefully between what he regards as explanations that function “more universally, transcending the realm of nature,” (ὕπερ τὴν φύσιν) and those that work “on an individual level, following the dictates of nature” (κατὰ τὴν φύσιν). A properly “theurgic” approach invokes “higher causal principles,” while a more mechanical / “technical” approach “resorts to the visible cycles of the generated realm.”¹⁵⁴ Porphyry, it is understood, is failing in this case to appreciate the distinction. Elsewhere, in a discussion of the proper kind of mantic art, Iamblichus similarly insists that such a craft operates in complete freedom from the material realm – “undefiled and sacerdotal and truly divine ... itself entirely removed from all, supernatural, and eternally pre-existent...”¹⁵⁵ Clarke and her colleagues surely are correct in judging that Iamblichus’ persistent application of the terms of the “supernatural” (ὕπερ τὴν φύσιν, ὑπερφυσῆς) is a way of forging a link – on the level of diction – between the activity of theurgists and the activity of gods. Such

φήσαιμι ἄν· ἀλλὰ τοῦτο ὀψιαίτατα παραγίγνεται καὶ τοῖς σφόδρα ὀλιγιστοῖς, καὶ ἀγαπητὸν εἰ καὶ ἐν δυσμαῖς τοῦ βίου ποτὲ ὑπάρξειεν (DM 230.12-231.2).

¹⁵⁴ DM 273.1-9. See Clarke, *et al.* (2003) xxvii.

¹⁵⁵ Ἐν οὖν τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ ἄχραντον καὶ ἱερατικὸν θεῖόν τε ὡς ἀληθῶς γένος τῆς μαντείας ... αὐτὸ ἐξήρηται πάντων, ὑπερφυσῆς ἀίδιον προὑπάρχον (DM 178.13-179.1).

terms, as they point out, denote divinity in the *De Mysteriis* – and by extension theurgic activity in Iamblichus; and they begin consistently to designate divinity in the works post-Iamblichean thinkers. For Iamblichus, the deployment of such language is a necessary part of a program of defining the cult activity of theurgists as completely *other* than the activity of magicians and other charlatans.¹⁵⁶ Such vigilance is ever required for Iamblichus, since the objections lodged by Porphyry in the *Letter to Anebo* do tend to collapse the very distinction between *natural* and *supernatural* that Iamblichus strives to maintain, given that those objections are founded in the skepticism of Plotinus and Porphyry as to the possible effectiveness of theurgy in any *supernatural* realm. Quite naturally Porphyry saw Iamblichus' project as something akin to magic, especially given the latter's occasional willingness to compile lists of sacred objects that might serve as receptacles for divine presence – stones, plants, and the like¹⁵⁷ – that might easily be viewed by sophisticated intellectuals as mere charms.¹⁵⁸

Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* thus needed to be an elaborate reply to a sustained attack constantly striving to reduce theurgy to mere natural manipulations. Porphyry's own history of skepticism concerning the efficacy of cult acts is most lucidly expressed in his work, *On Abstinence from Animal Food*. In this work, wherein we can sense the roots of his opposition to theurgy, he also takes the position that *all* material religion ought to be jettisoned where it concerns the most high god, since engagement with the material can only impede the mind's approach to non-material gods:

To the god who rules over all ... we shall offer nothing perceptible by the senses, wither by burning or in words. For there is nothing material which is not at once impure to the immaterial. So not even words (*logos*) expressed in speech are appropriate for him, nor yet internal words when they have been contaminated by the

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *DM* 288, where Iamblichus distinguishes between a legitimate transcendent theurgic clairvoyance and one that functions merely encosmically, relying on the false notion that there could be anything "genuine, perfect, and eternally good ... which is implanted by nature within the realms of generation...." γνήσιον καὶ τέλειον καὶ αἰδίων ἀγαθὸν τῶν ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως τῆς ἐν γενέσει ... ἐμφυομένων.

¹⁵⁷ See *DM* 233.9-12, and discussion below.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Wallis (1995) 107.

passion of the soul. But we shall worship him in pure silence and with pure thoughts about him.¹⁵⁹

Such an outlook would plainly have to inform suspicions of magic, prophesy, virtually all forms of sacrifice, and indeed any religious activity involving interaction with the material world. To lower divinities composed of body and soul – such as the stars – Porphyry prescribes sacrifices of inanimate things;¹⁶⁰ but one senses that the concession has been hard won. He also notes common views held regarding the lower order of *daemons*, and adamantly rejects blood sacrifice to them and other divinities, attributing the origin of such practices to deceptions practiced by the *daemons* themselves, who required the “vapors” from sacrifice for their sustenance. Such beings are actually malign, and the “power” above them is characterized as a deceiver. The true philosopher will have nothing to do with such practices, and will eschew them and other ritual activities in favor of a cult-free path to divinity. Porphyry culminates his argument with his celebrated dictum that “in every respect, the philosopher is the savior of himself.”¹⁶¹ Elsewhere he notes that true holiness – the end of which is assimilation to the divine (*oikeiōsis*) – is available principally to those who would *avoid* excessive entanglement in material expressions of piety; it belongs to the man

who strives to fast from the passions of the soul just as he fasts from those foods which arouse the passions, who feeds on wisdom about the gods and becomes like them (ὁμοιοῦσθαι) by right thinking about the divine; a man sanctified by intellectual sacrifice (νοεῖα θυσία), who approaches the god in white clothing, with a truly pure freedom from passion (ἀπαθεία) in the soul and with a body which is light and not weighed down with the alien juices of other creatures or with passions of the soul.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ θεῶ μὲν τῶ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ... μηδὲν τῶν αἰσθητῶν μήτε θυμιῶντες μήτ' ἐπονομάζοντες· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔστιν ἔνυλον, ὃ μὴ τῶ ἀύλω εὐθύς ἐστιν ἀκάθαρτον. διὸ οὐδὲ λόγος τούτῳ ὁ κατὰ φωνὴν οἰκειῖος, οὐδ' ὁ ἔνδον, ὅταν πάθει ψυχῆς ἢ μεμολυσμένος, διὰ δὲ σιγῆς καθαῖρας καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτοῦ καθαρῶν ἐννοιῶν θρησκευόμεν αὐτόν. (*Abst.* 2.34.2), trans. Gillian Clark, in Sorabji (2004).

¹⁶⁰ *Abst.* 2.37.3

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* 2.36; 42-43; 49. See Shaw (1995) 13.

¹⁶² ...ἀποσίτου μὲν παθῶν ψυχῆς σπουδάζοντος εἶναι, ἀποσίτου δὲ καὶ βρώσεων αἰ τὰ πάθη κινουῦσιν, σιτουμένου δὲ θεοσοφίαν καὶ ὁμοιουμένου ταῖς περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁρθαῖς διανοίαις καὶ ἰερωμένου τῇ νοεῖα θυσία καὶ μετὰ λευκῆς ἐσθήτος καὶ καθαῖρας τῶ ὄντι τῆς ψυχικῆς

The best offering that can be made to the gods, argues Porphyry, is a “pure intellect (*nous*) and a soul an affected by passion (*apathês*).”¹⁶³

Augustine, quoting Porphyry’s *Philosophy from Oracles* in his own *City of God*, records Porphyry’s contention that one of the roles of Jesus was actually to dissuade people from making offerings to impure *daemons* and lower divinities and to urge them to worship “the gods of heaven” and especially “God the Father.” Only ignorant men, argues Porphyry, ignoring the wisdom of sages like Jesus, “rejected all the gods,” and busied themselves instead with revering “the forbidden demons.” Such men “pretend to worship God,” while their acts are completely disoriented in terms of what constitutes true worship:

For God, the father of all, needs nothing, but it is good for us to adore him through justice and chastity and the other virtues making our very life a prayer to him by imitating him and seeking to know him. For seeking purifies, he says, and imitation deifies by directing our disposition towards him.¹⁶⁴

Such a view of cult reveals little in the way of equivocation. Though elsewhere he may appear not entirely free of hesitation, such as in his *Letter to Marcella*, where he argues the worthiness of honoring the gods “according to ancestral tradition,” even there he goes no further than to say that “when the altars of the gods are served they do no harm, when neglected they confer no benefit.”¹⁶⁵ This seems damnation by faint praise. A more conspicuous struggle directly with the problem posed by theurgy is in a passage of his *De Regressu Animae*, carefully preserved and pilloried by Augustine with malevolent glee: “Porphyry too, though hesitantly and with an almost shamefaced discussion

ἀπαθείας καὶ τῆς κουφότητος τοῦ σώματος προσιόντος τῷ θεῷ, οὐκ ἐξ ἀλλοτριῶν καὶ ὀθνείων χυμῶν καὶ παθῶν ψυχικῶν βεβαρημένου. (*Abst.* 2.45.2; 4).

¹⁶³ Θεοῖς δὲ ἀρίστη μὲν ἀπαρχὴ νοῦς καθαρός καὶ ψυχὴ ἀπαθής (*Abst.* 2.61.1).

¹⁶⁴ ‘Nam Deus quidem, utpote omnium pater, nullius indiget; sed nobis est bene, cum eum per iustitiam et castitatem aliasque virtutes adoramus, ipsam vitam precem ad ipsum facientes per imitationem et inquisitionem de ipso. Inquisitio enim purgat, inquit; ‘imitatio deificat affectionem ad ipsum operando’ (*De Civ. D.* 19.23. Gillian Clark, trans., in Sorabji (2004) 374-5).

¹⁶⁵ βωμοὶ δὲ θεοῦ ἱεροσπουόμενοι μὲν οὐδὲν βλάπτουσιν, ἀμελούμενοι δὲ οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦσιν (*Marc.* 18, 3-4, trans. Gillian Clark, in Sorabji [2004] 374).

promises a certain quasi-purification of the soul by theurgy, but denies that this art can offer anyone return to God." Augustine – observing the very distinctions preserved by Porphyry – suggests that the latter "wavers" between "the vice of sacrilegious curiosity (*curiositas*) and the profession of philosophy." At times he warns against theurgy as "deceptive" and "dangerous"; at other times "he says is it useful for cleansing part of the soul," – *not* the "intellectual" part of the soul, Augustine hastens to point out, "which grasps the truth of the intelligibles," but rather only the "pneumatic (*spiritalis*) part, which receives the images (*imagines*) of corporeal things." Theurgic rites can thus prepare the lower part of the soul for the "reception of spirits and angels and for seeing gods," but as Porphyry grants, they supply *no* purification for the higher soul to make it "suitable for seeing its God and for perceiving that which truly exists." But even this concession is essentially nullified by Porphyry's later comments, as Augustine delights in pointing out. Even the minimal acknowledgment of the lower soul's purification is rendered void when Porphyry grants that even *without* purification of the "pneumatic part," the intellectual soul can nevertheless "escape to its own."¹⁶⁶ Under such a construction, theurgy is simply unnecessary.¹⁶⁷

Thus it appears that even when Porphyry is willing to make concessions to tradition, he still leans toward maintaining a sharp, dualist differentiation between the material and the transcendent, a differentiation that expresses itself as endorsement for "noetic" practices that facilitate the soul's ascent, and suspicion of religious rites that involve manipulation of divine passions or any kind of crude economy of propitiation. Porphyry's master, Plotinus, has little directly to say on the subject, although in the *Life* written by Porphyry he is explicitly depicted as averse to ritual, as when he is said to

¹⁶⁶ Nam et Porphyrius quondam quasi purgationem animae per theurgian, cunctanter tamen et pudibunda quodam modo disputatione promittit; reversionem vero ad Deum hanc artem praestare cuiquam negat.... inter vitium sacrilegae curiositatis et philosophiae professionem ... fluctuare.... utilem dicit esse mundanae parti animae ... non quidem intellectuali, qua rerum rerum intellegibilium percipitur veritas ... sed spiritali, qua corporalium rerum capiuntur imagines.... susceptioni spirituum et angelorum et ad videndos deos.... [animam] idoneam ad videndum Deum suum et perspicienda ea quae vere sunt.... in sua ... evadere. (*De Civ. D.* 10.9. *De Regresu Animae* Bidez [1964] fr. 2, 27, 21-28, 19; incl. Porphyry fr. 290F Smith [1993]).

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Fowden (2005) 130.

have rebuffed an invitation by a student to attend sacrifices (“They ought to come to me; not I to them.”¹⁶⁸); but on the other hand, he also seems to have embraced the widely held belief in a kind of cosmic sympathy – the mutual connectedness of all levels of reality – a Platonic notion of descending divine hierarchy wedded to a Pythagorean belief in cosmic *philia* or *sympatheia*. Within such a view, sacrifices and rituals also have their function, inasmuch as they, too – as all things – are linked to higher realms. Thus, while he shows aversion toward conventional cult and common superstition, Plotinus does nonetheless endorse the axiom that all things are somehow connected:

If a man’s riches come from hard work, from farming, for instance, the cause is to be referred to the farmer, with the environment helping. If he found a treasure, we must say that something from the All cooperated; if so, it is indicated [in the heavens]; for all things without exception are connected with each other.

Still later, he enigmatically observes: “that all happenings form a unity and are as it were spun together, in the cases of individuals as well as wholes, is signified by one of the Fates, as they are called.”¹⁶⁹ As much as Plotinus’ thought may be devoted to a principle of individual striving and discipline as the key to the soul’s ascent rather than to unreflective ritual, one can nevertheless see how religious activity is not *necessarily* excluded from such a worldview.

In the case of Porphyry, perhaps we simply have more evidence for an open struggle with such questions. Quite possibly Porphyry’s own anxiety over the place of religious ritual in the philosopher’s life – or the place of magic and quackery, with whose territory ancient religious piety often shares a border – prompted a series of changes in judgment over the course of his career. Such anxiety may have even fueled a quarrel with his pupil Iamblichus, resulting in the *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus’ extensive and elaborate reply. In the *Letter to Anebo*, Porphyry is plainly committed to a

¹⁶⁸ ἐκείνους δεῖ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἔρχεσθαι, οὐκ ἐμὲ πρὸς ἐκείνους. (VP 10.35-36. trans. Armstrong).

¹⁶⁹ Εἰ δ’ ἐκ πόνων, οἷον ἐκ γεωργίας, ἐπὶ τὸν γεωργόν, συνεργὸν τὸ περιέχον γεγενημένον. Εἰ δὲ θησαυρὸν εὔρε, συμπεσεῖν τι τῶν ἐκ τοῦ παντός· εἰ δέ, σημαίνεται· πάντως γὰρ ἀκολουθεῖ ἀλλήλοις πάντα.... Πάντα δὲ ὁμοῦ γενόμενα καὶ οἷον συγκλωσθέντα διὰ τῆς μιᾶς τῶν λεγομένων Μοιρῶν δεδήλωται ἐπὶ τε ἐκάστων ἐπὶ τε τῶν ὅλων. (Enn. II.3.14; 15). See Fowden (2005) 526.

sharp dissent from theurgy and to the assertion of the primacy of the intellectual over the cultic in philosophy. In the letter, no trace remains of his earlier willingness to grant at least some standing of theurgy as a set of practice that might purify the “spiritual” soul.

These are the concerns at the heart of the intellectual dispute over theurgy. In essence, they concern basic questions about the nature of material reality – whether matter itself ought to be viewed as good or evil, as a hindrance to the soul’s ascent, or as a vehicle that might contribute to its purification. For materially grounded religious cult – as Iamblichus clearly grasped – everything depended upon that question. Given that the intellectual mood of the age tended toward a dualist rejection of material reality, and given that much of the material endorsed by Iamblichus could be seen as akin to some fairly dubious practices and pseudo-science, the great task before Iamblichus was to defend his system against charges that it was merely magic repackaged with an intellectual patina, a bundle of sordid superstitions given an artificial philosophical pedigree. In the rigorous scholastic environment of third century intellectual culture, characterized by an insistence on noetic discipline exclusively as the true path to the soul’s liberation, Iamblichus would have had understandable difficulties making his case.

Christian gravitation to principles systematized by Iamblichus is not central to the present chapter, though we should nevertheless bear in mind that thinkers both pagan and Christian would be drawing upon some of the same metaphysical assumptions, and similar intellectual apparatus for the articulation of belief. Given that both Christian and theurgic thinkers would be preoccupied in distinctive ways with the problem of the material world and embodiment, and the related issue of the material world’s capacity for mediation of the divine, the fact of their manipulating some of the same language and argument should occasion no surprise. Christian writers naturally had their reasons to assert difference – to emphasize unique revelation from on high rather than kinship with pagan culture – but their need to explain a complicated view of

materially mediated divinity makes them obvious cousins to Iamblichus and those Neoplatonists who engaged in disputes over such questions.

This understanding of a common intellectual heritage may ground the hypothesis that Iamblichus' defense of theurgy – to include, by extension, much traditional cult practice of the empire – can be meaningfully related to early Christian eucharistic theory in some of its shades. This is not to assert simply that eucharist *is* theurgy, or that an exhaustive account of eucharistic theology may be given by viewing it straightforwardly as theurgy smuggled into Christian doctrine or thought; rather, it is to argue that Christian thinkers in the third and fourth centuries, as they struggled to define and distinguish Christian practice precisely in the face of that “shared culture,” tintured their thinking about eucharist with principles and language bestowed by a distinctly theurgic strain of Neoplatonist thought. If such a view is correct, then surely we must revise the traditional view that theurgy “influences” Christian thought only when pseudo-Dionysius openly adopts its vocabulary in the fifth century, a distinctly lineal model, in which Pseudo-Dionysius becomes merely the genealogical descendant of Iamblichean and Athenian schools of Neoplatonism.¹⁷⁰ Thus, although there is no decisive evidence for Iamblichus' having studied with Christians – or, for that matter, for his work as even meaningfully responsive to Christianity¹⁷¹ – it would nevertheless be perilous to assume that “influence” happened later, simply, straightforwardly, and in

¹⁷⁰ See Shaw (1999) for an interesting discussion of the trajectory of such arguments well into modernity, when theologians have continued to dispute as to whether Dionysius is too much a *theurgist* and therefore *not Christian*.

¹⁷¹ See Fowden (2005) 532: “Though it seems likely that Iamblichus had wanted, by fusing elements of cult and philosophy, to make polytheism more coherent and better able to resist Christian attack, in practice theurgy remained the preoccupation of an elite.” The latter is likely true; but nowhere, as is widely acknowledged, does Iamblichus even mention Christians – unless he does so obliquely when he mentions “atheists” (*atheoi*) in the course of rejecting their views (*DM* 179.9 ff. See Clarke, *et al.* [2003] xxviii, with n. 51). More persuasive is the argument of Shaw (1995) that Iamblichus is more concerned to refute his fellow Platonists, whom he regards as having overturned key understandings in the Platonic tradition. It is they, the Greeks, who are the dangerous and light-minded innovators: “for the Hellenes are experimental by nature, and eagerly propelled in all directions, having no proper ballast in them; and they preserve nothing which they have received from anyone else, but even this they promptly abandon and change it all according to their unreliable linguistic innovation” *DM* 259.7-9. See Shaw (2005) 2-3.

a kind of cultural vacuum. Such an approach assumes, after all, that the formative thinkers in both the elaboration of Christian ritual and the development of later Neoplatonism operated in separate worlds, a view that cannot be maintained.

The foundational supposition of the present argument rejects this lineal view, asserting rather that both Christian ritual and theurgy partake in the confluence of ideas, presuppositions and doctrines already prevalent in the Mediterranean world of their time. Drawing upon these diverse traditions, both Christians and theurgic thinkers would be forced to take a more complicated view of material embodiment than radical dualism would allow, and to embrace a corollary set of views as to how the soul's ascent from materiality may be facilitated by materially grounded rituals.

Before taking up again the question of Christian adaptations, the present chapter will undertake to engage (2.), Iamblichus' conflict with the Platonist tradition of his time, especially his engagement with what he sees as distortions of Platonic thought in the work of Middle Platonists, Plotinus and Porphyry, as such thought touches on the dissociation of the soul from matter, positing matter as evil and the soul as "undescended"; (3.), Iamblichus' affirmation of an essentially Platonic view of the materially manifest cosmos as integrated with transcendent reality, such that all *paideia* and re-orientation for the descended soul may be seen in terms of a monist cosmic harmony, and thus as rightly implicating material religious cult; third (4.), Iamblichus' theoretically monist metaphysics, rooted in Neopythagorean thought and affirming clearly the goodness of material reality as a manifestation of eternal cosmic proportions; fourth (5.), Iamblichus' resolution of Platonism's ambivalence over matter, resolving the paradox of matter as both disorienting obstacle and necessary instrument, and asserting the conviction that the soul's cosmic function is participation in the demiurgic organization of the material cosmos through cult that properly aligns it with the demiurge's *daemoniac* functionaries; fifth (6.) the Iamblichean theory of the *symbolon* – expressed through the complex of terms *symbolon*, *synthema*, and *eikon* – the arcane signs and imprints dispersed through material nature, marking the theurgist's points of access to the invisible demiurgic world of gods and *daemones*. Iamblichus' thought on these

symbola is crucial to understanding the links connecting Christian thinkers with a theurgic worldview – links that are manifest in the occasional open embrace of such language and concepts by Christian thinkers, as well as in their occasional rhetorical dissimulation of such appropriations. Here I shall argue that for Iamblichus – in a turn of thought that would be essential within the Christian embrace of similar ideas – *symbola* are not merely coded signs or effective switches that ritually enable the soul’s re-adaptation and re-ascent to the noetic world of divine presence, but rather divine presence made visible – divinity actualized in the world – such that to come into the ambit of the *symbolon* was to come into the presence of the god, a presence that enabled the soul’s ascent to participation in divine activity.

While Christians may not have seen the soul’s proper end in terms of this demiurgic function, their thought surely shares characteristics with this variant of Platonism, especially insofar as both are expressions of a need to manage the paradox of embodiment as *both* a condition of hindrance (cf. Paul’s “body of death”) *and* a locus of healing and transfiguration, and to justify and explain a series of ritual engagements with material reality that were understood as essential to bringing about the soul’s remedy. Christians would employ much of the same language and conceptual category in elaborating theory of eucharist – though, as we will see, they would pointedly subtract the demiurgic function imputed to the soul by Iamblichus’ theurgy, and would also therefore reject any notion of cooperation with the *daemonic*. For them, the *symbolon* would continue to function to enable the soul’s ascent, but it would do so more narrowly within the church; and it would facilitate the soul’s redemption from sin and death, rather than bringing it into demiurgic cooperation with *daemones*.

2. *Plato, Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Tradition: Embodiment and its Discontents*

The difficulties involved in justifying a theurgic Platonism stem originally from the ambivalence of the Platonic tradition itself on the question of material embodiment.

The central issue is whether the soul's embodiment should be seen strictly as a hindrance to the soul's ascent – the soul's *escape* from the perils and illusions of the material world – or as a formative, educative experience in the soul's life, to include the view of the souls' descent as a necessary projection of the nonmaterial (soul) into the material (matter), such that the former functioned as a kind of creative bridge between the intelligible and perceptible realms. To put the matter most simply, is a monist or dualist reading of Plato's critical dialogues correct? Plato's *Timaeus*, which exhibits a more monist tendency among the dialogues of the Platonic corpus, seems to find in the material world cosmic harmonies to which the embodied soul could become attuned. There is no doubt that the binding of souls to material bodies is attended by violent effects, such that external sensations tend to disrupt the soul's proper orientation in its "revolutions," producing a state of affairs in which, "as often as a soul is bound within a mortal body it becomes at first irrational."¹⁷² But even given the initial shocks of embodiment the soul's revolutions can become stabilized over time so that intelligence prevails over embodiment's initial chaos; if such stability is "reinforced by right educational training, the man becomes wholly sound and faultless, having escaped the worst of maladies...."¹⁷³ Within such a framework, the universe itself is properly ordered; only the soul is subject to inversion (*anatropē*) – an idea that Plato explores through the metaphor of a man suspended upside-down, such that his perceptions of reality are completely distorted.¹⁷⁴ But we should bear in mind that such a view is not uniformly pessimistic. With proper *paideia*, the ignorance imposed by the soul's disruptive bonding to matter may be overcome, and the health of proper orientation attained. By contrast, from the second century C.E. onward, we encounter Middle Platonist and Neoplatonist thinkers who display a more starkly dualist view of the

¹⁷² περιφοραὶ ἄνους ψυχὴ γίγνεται τὸ πρῶτον, ὅταν εἰς σῶμα ἐνδεθῆ θνητόν (*Ti.* 44A-B, trans. Bury [1929]).

¹⁷³ συνεπιλαμβάνηται τις ὀρθὴ τροφὴ παιδεύσεως, ὀλόκληρος ὑγιῆς τε παντελῶς, τὴν μεγίστην ἀποφυγῶν νόσον, γίγνεται (*ibid.* 44C).

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* 43E. Cf. Shaw (1995) 9, where Plato's view of the inverted soul is discussed within the "locative" cosmological paradigm articulated by Cornelius Loew, as discussed in detail by J. Z. Smith (1978) 88-103.

cosmos, in which the world of material nature is seen almost exclusively as an obstacle to the soul's good.¹⁷⁵ Although such later thinkers certainly appreciated Plato's ambivalence on the question, a harder insistence on dualism nevertheless appears dominant. Porphyry's comment that "Plotinus, the philosopher of our times, seemed ashamed of being in the body," surely echoes such assumptions. The great man's last words, according to the same account, were "Try to bring back the god in us to the divine in All!"¹⁷⁶ While such statements have the quality of philosophical apothegm, and may be taken as generic expressions of the overall goals of Platonist philosophical *paideia* of whatever variety, they nevertheless suggest the more dualist view of embodiment commonly associated in Plato with the dialogues *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. From the perspective of the former, when a human being experiences the griefs and pains that follow from embodied experience, he also "suffers the greatest and most extreme evil and does not take it into account." According to Socrates, this "greatest evil" is that due to the soul's false conviction that it experiences something *real* in experiencing pleasure or pain,

each pleasure or pain nails it as with a nail to the body and rivets it on and makes it corporeal, so that it fancies the things are true which the body says are true. For because it has the same beliefs and pleasures as the body it is compelled to adopt also the same habits and ode of life, and can never depart in purity to the other world, but must always go away contaminated with the body; and so it sinks quickly into another body again and grows into it, like seed that is sown. Therefore it has no part in the communion with the divine and pure and absolute.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Shaw (1995) 10, continuing the discussion within the framework set up by J.Z. Smith (1978), where "locative" cosmology is now effectively displaced by "utopian." In the latter, the sensible cosmos becomes the soul's enemy. Rather than assimilation, the soul now seeks escape. Such a view of the cosmos is characteristic of the "age of anxiety" that Dodds (1965) identifies in the later Roman Empire.

¹⁷⁶ Πλωτίνος ὁ καθ' ἡμᾶς γεγωνὸς φιλόσοφος ἐφκει μὲν αἰσχυνομένῳ ὅτι ἐν σώματι εἶη.... πειρᾶσθαι τὸν ἐν ὑμῖν θεὸν ἀνάγειν πρὸς τὸ ἐν τῷ παντὶ θεῖον (*Plot.* 1.1; 2.26, trans. Armstrong). See Fowden (2005) 524.

¹⁷⁷ ὁ πάντων μέγιστόν τε κακῶν καὶ ἔσχατόν ἐστι, τοῦτο πάσχει καὶ οὐ λογίζεται αὐτό.... ἐκάστη ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ὥσπερ ἦλον ἔχουσα προσηλοῖ αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα καὶ προσπερονᾷ καὶ ποιεῖ σωματοειδῆ, δοξάζουσιν αὐτὰ ἀληθῆ εἶναι ἅπερ ἂν καὶ τὸ σῶμα φῆ. ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ ὁμοδοξεῖν τῷ σώματι καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς χαίρειν ἀναγκάζεται οἶμαι ὁμότροπός τε καὶ ὁμότροφος

Here the soul's inversion and consequent ignorance produce a failure to perceive the ultimate *unreality* of physical trials, and under the compounding effects of repeated subjection to the illusions of the perceptible world, finally confine it to an irrational and debased – because increasingly only *material* existence. Such a description of the soul's downward regression is pessimistic, and consistent with the more celebrated reflections from *Phaedrus*, where Socrates recalls the soul's perceptions of intelligible forms, locating them in the time prior to the experience of evils “which awaited us in the time to come” – that is, in the time prior to our embodiment, when we were “not entombed in this which we carry about with us and call the body, in which we are imprisoned like an oyster in its shell.”¹⁷⁸ Such passages propose the view that embodiment offers the soul only a compounding hindrance over time, and suggest that the soul's material entrapment is not only purposeless, but ultimately lacking all redeeming educative qualities, as well. Matters go only from bad to worse as the soul's powers of intellectual perception gradually succumb to the false experiences imposed by sense perception. Matter, in such formulations, appears entirely evil, and almost inescapable.

In the later Platonic tradition, Plotinus laboriously qualifies such indictments of matter, and is willing at least to characterize at least *intelligible* matter – as distinguished from perceptible matter – as not entirely evil. Employing a language of darkness and light to distinguish matter and form on both the intelligible and perceptible planes, he argues that at least “the darkness ... in intelligible things differs from that in the things of sense, and so does the matter, by just as much as the form superimposed on both is different.” Whatever mitigating effects such distinctions might enable appear lost, however, when he argues later that “divine matter when it receives that which defines it has a defined and intelligent life, but the matter of this world becomes something

γίγνεσθαι καὶ οἷα μηδέποτε εἰς Ἄιδου καθαρῶς ἀφικέσθαι, ἀλλὰ ἀεὶ τοῦ σώματος ἀναπλέα ἐξιέναι, ὥστε ταχὺ πάλιν πίπτειν εἰς ἄλλο σῶμα καὶ ὥσπερ σπειρομένη ἐμφύεσθαι, καὶ ἐκ τούτων ἄμοιρος εἶναι τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τε καὶ καθαρῶ καὶ μονοειδοῦς συνουσίας (*Phaed.* 83C, D. trans. Fowler).

¹⁷⁸ ὅσα ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑστέρω χρόνῳ ὑπέμενεν.... ἀσήμαντοι τούτου ὁ νῦν δὴ σῶμα περιφέροντες ὀνομάζομεν, ὅστρεον τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι (*Phaedr.* 250C).

defined, but not alive or thinking, a decorated corpse.”¹⁷⁹ The matter of the intelligible realm is thus be seen as different not only by virtue of its definition supplied by form, but also by virtue of its life-endowing conjunction with intelligibles. This matter (ύλη), which is the “depth” (τὸ βάθος) that permits the full realization and differentiation of intelligibles, is then sharply distinguished from the dead, non-sentient matter of the perceptible world, matter that is merely a “decorated corpse,” the tomb or oyster shell of Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Plotinus emphatically confirms this view elsewhere, in the course of his consideration of evils, where “the whole world of sense” is classed with evil in the category of *non-being* (μη ὄν).¹⁸⁰ “There must be something,” he argues, “which is unbounded in itself and absolutely formless.”¹⁸¹ That thing, he asserts,

which underlies figures and forms and shapes and measures and limits, decked out with an adornment which belongs to something else, having no good of its own, only a shadow in comparison with real being, is the substance of evil (if there really can be a substance of evil); this is what our argument discovers to be the primal evil, absolute evil.¹⁸²

Plotinus here displays his full horror at formless matter. Whatsoever “adornment” it may appear to have is merely the product of what *exists*, given its own lack of existence as a mere “depth” to be filled, given its lack of form, boundary, stability; given its own impoverished passivity. Perceptible matter, for Plotinus, is thus a kind of vacuum, the very inverse of being; whatever characterizes form and being cannot characterize matter, and can only contribute to matter its *false* appearance of life. So hard is this dualist opposition, in fact, that Plotinus is famously even willing – as an experiment in Platonist

¹⁷⁹ Διάφορόν γε μὴν τὸ σκοτεινὸν τό τε ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς τό τε ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ὑπάρχει διάφορός τε ἡ ὕλη, ὅσω καὶ τὸ εἶδος τὸ ἐπικείμενον ἀμφοῖν διάφορον· ἡ μὲν γὰρ θεία λαβοῦσα τὸ ὀρίζον αὐτὴν ζωὴν ὠρισμένην καὶ νοερὰν ἔχει, ἡ δὲ ὠρισμένον μὲν τι γίγνεται, οὐ μὴν ζῶν οὐδὲ νοοῦν, ἀλλὰ νεκρὸν κεκοσμημένον (*Enn.* II.4.5.12-22, trans. Armstrong). See Shaw (1995) 29.

¹⁸⁰ Τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ τὸ αἰσθητὸν πᾶν (*Enn.* I.8.3.10).

¹⁸¹ ...εἶναί τι καὶ ἄπειρον καθ’ αὐτὸ καὶ ἀνείδεον... (*Enn.* I.8.3.31-32).

¹⁸² Τὴν δ’ ὑποκειμένην σχήμασι καὶ εἶδεσι καὶ μορφαῖς καὶ μέτροις καὶ πέρασι καὶ ἀλλοτρίῳ κόσμῳ κοσμουμένην, μηδὲν παρ’ αὐτῆς ἀγαθὸν ἔχουσαν, εἶδωλον δὲ ὡς πρὸς τὰ ὄντα, κακοῦ δὴ οὐσίαν, εἴ τις καὶ δύναται κακοῦ οὐσία εἶναι, ταύτην ἀνευρίσκει ὁ λόγος κακὸν εἶναι πρῶτον καὶ καθ’ αὐτὸ κακόν (*Enn.* I.8.3.35-40).

heterodoxy – to postulate *essential* evil. If there is an “essence” of evil, then surely it is such perceptible matter as this.

Plotinus’ theory of the soul as “undescended,” or as only partially descended into matter, is in reasonable continuity with such opinions. This theory of the “undescended soul” holds that at least part of the soul remains anchored in the intelligible realm, and is therefore free from the potentially polluting material world. Such thought, characteristic of both Plotinus and Porphyry, tends toward the more dualist cosmology expressed in *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo* and their emphasis on the evils of embodiment. For Plotinus – though his view was certainly complicated – the *lower* soul “descends” to materiality, while the *higher* soul remains in the intelligible realm. While he does not explicitly say that this state of affairs must necessarily result in evil for the whole soul, his thought does display a marked anxiety on this question:

Since this nature [of matter] is twofold, partly intelligible and partly perceptible, it is better for the soul to be in the intelligible, but all the same, since it has this kind of nature, it is necessarily bound to be able to participate in the perceptible, and it should not be annoyed with itself because, granted that all things are not the best, it occupies a middle rank among realities, belonging to that divine part but being on the lowest edge of the intelligible, and, having a common boundary with the perceptible nature, gives something to it of what it has in itself and receives something from it in return, if it does not use only its safe part in governing the universe....¹⁸³

While he later notes that the soul’s experience of perceptible reality can be educative, leading to a deeper appreciation of the superior goodness of the intelligible realm, he nevertheless seems anxious over the perils associated with the perceptible realm. The soul might “receive something from it in return” – something which, as would seem to follow, would be polluting – when it (the soul) “does not use only its safe part in

¹⁸³ Διττῆς δὲ φύσεως ταύτης οὐσης, νοητῆς, τῆς δὲ αἰσθητῆς, ἄμεινον μὲν ψυχῇ ἐν τῷ νοητῷ εἶναι, ἀνάγκη γε μὴν ἔχειν καὶ τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ μεταλαμβάνειν τοιαύτην φύσιν ἐχούση, καὶ οὐκ ἀγανακτικτέον αὐτὴν ἑαυτῇ, εἰ μὴ πάντα ἐστὶ τὸ κρεῖττον, μέσην τάξιν ἐν τοῖς οὐσιν ἐπισχοῦσαν, θείας μὲν μοίρας οὐσαν, ἐν ἐσχάτῳ δὲ τοῦ νοητοῦ οὐσαν, ὡς ὄμορον οὐσαν τῇ αἰσθητῇ φύσει διδόναι μὲν τι τούτῳ τῶν παρ’ αὐτῆς, ἀντιλαμβάνειν δὲ καὶ παρ’ αὐτοῦ, εἰ μὴ μετὰ τοῦ αὐτῆς ἀσφαλοῦς διακοσμοῖ (*Enn.* IV.8.7.1-10).

governing the universe.” Plotinus elsewhere vehemently defends the goodness of the material order, which is good inasmuch as it flows ultimately from the Good.¹⁸⁴ His celebrated attack on the pronounced dualism of the Gnostics stems from such a view. But even so, one senses his anxiety that the perceptible realm is a place of dangers – a place that enchants and deceives¹⁸⁵ – and that the intelligible realm is somehow the soul’s more secure anchorage. Such an underlying conviction seems to lead to his conclusion that there is a part of the soul that does not “descend” at all:

If one ought to dare to express one’s own view more clearly, contradicting the opinion of others, even our soul does not altogether come down, but there is always something of it in the intelligible; but if the part which is in the world of sense perception gets control, or rather, if it is itself brought under control, and thrown into confusion [by the body], it prevents us from perceiving the things which the upper part of the soul contemplates.¹⁸⁶

Plotinus’ hesitation over the possibility the lower soul controlling or – still worse – being controlled by materiality reflects the anxiety of the *Phaedo*, where each experience of passion constitutes a further nail bolting the soul ever more firmly to imprisoning matter, progressively alienating the soul from the prospect of apprehending intelligibles. Still, Plotinus does sometimes qualify this grim psychology, such as when he suggests that the soul’s involvement with a material body cannot be all bad,

since it is not evil in every way for soul to give body the ability to flourish and exist, because not every kind of provident care for the inferior deprives the being exercising it of its ability to remain in the highest.¹⁸⁷

Here Plotinus displays significantly less concern for the perils of embodiment, and turns more optimistically toward the idea of “provident care” – the suggestion that soul plays

¹⁸⁴ See, for instance, *Enn.* IV.8.6.15 ff.

¹⁸⁵ *Enn.* IV.4.43.20-26. See Shaw (1995) 11.

¹⁸⁶ Καὶ εἰ χροῖ παρὰ δόξαν τῶν ἄλλων τολμῆσαι τὸ φαινόμενον λέγειν σαφέστερον, οὐ πᾶσα οὐδ’ ἡ ἡμετέρα ψυχὴ ἔδου, ἀλλ’ ἔστι τι αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ νοητῷ αἰεὶ· τὸ δὲ ἐν τῷ αἰσθητῷ εἰ κρατοῖ, μᾶλλον δὲ εἰ κρατοῖτο καὶ θορυβοῖτο, οὐκ ἔᾶ αἰσθησιν ἡμῖν εἶναι ὧν θεᾶται τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἄνω. (*Enn.* IV.8.8.1-6).

¹⁸⁷ ὡς οὐ κακὸν ὄν ψυχῇ ὁπωσοῦν σώματι παρέχειν τὴν τοῦ εὐδύναμιν καὶ τοῦ εἶναι, ὅτι μὴ πᾶσα πρόνοια τοῦ χείρονος ἀφαιρεῖ τὸ ἐν τῷ ἀρίστῳ τὸ προνοοῦν μένειν. (*Enn.* IV.8.2.23-27).

a crucial role in organizing reality in its material manifestation. This move suggests the tension latent in Platonic thought on such questions: while the body might seem at times to limit or even imprison the soul, the soul nevertheless has functions to perform in Platonic cosmology – functions that are closely linked to its entry into materiality. Plotinus himself is vexed by the tensions that arise from these seemingly conflicting positions, and he openly raises questions as to whether there can be consistency between the psychology of the *Phaedrus* and the *Phaedo* and the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, where the work of the Demiurge in organizing the cosmos is not properly completed without the descent and embodiment of souls:

What then, does this philosopher say? He is obviously not saying the same thing everywhere, so that one can easily know what his intention is; but he everywhere speaks with contempt of the whole world of sense and disapproves of the soul's fellowship with body and says that soul is fettered and buried in it And though in all these passages he disapproves of the soul's coming to body, in the *Timaeus* when speaking about this All he praises the universe and calls it a blessed god, and says that the soul was given by the goodness of the Craftsman, so that this All might be intelligent, and this could not be without soul. The soul of the All, then, was sent into it for this reason by the god, and the soul of each one of us was sent that the All might be perfect: since it was necessary that all the very same kinds of living things which were in the intelligible world should also exist in the world perceived by the senses.¹⁸⁸

In a sense, Iamblichus' objection to the dominant dualism of his time could be said to start here. His thinking is more consistent with the notion of the cosmos as a "blessed god," and his view of the soul can never detach itself from the idea that the soul, as an

¹⁸⁸ Τί οὖν λέγει ὁ φιλόσοφος οὗτος; Οὐ ταὐτὸν λέγων πανταχῆ φανεῖται, ἵνα ἂν τις ἐκ ῥαδίας τὸ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς βούλημα εἶδεν, ἀλλὰ τὸ αἰσθητὸν πᾶν πανταχοῦ ἀτιμάσας καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα κοινωνίαν τῆς ψυχῆς μεμψάμενος ἐν δ ε σ μ ῶ τε εἶναι καὶ τεθάφθαι ἐν αὐτῷ τὴν ψυχὴν λέγει.... Καὶ ἐν τούτοις ἅπασιν μεμψάμενος τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἄφιξιν πρὸς σῶμα, ἐν Τιμαίῳ περὶ τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς λέγων τὸν τε κόσμον ἐπαινεῖ καὶ θεὸν λέγει εἶναι εὐδαίμονα τὴν τε ψυχὴν παρὰ ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἔννοον τότε τὸ πᾶν εἶναι δεδόσθαι, ἐπειδὴ ἔννοον μὲν αὐτὸ ἔδει εἶναι, ἄνευ δὲ ψυχῆς οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν τοῦτο γενέσθαι. Ἡ τε οὖν ψυχὴ ἢ τοῦ παντὸς τούτου χάριν εἰς αὐτὸ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπέμφθη, ἢ τε ἐκάστου ἡμῶν, πρὸς τὸ τέλος αὐτὸ εἶναι· ἐπειδὴ ἔδει, ὅσα ἐν νοητῷ κόσμῳ, τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα γένη ζώων καὶ ἐν τῷ αἰσθητῷ ὑπάρχειν (*Enn.* IV.8.1.27-31, 40-51).

offshoot of the World Soul and thus a kind of emissary of the Demiurge, has a critical function to perform in the organizing of the cosmos, which itself cannot be wholly evil since it is the ultimate emanation of the categorically good. From such a viewpoint, the soul's descent into matter is not so much a fall into the entrapment of evil so much as a mission for the accomplishment of good, and although the entry of the soul into matter might occasion confusion, with the proper remedies – the proper *paideia* – the soul can attain to a proper relationship with perceptible matter in the interest both of its own re-ascend and the proper divinization of the material world.

3. Iamblichus and Platonic Cosmology

Before such lofty heights can be scaled, though, it is important to establish that Iamblichus' attitude to perceptible matter differed crucially from that expressed by Plotinus. First, Iamblichus is resistant to the more pessimistic view of the cosmos in response to which Dodds makes his claim for an "age of anxiety," preferring rather the monism expressed in the cosmic outlook of the *Timaeus*, and also elaborated by Plato in his description of an idealized cosmos in the *Laws*. In this evocation of a golden age, because no human nature had the capacity to govern cities autocratically (where Plato presumably means without responsibility to some higher power) without "hubris" and "injustice," Cronos supplies governors in the form of *daemones*, who rule over the cities of men, resulting in great prosperity for humankind. Plato regards this vision of a mythic past as having universal applicability, and argues that "we ought by every means to imitate the life of the age of Cronos, as tradition paints it, and order both our homes and our states in obedience to the immortal element within us, giving to reason's ordering the name of 'law.'"¹⁸⁹ The underlying notion is that the rational soul can

¹⁸⁹ μιμῆσθαι δεῖν ἡμᾶς οἴεται πάση μηχανῇ τὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ Κρόνου λεγόμενον βίον, καὶ ὅσον ἐν ἡμῖν ἀθανασίας ἔνεστι, τούτῳ πειθομένους δημοσίᾳ καὶ ἰδίᾳ τὰς τ' οἰκήσεις καὶ τὰς πόλεις διοικεῖν, τὴν τοῦ νοῦ διανομὴν ἐπονομάζοντας νόμον. (Lg. 713E-714A, trans. Bury). Cf. Shaw (1995) 9, whose efficient discussion of the world envisioned in Plato's Lg. supplies the argumentative substance of the present treatment.

function in harmony with the divine in the course of managing a polity. Where this is not the case, where a man is motivated by arrogance and greed and thus fails to follow the Justice that attends on God, he

inflamed in soul with insolence, dreaming that he has no ruler or guide, but rather is competent himself to guide others, – such an one is abandoned and left behind by the God, and when abandoned he taketh to him others of like nature, and by his mad prancings throweth all into confusion.¹⁹⁰

Such a man's behavior results in ruin for himself and his community. Having already established that virtuous and stable government is obtained by responding to the immortal element – the rational *nous* – within the human soul, Plato is able to move from this picture of the madman whose soul is *not* responsive to God, to a characterization of a man who *is* so responsive, one who may be sketched in accordance with the principle that “like is dear to like” – one whose soul is responsive to God who is “the measure of all things.”¹⁹¹ The ruler who would rule with justice and temperance must liken himself to God so far as possible, an essential component of which is proper participation in religious cult. Plato is emphatic on this point, suggesting that “of all the rules it is the noblest and the truest.” It is namely that

to engage in sacrifice and communion with the gods continually, by prayers and offerings and devotions of every kind, is a thing most noble and good and helpful towards the happy life, and superlatively fitting also, for the good man; but for the wicked, the very opposite. For the wicked man is unclean of soul, whereas the good man is clean....¹⁹²

The religious offerings of evil men are profitless for both good men and, but the religious “toil” of good men, whose souls are the “like” attracting to “like,” are “most

¹⁹⁰ ...φλέγεται τὴν ψυχὴν μεθ' ὕβρεως, ὡς οὔτε ἄρχοντος οὔτε τινὸς ἡγεμόνος δεόμενος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλοις ἰκανὸς ὧν ἡγεῖσθαι, καταλείπεται ἔρημος θεοῦ, καταλειφθεὶς δὲ καὶ ἔτι ἄλλους τοιοῦτους προσλαβὼν σκιρτᾷ ταράττων πάντα ἅμα.... (Lg. 716A-B).

¹⁹¹ τῷ μὲν ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον...φίλον.... πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον (*ibid.* 716C).

¹⁹² ὡς τῷ μὲν ἀγαθῷ θύειν καὶ προσομιλεῖν ἀεὶ τοῖς θεοῖς εὐχαῖς καὶ ἀναθήμασιν καὶ συμπάσῃ θεραπείᾳ θεῶν κάλλιστον καὶ ἄριστον καὶ ἀνυσιμώτατον πρὸς τὸν εὐδαίμονα βίον καὶ δὴ καὶ διαφερόντως πρέπον, τῷ δὲ κακῷ τούτων τάναντία πέφυκεν. ἀκάθαρτος γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν ὃ γε κακός, καθαρὸς δὲ ὁ ἐναντίος (*ibid.* 716D-E).

profitable to them all.”¹⁹³ That man whose soul is unlike divinity tends downward toward the exploitation of nature and his fellows, while the soul of the good man is oriented toward the gods, synchronizing his immortal, rational soul with its source – and with the *daemonic* governors of the world who emanate from that source – and creates bonds through religious rites that securely link his own governing activity in the world with that of transcendent beings. Surely this is a vision of the soul’s function in the cosmos that is consistent with Plotinus’ characterization of the *Timaeus* above. From such a perspective, the soul’s *paideia* is the process by which the soul is brought into harmony with the transcendent *daemonic* powers governing the world, through an engagement with the material world whose crucial form is the religious cult mediating between the human and the divine. So important is such cult that Plato will elsewhere insist on the careful organization of the calendar so that the seasons with their corresponding sacrifices and feasts are properly maintained, insisting on

the arranging of days into monthly periods, and of months into a year, in each instance, so that the seasons, with their respective sacrifices and feasts, may each be assigned its due position by being held as nature dictates, and that thus they may create fresh liveliness and alertness in the state, and may pay their due honours to the gods, and may render the citizens more intelligent about these matters.¹⁹⁴

Within the framework of such a vision, proper cult practice becomes the effective instrument of the correct relationship between human and divine realms. The progress of human beings and human polities is shaped and directed by a system of *paideia*, to include proper religious cult, such that the divine element in humanity – the rational soul – becomes aligned with the gods. That such *paideia* is effected within the material cosmos is never in doubt. The re-assimilation of human souls – and therefore communities – into divine life is brought about, at least in part, through the mediation of

¹⁹³ ἐγκαιρότατος ἅπασιν (*ibid.* 717A).

¹⁹⁴ ἡμερῶν τάξεως εἰς μηνῶν περιόδους καὶ μηνῶν εἰς ἕκαστον τὸν ἐνιαυτόν, ἵνα ὥραι καὶ θυσίαι καὶ ἑορταὶ τὰ προσήκοντ’ ἀπολαμβάνουσαι ἑαυταῖς ἕκασται τῷ κατὰ φύσιν ἄγεσθαι, ζῶσαν τὴν πόλιν καὶ ἐργηγοῦντιαν παρεχόμεναι, θεοῖς μὲν τὰς τιμὰς ἀποδιδῶσιν, τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους περὶ αὐτὰ μᾶλλον ἔμφρονας ἀπεργάζωνται (*ibid.* 809D; cited in Shaw [1995] 9).

the material world. As Gregory Shaw neatly summarizes the matter: “Plato’s *homoiosis theo*, recognized as the goal of *paideia*, which was measured by the soul’s *homoiosis kosmo*; to be assimilated to the gods one had to enter into communion with the *daimones* who revealed them in the natural world.”¹⁹⁵

4. Iamblichean First Principles and the Goodness of Material Reality

Iamblichus clearly regards his peers’ judgments on the nature of the cosmos as divergent from this traditional perspective. Apart from this monist vision of cosmic harmony, though, Iamblichus even in the abstract displays a more favorable view of sensible matter, the *chora* and *hule* of the Plato and Aristotle, respectively. More will be said on the subject of Iamblichus’ ambivalence toward matter in Section 4 of the present chapter, particularly as it functions in theurgic cult – but crucial for the present argument is that Iamblichus views sensible matter as *good* because of its origins in the highest intelligible being, and that unlike Plotinus, he finds no rend in the cosmic fabric that might constitute grounds for the denigration of sensible matter.

The key to this Iamblichean understanding lies in his metaphysical first principles, articulated in *De Mysteriis* and in his surviving Pythagorean documents. In the *De Mysteriis*, as he replies to Porphyry’s queries concerning his first principles, Iamblichus posits “one god, prior cause even of the first god and king, remaining unmoved in the singularity of his own unity.” This is the One, the “totally ineffable,” above all intellection.¹⁹⁶ This One is the “paradigm for the self-fathering, self-generating, and only-fathered God who is true Good.” This second One is grounded in the first One – the “something greater, and primary, and fount of all things, and basic root of all the first objects of intellection, which are the forms.” From this first One “there has autonomously shone forth the self-sufficient god ... ‘father of himself’ and ‘principle of himself’” – the second One, who is “first principle and god of gods, a

¹⁹⁵ Shaw (1995) 9.

¹⁹⁶ See Dillon (1973) 29-33.

monad springing from the One, pre-essential and first principle of essence” – the monad of the intelligible realm, from whom derive “essentiality and essence,” making him “father of essence.”¹⁹⁷ This hierarchy, wherein from the first One there descends the second One – the Monad or Principle of the intelligible realm – from whom in turn essence is derived, is the basic foundation of Iamblichean metaphysics. Iamblichus provides it support by bearing witness to Egyptian hierarchies cited in Hermetic literature, then goes on to note that “other rulers have been set over the creation of the visible realm.” Here he means the “demiurgic intellect,” whose role is described as “coming to create and bringing into the light the invisible power of the hidden reason principles.”¹⁹⁸ This Demiurge, the lowest element in Iamblichus’ intelligible realm, thus performs its characteristic function in Platonist thought: the transmission of the forms latent in the Monad of the intelligible realm (the second One) to Soul, which receives them as *logoi* and then passes them into the sensible world.¹⁹⁹ As for the divinities below the Demiurge – those who preside over the sensible realm of generation – Iamblichus apportions them with complex taxonomies again identified as Egyptian, and then characterizes the cosmic hierarchy in its entirety:

And thus it is that the doctrine of the Egyptians on first principles, starting at the highest level and proceeding to the lowest, begins from unity, and proceeds to multiplicity, the many being in turn governed by a unity, and all levels the indeterminate nature being

¹⁹⁷ The complete passage reads: Πρὸ τῶν ὄντως ὄντων καὶ τῶν ὅλων ἀρχῶν ἔστι θεὸς εἷς, πρῶτιστος καὶ τοῦ πρῶτου θεοῦ καὶ βασιλέως, ἀκίνητος ἐν μονότητι τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἐνότητος μένων. Οὐτε γὰρ νοητὸν αὐτῷ ἐπιπέκεται οὔτε ἄλλο τι· παράδειγμα δὲ ἴδρυται τοῦ αὐτοπάτορος αὐτογόνου καὶ μονοπάτορος θεοῦ τοῦ ὄντως ἀγαθοῦ· μείζον γὰρ τι καὶ πρῶτον καὶ πηγὴ τῶν πάντων καὶ πυθμὴν τῶν νοουμένων πρῶτων ἰδεῶν ὄντων. Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ἐνὸς τούτου ὁ αὐτάρκης θεὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐξέλαμψε, διὸ καὶ αὐτοπάτωρ καὶ αὐτάρχης· ἀρχὴ γὰρ οὗτος καὶ θεὸς θεῶν, μονὰς ἐκ τοῦ ἐνός, προούσιος καὶ ἀρχὴ τῆς οὐσίας. Ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἡ οὐσιότης καὶ ἡ οὐσία, διὸ καὶ οὐσιοπάτωρ καλεῖται· αὐτὸς γὰρ τὸ προόντως ὄν ἔστι, τῶν νοητῶν ἀρχή, διὸ καὶ νοητάρχης προσαγορεύεται (*DM* 261.7-262.6).

¹⁹⁸ The complete passage reads: Ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοις τῶν ἐμφανῶν δημιουργίας ἄλλοι προεστήκασιν ἡγεμόνες. Ὁ γὰρ δημιουργικὸς νοῦς καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας προστάτης καὶ σοφίας, ἐρχόμενος μὲν ἐπὶ γένεσιν, καὶ τὴν ἀφανῆ τῶν κεκρυμμένων λόγων δύναμιν εἰς φῶς ἄγων (*DM* 263.7-9).

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Dillon (1973) 37-39, Clarke, *et al.*, (2003) 311, n. 413.

dominated by a certain definite measure and by the supreme causal principle which unifies all things.²⁰⁰

The vision that Iamblichus articulates here, from the loftiest ineffable, to intelligible, and finally to the lowest and most diffuse material – with nature in all its multiplicity firmly informed by “definite measure” and anchored to the “supreme causal principle” – is nothing if not monist.²⁰¹ Though not especially technical, the passage seems to articulate a governing view of reality to which Iamblichus’ arguments elsewhere ought to be seen as subordinate. As with Plato, Iamblichus’ account of sensible matter will occasionally *appear* negative, but such views, where they do appear, are ultimately subject to this larger vision – surely consistent with the cosmology of the *Timaeus* – wherein the material world is surely no straightforward menace to souls whose only object is simply escape. Iamblichus, simply put, rejects the “age of anxiety” and its attendant dualism, and restores unity to a shattered cosmos.

Therefore we can fairly characterize Iamblichus’ view of sensible matter as being basically at odds with the view of Plotinus, who suggests the possibility that such matter is “essential evil,” or at the very least that it arises from a “weakening” at the lowest level of the intelligible. Iamblichus, to the contrary, would hold that such a view clashes with the fact of matter’s ultimate emanation from the One. Bearing in mind that it is only due to the requirements of discourse that we speak of the creation of the cosmos as if it occurred through a series of steps – rather than as an eternally realized effect of the Demiurge (there being no moment in which the Demiurge *is* and the cosmos *is not*) we can thus argue more persuasively that for Iamblichus, sensible matter is properly understood as a direct and immediate emanation of the intelligible One, constituting the lowest level of a perfectly unified cosmos.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Καὶ οὕτως ἄνωθεν ἄχρι τῶν τελευταίων ἢ περὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν Αἰγυπτίους πραγματεία ἀφ’ ἑνὸς ἄρχεται, καὶ πρόεισιν εἰς πλῆθος, τῶν πολλῶν αὐθις ὑφ’ ἑνὸς διακυβερνωμένων καὶ πανταχοῦ τῆς ἀορίστου φύσεως ἐπικρατουμένης ὑπὸ τινος ὠρισμένου μέτρου καὶ τῆς ἀνωτάτω ἐνιαίας πάντων αἰτίας. (*DM* 265.1-5).

²⁰¹ Cf. Shaw (1995) 28-29.

²⁰² Such is more or less the formulation of Bäumker (1890): “Den Ursprung der sinnlichen Materie scheint Iamblich nicht mit Plotin aus einer Abschwächung der untersten geistigen Kraft, sondern,

Iamblichus' approach to first principles, then, appears consistent with a view of sensible matter as an emanation of the highest intelligible principle. Scholarship has amply shown that such Iamblichean thought has Neopythagorean roots. Festugière has explained that Iamblichus' articulation of first principles mirrors that of the first century Neopythagorean Moderatus of Gades.²⁰³ Where Iamblichus sees matter as deriving from the paternal Monad (second One) in a process that involves its separation from substance, Moderatus offers a parallel vision of "quantity" (*posotes*) deriving from "unifying reason," (*heniaios logos*) likewise once it has been separated from substance or form:

βουληθεῖς ὁ ἐνιαῖος λόγος, ὡς πού φησιν ὁ Πλάτων, τὴν γένεσιν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ τῶν ὄντων συστήσασθαι, κατὰ στέρησιν αὐτοῦ ἐχώρισε τὴν ποσότητα πάντων αὐτὴν στερήσας τῶν αὐτοῦ λόγων καὶ εἰδῶν. τοῦτο δὲ ποσότητα ἐκάλεσεν ἄμορφον καὶ ἀδιαίρετον καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον, ἐπιδεχομένην μέντοι μορφὴν σχῆμα διαίρειν ποιότητα πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον.²⁰⁴

Matter, then, is derived from the highest intelligible principle in a manner that separates it from the forms and *logoi* of the highest principle, so that it is then implicitly open to the operations of the Demiurge. Festugière finds that Iamblichus' language on first principles in the *De Mysteriis* echoes such a view, especially where it explicitly locates the derivation of matter in a *scission* of "materiality" from the "substantiality" of the highest intelligible principle – the "god" of the passage in question:

As for matter, God derived it from substantiality, when he had abstracted materiality from it; this matter, which is endowed with life, the Demiurge took in hand and from it fashioned the simple and impassible (heavenly) spheres, while its lowest residue he

wie später Proclus, unmittelbar aus dem obersten intelligibeln Sein herzuleiten. Dieselbe Auffassung vom Ursprung der Materie begegnet uns in der Schrift von den ägyptischen Mysterien.... Diese Schrift redet auch von einer reinen und göttlichen Materie in der Welt, die von dem Vater des Alls her stammt und darum – in Tempeln und Opfergaben – einen würdigen Aufenthalt der Götter abgibt. Gegenüber der Ansicht Plotins von der Materie als dem Urbösen zeigt sich hier eine Wendung in der Wertschätzung der Materie, welche die Ansicht des Proclus vorbereitet" (419-20). Cited in Shaw (1995) 29, n.5.

²⁰³ See Shaw (1995) 30.

²⁰⁴ Simplic., *in Ph.* 231.5-12. Simplicius is here quoting Porphyry's invocation of Moderatus. Text cited in Shaw (1995)

crafted into bodies which are subject to generation and corruption.²⁰⁵

For Festugière, the parallels between the texts are striking: “ὁ ἐνιαῖος λόγος Μ. = ἡ ἀνωτάτω ἐνιαία αἰτία J., αὐτοῦ ἐχώρισε τὴν ποσότητα Μ. = Ὑλην δὲ παρήγαγεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τῆς οὐσιότητος ὑποσχισθείσης ὑλότητος J., ἄμορφον καὶ ἀδιαίρετον καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον Μ. = τῆς ἀορίστου φύσεως J.” Furthermore, notes Festugière, the Iamblichean language such as “*indeterminate nature*” (ἡ ἀόριστος φύσις) and “*proceeds to multiplicity*” (πρόεισιν εἰς πλῆθος) reveals that Iamblichus’ “*materiality*” (ὑλότης) is in fact equivalent to Moderatus’ “*quantity*,” (*posotes*) which itself answers to the “*indeterminate dyad*” (δυὰς ἀόριστος) of Pythagorean thought – that is, the Pythagorean material principle, the indeterminate matter upon which the Demiurge works to bring about multiplicity – *i.e.* “*quantity*” – in the sensible world. It is the principle that makes “*quantity*” or “*multiplicity*” possible.²⁰⁶

John Dillon, in his reading of Iamblichus’ first principles, assents to the introduction of a Pythagorean-Platonic dyad at some point in the development of Iamblichus’ thought, but finds it absent from the *De Mysteriis*. Drawing principally upon Damascius’ passing comments on Iamblichus’ “*Chaldean Theology*” or “*Platonic Theology*,” he develops a scheme of first principles as follows:²⁰⁷

The First One (παντελῶς ἄρρητον)

²⁰⁵ Ὑλην δὲ παρήγαγεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τῆς οὐσιότητος ὑποσχισθείσης ὑλότητος, ἦν παραλαβὼν ὁ δημιουργὸς ζωτικὴν οὐσαν τὰς ἀπλᾶς καὶ ἀπαθεῖς σφαίρας ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ἐδημιούργησε, τὸ δὲ ἔσχατον αὐτῆς εἰς τὰ γεννητὰ καὶ φθαρτὰ σώματα διεκόσμησεν (*DM* 265.5-8).

²⁰⁶ Festugière notes that ἐχώρισε in the passage from Moderatus is Zeller’s emendation for the ἐχώρησε of the text, suggesting that it is likely correct given the striking parallels otherwise present in the two passages, which “complete and therefore clarify one another” to reveal a shared cosmology in which the scission of materiality from substantiality produces a material principle that makes possible multiplicity and differentiation (“quantity” itself) in the material world: “Dieu découpe, dans sa propre substance, de la matérialité (= quantité), après l’avoir privée de toutes les déterminations qui ressortissent à l’Un. Cette matière est dès lors une chose informe, indivisée, la pure possibilité du ποσόν, du πλῆθος” (40).

²⁰⁷ Dillon (1987) 883.

The Second One
(τὸ ἀπλῶς ἕν, πρὸ τῆς δυάδος)

Limit
(πέρας)

The Unlimited
(τὸ ἄπειρον)

The One Existent
(τὸ ἕν ὄν)

Dillon derives this scheme first from Damascius' observation that Iamblichus' views appear to embrace both a first and second One – a view entirely consistent with what we find in *De Mysteriis*. Damascius asks whether “the first principles before the first noetic triad are two in number, the completely ineffable, and that which is unconnected to the triad, as is the view of the great Iamblichus in book 28 of his most excellent ‘Chaldean Theology’....”²⁰⁸ Such a distinction neatly preserves the boundary between absolute transcendence and active engagement with the cosmos. Dillon goes on to point out, however, that in this schema, Iamblichus also postulates an additional element between this second One and the intelligible realm: the Dyad *peras – apeiron*. As Damascius describes this new element, regarding the “One Existent” (the lowest element here charted) to be the apex of the intelligible realm, “the Dyad of first principles has, then, a distinct existence ... even as there exists also the One before the Dyad, which Iamblichus postulates before both, to be the cause of the One-Existent.”²⁰⁹ Thus, quite straightforwardly there exists the Dyad *between* the Second One and the One-Existent at the top of the noetic realm. Damascius clarifies this point later, arguing, “For indeed the one first principle” – *i.e.*, the Second One, subordinate to the ineffable One – “is prior to

²⁰⁸ πότερον δύο εἰσὶν αἱ πρῶται ἀρχαὶ πρὸ τῆς νοητῆς πρώτης τριάδος, ἢτε πάντη ἀρρητος καὶ ἡ ἀσύντακτος πρὸς τὴν τριάδα, καθάπερ ἠξίωσεν ὁ μέγας Ἰάμβλιχος ἐν τῷ ΚΗῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς χαλδαϊκῆς τελειοτάτης θεολογίας (Damasc. *in Prm.*, in Ruelle, *Dub. et Sol.* I p. 86). Dillon (1987) cites and translates.

²⁰⁹ ...εἶναι τοῖνυν τὴν δυάδα τῶν ἀρχῶν προδηρημένην τῆς εἰρημένης δυάδος αἰτίαν, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ πρὸ τῆς δυάδος ἕν, ὅπερ ὁ Ἰάμβλιχος τίθεται πρὸ ἀμφοῖν τοῦ ὄντος ἑνὸς αἰτίον προὑπάρχειν (Damasc. *In Prm.*, in Ruelle, *Dub. et Sol.* I p. 101). Dillon (1987) cites and translates.

the two;” – *i.e.*, prior to the two principles of the Dyad – “and this is the ‘Simply One,’ which Iamblichus postulates in between the two first principles” – *i.e.*, the two principles of the Dyad – “and that absolutely ineffable (first principle). These two principles may be termed Limit and the Unlimited, or, if one wishes, One and Many, the ‘One’ here to be taken as ‘One’ as opposed to ‘Many,’ not the One which is prior to both these and has nothing opposed to it.”²¹⁰ Dillon goes on to explain that in this schema, the One-Existent, the ἐν ὄν or ἀεὶ ὄν at the summit of the noetic realm will be the μικτόν resulting from the concerted action of these two principles, the Second One serving as a mixing agent, while the First One sits in unspeakable splendor above all of this.”²¹¹

Thus Dillon perceives that it is somehow the combinations of Limit and the Unlimited – or One and Many – that enable a world of multiplicity. He goes no further than this point at the moment, however, being content to point out that this scheme is a “scholastic working out” of issues left somewhat open by Plotinus, and that it also honors the “the necessity for fitting in the Pythagorean-Platonic Unlimited Dyad as some point in the scheme of first principles in such a way as to be inferior to the One.”²¹² What is curious is his view that the first principles articulated in *De Mysteriis* stand merely as an earlier, somewhat reduced prototype for the later Iamblichean thought explored by Damascius. In Dillon’s view, the hierarchy of principles that we have seen already in book 8 of *De Mysteriis* – with its “one god, prior cause even of the first god and king” (first One), who is “paradigm for the ... self-generating only-fathered God who is true Good ... first principle and god of gods, a monad springing from the One, pre-essential and first principle of essence ... termed ‘father of essence’ ... ‘principle of intellection” (second One) – seems to leave no room for the Dyad as postulated in Iamblichus’ later scheme. Rather, in Dillon’s view, Iamblichus supplies a Hermetic

²¹⁰ Καὶ γὰρ ἡ μία ἀρχὴ πρὸ τῶν δυεῖν· αὕτη μὲν οὖν τὸ ἀπλῶς ἓν, ὃ μέσον ὁ Ἰάμβλιχος τίθεται τῶν δύο ἀρχῶν καὶ τῆς παντάπασιν ἀπορρήτου ἐκείνης, αἱ δὲ δύο, πέρους φέρε καὶ ἄπειρον, ἢ καὶ εἰ βούλεται τις, ἓν καὶ πολλά, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀντικείμενον ἓν τοῖς πολλοῖς, οὐ τὸ πρὸ ἀμφοῖν καὶ ἀναντίθετον (Damasc. *In Prm.*, in Ruelle, *Dub. et Sol.* I p. 103). Dillon (1987) cites and translates.

²¹¹ p. 882.

²¹² p. 884.

recapitulation of much the same scheme, less the Dyad, with a descending hierarchy of an Indivisible One, a “First Product” – termed “Ikton” here – and “Kmeph,” who seems to perform the role of Demiurge, though other Egyptian names seem to designate the Demiurge with equal force.²¹³ What Dillon finds curiously lacking is the element of the Dyad, the two opposed principles between the second One and the One-Existent; however, if we recall Festugière’s exegesis of 265.1-5, we shall perhaps recognize the presence of a somewhat inchoate Dyad in Iamblichus’ description of sensible reality’s emanation from the One, where language like “*indeterminate nature*” (ἡ ἀόριστος φύσις) and “*proceeds to multiplicity*” (πρόεισιν εἰς πλῆθος) predominates, and suggests, as Festugière argues, a lurking Pythagorean Dyad – δυὰς ἀόριστος – *which is the very principle enabling multiplicity*, that is – like Moderatus’ principle of “*quantity*” (*posotes*) and Iamblichus’ material principle (*hylotes*) – a material principle that makes possible, with mathematically precise proportion, the emanation of a material world of multiplicity and variation from the paternal Monad (second One).

Here I mean merely to suggest that this Platonic-Pythagorean principle is already implied in *De Mysteriis*, though it is certainly not, as Dillon argues, openly advanced until Iamblichus’ later work. Its importance for the present argument lies in the fact that for Iamblichus, the tenets of a Pythagorean view of the grounding of sensible reality inform his insistent monism. Because the sensible world in its multiplicity is derived from the mathematical combinations of One and Many – of Limit and Unlimited – it may be reasonably viewed as *continuous* with the One. Mathematical proportion means proper balance, as it were, in the demiurgic manifestation of form in matter, and the material world is a manifestation of a harmonious cosmic whole.

Iamblichus’ surviving Pythagorean treatises support this view. Much of his argument is predicated on the basic Pythagorean understanding that all material manifestation is an outward expression of hidden numerical proportions.²¹⁴ Indeed,

²¹³ DM 263.1-264.3.

²¹⁴ For Iamblichus, as Dominic J. O’Meara (1989) points out, the Pythagorean categorizations of number already embrace “the principles and forms in bodies (*Comm.* [=DCMS] 64, 2-19),” which are “described in Psellus’ excerpts as ‘physical number.’ They correspond to (Aristotelian)

Iamblichus understanding of the Demiurge includes the clearly expressed notion that the latter organizes the world by means of “forms and principles according to number.”²¹⁵ His thought includes the further presupposition that in the polarity made explicit in the Dyad – the opposition expressed as Limit and the Unlimited, One and Many, Monad and Dyad – we may locate the numerical analogy to form and matter, with monad corresponding to the singularity of form, and dyad corresponding to the multiplicity and receptivity of matter.²¹⁶ Here is the principle of “quantity,” the very potentiality for multiplicity expressed by Moderatus of Gades, and mirrored by Iamblichus’ characterization in *De Mysteriis* of a scission between form and matter that enables a descent “into multiplicity.” As Iamblichus puts it in his exegesis of Nicomachus, “it is clear that all things in the cosmos are constituted and come to be analogously, just as all properties of number are derived from the monad and the dyad.”²¹⁷ In this view, the sensible world is itself a reflection of a rational, predictable, mathematical order.

The clarity of Iamblichus’ belief in the Dyad as material principle emerges in his treatise *On General Mathematical Science*, in which he posits his “two first and highest principles,” the “One” and the “Many,” the latter of which “is able to provide division,” and which would hence be, as we have seen, the key to formal multiplicity and differentiation in the world. To this principle he correlates “a completely fluid and pliant matter.”²¹⁸ Although the passage in question would appear to equate the “one” of

immanent forms and (Stoic) ‘seeds’ which organize matter and which had been introduced into the Platonic universe by Plotinus and by Platonists before him” (62).

²¹⁵ εύρίσκεται δὲ ἀναλόγως καὶ ἐν ταῖς κοσμικαῖς ἀρχαῖς ὁ δημιουργὸς θεὸς μὴ ὢν τῆς ὕλης γεννητικός, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὴν αἰδίων παραλαβών, εἶδει καὶ λόγοις τοῖς κατ’ ἀριθμὸν διαπλάττων καὶ κοσμοποιῶν (*In Nic.* 75.5-8). Cited in O’Meara (1989) 62; Shaw (1995) 30.

²¹⁶ *In Nic.* 77.22-79.8. Cited in O’Meara (1989) 62.

²¹⁷ δῆλον οὖν ὅτι ἀναλόγως ἐξ εἶδους καὶ ὕλης τὰ ἐν κόσμῳ πάντα συνέστη καὶ γίνεται, ὡς ἐκ μονάδος καὶ δυάδος τὰ ἐν ἀριθμῷ συμπτώματα πάντα (*In Nic.* 78.11-14).

²¹⁸ trans. Shaw (1995): “Now, of the mathematical numbers let the two first and highest principles be set forth: the One (which one must not yet call ‘being’ on account of its being simple, the principle of beings and not yet that sort of being of which it is principle), and the other is the principle of the Many, which – of itself – is able to provide division. Because of this, as much as it is in our power to say, we compare it to a completely fluid and pliant matter” (*DCMS* 15.6-14).

the one-many dyadic opposition with the more ascendant Paternal Monad of *De Mysteriis* – the “simple One” or “second” One of the Iamblichean metaphysics explored by Damascius – some solution to this apparent inconsistency might be supplied by the *Theology of Numbers*. Although this work is of uncertain authorship, its contents seem consistently Iamblichean. At one point, it hints at a possible *blending* of the Monad and the dyadic material principle: “According to one designation they [the Pythagoreans] call the monad ‘matter’ and ‘receptacle of all’ since it is the cause of the dyad and of all receiving ratios.”²¹⁹ Thus, in Shaw’s view, rather than neatly positing *either* a one-many Dyad deriving from a higher Monad (as in Dillon’s diagram above), *or* a one-many Dyad wherein only the “one” element is coessential with a higher Monad – as would appear the case in *DCMS* 15.6-14 – Iamblichus rather asserts prior to the Dyad a Monad in which the elements of the Dyad “remain essentially contained” and with which they may be therefore reasonably regarded as synonymous.²²⁰ This view is certainly reasonable, given the tendency in such emanationist metaphysics to regard lower levels as embraced by higher, and given the difficulties entailed in trying to narrate sequentially or to diagram linearly what is essentially a collapsing of all differentiated being into a single causal unity. In either case – whether the One-Many is seen as an independent emanation of the Monad, or whether the “One” of the One-Many is seen as coessential with the Monad – what we likely have is an alternate articulation of the view expressed in *De Mysteriis*, namely, that sensible matter emerges from a scission between *substantiality* and *materiality* at the level of the Paternal Monad.²²¹

Τῶν δὴ ἀριθμῶν τῶν μαθηματικῶν δύο τὰς πρωτίστας καὶ ἀνωτάτω ὑποθετέον ἀρχάς, τὸ ἓν (ὅπερ δὴ οὐδὲ ὄν πω δεῖ καλεῖν, διὰ τὸ ἀπλοῦν εἶναι καὶ διὰ τὸ ἀρχὴν μὲν ὑπάρχειν τῶν ὄντων, τὴν δὲ ἀρχὴν μηδέπω εἶναι τοιαύτην οἷα ἐκεῖνα ὧν ἐστὶν ἀρχή), καὶ ἄλλην πάλιν ἀρχὴν τὴν τοῦ πλήθους, ἣν καὶ διαίρεισιν οἷόν τ’ εἶναι καθ’ αὐτὸ παρέχεσθαι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὕγρα τι παντάπασι καὶ εὐπλαδεῖ ὕλη, προσηκόντως εἰς δύναμιν παραδεικνύντες, ἀποφαίνομεν ἂν ὁμοίαν εἶναι·

²¹⁹ Shaw (1995) trans. κατὰ δέ τι σημαινόμενον καὶ ὕλην αὐτὴν καλοῦσι καὶ πανδοχέα γε, ὡς παρεκτικὴν οὖσαν καὶ δυάδος τῆς κυρίως ὕλης καὶ πάντων χωρητικὴν λόγων (*TA* 5,12-15).

²²⁰ Shaw (1995) 33.

²²¹ *DM* 265.6-10. Cf. Shaw (1995) 33.

Because of the balanced, mathematical precision underlying such a cosmology, it is impossible for Iamblichus to concede that matter is evil. He makes the point repeatedly throughout *On General Mathematical Science*. The material principle cannot be “evil or ugly,”²²² especially since as “receptacle” of the One, such qualities would tarnish the One by implication.²²³ If evil intrudes, it does so only negatively, at lower levels of being – well below the levels of mathematical and geometrical perfection – as Iamblichus spells out explicitly: “But in the last things, in the fourth and fifth levels, which are composed from the last elements, evil appears, not as a guiding principle, but from something falling out and not maintaining the natural order.”²²⁴ Evil is thus *not* characteristic of the natural order (φύσις) but is rather an aberration from proper being at the natural order’s level.

Such a Pythagorean vision is consistent with the monist vision set forth by Plato in the *Laws* and the *Timaeus*. Shaw suggests some of the evident parallels, including his argument that the material principles of both Moderatus (*posotes*) Iamblichus (*hule / hulotes*) are “functionally the equivalents of the material principle in the *Timaeus*, which was able to receive the Forms without distortion because it lacked all formal qualities (*Tim.* 49b).”²²⁵ Along the same lines – again suggesting this common Pythagorean-Platonist cosmology – the dyadic principles of “unity” and “multiplicity” evident in Iamblichus’ thought effectively shadow the outlook of the *Timaeus*. In *On General Mathematical Science*, “unity and multiplicity” are combined by “persuasive necessity”²²⁶ – language that echoes Plato in the *Timaeus*, in which “persuasive necessity” combines

²²² κακὸν δὲ ἢ αἰσχροὺν τὸ τοιοῦτον οὐ προσήκον ἴσως ἐστὶ τιθέναι (*DCMS* 15.23-34). Cf. 16.1-2.

²²³ πῶς οὐκ ἄλογον ἂν εἶη λέγειν τὸ κακὸν ἢ τὸ αἰσχροὺν δεκτικὸν κατὰ φύσιν τοῦ τοιοῦτου πράγματος εἶναι; (*DCMS* 16.4-6).

²²⁴ ἐπ’ ἐσχάτῳ δὲ ἐν τοῖς τετάρτοις καὶ πέμπτοις τοῖς συντιθεμένοις ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τῶν τελευταίων κακίαν γενέσθαι οὐ προηγουμένως, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ἐκπίπτειν καὶ μὴ κατακρατεῖν τινα τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν (*DCMS* 18.1-13).

²²⁵ 30.

²²⁶ ...οὐ τε ἑνὸς καὶ τῆς τοῦ πλήθους ἀρχῆς, τὸ πρῶτον γένος, ἀριθμῶν ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων τούτων μετὰ τινος πιθανῆς ἀνάγκης συντιθεμένων (*DCMS* 15.17).

“same” and “different.”²²⁷ In each case, the “*harmonia*” of these opposed principles functions as “the framework for the manifest world.”²²⁸

It follows that from whatsoever angle we view the matter, Iamblichus appears to embrace a monist vision of reality. Whether we focus on his sympathy to a Platonic vision of the cosmos in which religion properly ordered and *paideia* rightly supplied give shape to a human *polis* synchronized with the divine, or on his insistently Neopythagorean view of sensible matter as derived from the Monad, formed by mathematical ratios and therefore basically *good*, we plainly must conclude that Iamblichus thought is a conscious departure from much of the dualism that characterizes the Platonism of his age. In his schema, it is not the material world – an emanation from the One – that is distorted or *evil*, but rather the soul that suffers inversion and distortion in embodiment. What remains for immediate explanation is just how matter so conceived can still be regarded, paradoxically, as both hindrance and help, that is, how it may function in the Iamblichean scheme as both the site of a jarring psychic disorientation *and* the necessary means of the soul’s healing. From an understanding of this important Iamblichean resolution of a classic Platonic problem, we shall then move to a more minute consideration of the Iamblichean *symbolon*, a ritual concept in clear, almost necessary continuity with the theoretical monism already

²²⁷ Plato actually here writes of *force* rather than *persuasion*, though the point is perhaps the same, namely that opposed principles whose combination makes possible a world of material differentiation. Although the formulation is not so openly quantitative as Iamblichus’ emphasis on the Dyad, it is similar in its attempt to account for the passage from unity to multiplicity. The context is Plato’s discussion of the formation of the soul itself, which occupies a bridge position between the unity of the World Soul and the multiplicity of material embodiment. Plato captures its liminal position by asserting the fusion of “being which is indivisible and always the same” (τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ἐχούσης οὐσίας) with “being which is transient and divisible in bodies” (τῆς αὖ περὶ τὰ σώματα γιγνομένης μεριστῆς) – elements termed “Same” and “Other.” He posits a “third form of being” (τρίτον οὐσίας εἶδος) that is composed from these two, and which serves as a conceptual bridge allowing the forced “blending” of all three: “And He took the three of them, and blent them all together into one form, by forcing the other into union with the Same, in spite of its being naturally difficult to mix. (καὶ τρία λαβὼν αὐτὰ ὄντα συνεκεράσατο εἰς μίαν πάντα ιδέαν, τὴν θατέρου φύσιν δύσμεικτον οὖσαν εἰς ταῦτὸν συναρμόττων βίᾳ)” *Ti.* 35a.

²²⁸ Shaw (1995) 33.

discussed, and an idea with which Christian thought on eucharist would find considerable affinity.

5. Matter as Obstacle, Matter as Instrument: Daemons and Demiurgic Souls

Even when Iamblichus' metaphysics are shown clearly to be fundamentally monist, we must still explain the paradoxical language employed in *De Mysteriis* concerning the nature of material reality. That is to say, it must be shown how Iamblichus resolves the latent Platonic tensions between positive and negative views of matter. At times Iamblichus seems to adopt a univocally negative view of matter, the perspective of the *Phaedo*: matter as a shell that limits the soul's noetic capacities. Very often Iamblichus discusses material embodiment and the "influences emanating from matter"²²⁹ precisely in terms of "pollution":

And so pollution emanating from material things may communicate itself to entities which are confined in a material body, and to be purified from such influences is necessary for such things as can be polluted by matter.²³⁰

Under discussion here are the important distinctions to be made between higher beings and lower, and Iamblichus sees fit to comment on the necessary "purification" of the lower almost gratuitously. Later, in his discussion of the effects burnt offering, he seems to argue from similar premises, assuming that the "essences" involved in burnt offering must be separated from matter by purging fire before they can effectively interact with *daemons*. Just as thunderbolts in nature separate matter from "those elements which are immaterial in their essence,"²³¹ – elements otherwise "overcome by [matter] and imprisoned in it"²³² – just so the fire of sacrifice

²²⁹ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης πάθη (DM 204. 7).

²³⁰ Καὶ ὁ μολυσμὸς οὖν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐνύλων συμπίπτει τοῖς ἀπὸ σώματος ὑλικοῦ κατεχομένοις, καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ τούτων ἀποκαθαίρεσθαι ἀναγκαῖον ἐκείνοις ὅσα δύναται ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης μιαίνεσθαι. (DM 204.3-6).

²³¹ τὰ ἄυλα μὲν κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν (DM 215.12).

²³² κρατούμενα δὲ ἀπ' αὐτῆς καὶ πεπεδημένα (DM 215.12-13).

destroys all that is material in the sacrifices, purifies the offerings with fire and frees them from the bonds of matter, and renders them suitable, through the purification of their nature, for consorting with the gods....²³³

In like manner this same fire “liberates us from the bonds of generation and makes us like to the gods, and renders us worthy to enjoy their friendship, and turns round our material nature towards the immaterial.”²³⁴ Exactly how the consuming fire works with equal effect on the sacrificial victim and the sacrificing agent is left somewhat unclear, but the language nevertheless effectively illustrates Iamblichus’ intended point. Both in sacrifices and in the sacrificing agent, all that is material is represented as a “bondage” from which inner essences must be liberated, a perspective which initially appears narrowly dualist.

A key to the deeper complexity of the thought here may possibly be found in the language of “turning” found toward the end of the passage, where Iamblichus argues that the effects of the fire “turns” (περιάγει) our material nature toward the non-material. Such language suggests a process of re-orientation rather than some simple liberating rupture. Other passages, too, give a sense of how some kind of process may be involved, a process contingent on the degree of investment or absorption in the particularities of material nature on the part of individual embodied souls. In arguing for the freedom of the world soul from the ill effects of matter – namely, passions and other hindrances to intellection – Iamblichus argues that individual souls are indeed enchained, but that the perception that higher souls – such as the world soul – ought therefore to be similarly limited, arises from a failure to grasp the superiority of wholes to parts.²³⁵ Iamblichus does not spell out here what the remedy for any individual soul

²³³ ἀναιρεῖ τὸ ὑλικὸν πᾶν ἐν ταῖς θυσίαις, τὰ τε προσαγόμενα τῷ πυρὶ καθαίρει καὶ ἀπολύει τῶν ἐν τῇ ὕλη δεσμῶν, ἐπιτήδειά τε διὰ καθαρότητα φύσεως πρὸς τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἐπιτήδειά τε διὰ καθαρότητα φύσεως πρὸς τὴν τῶν θεῶν κοινωνίαν ἀπεργάζεται (DM 215.14-216.3).

²³⁴ ἡμᾶς διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν τρόπων ἀπολύει τῶν τῆς γενέσεως δεσμῶν καὶ ἀφομοιοῖ τοῖς θεοῖς, πρὸς τε τὴν φιλίαν αὐτῶν ἐπιτηδείους ἐργάζεται, καὶ περιάγει τὴν ἔνυλον ἡμῖν φύσιν ἐπὶ τὴν ἄυλον (DM 216.3-6).

²³⁵ ἢ τῶν ὅλων ὑπεροχὴ πρὸς τὰ μέρη (DM 200). A frequent trope in Iamblichus, and a key element in his theodicy. Cf. Shaw (1995) 39-40; 54-55; 63-66.

might be, trapped in its particular body and beset by its particular impressions and obstacles, but the prospect that remedy might be available through a re-orientation of the soul toward *wholeness* is at least left open.

Iamblichus' commitment to theurgy turns at least in part on this awareness that embodiment causes problems in particular cases, but that the soul may be turned toward a more productive engagement with the material realm. Indeed, it is axiomatic to his religious system that *no one* – not even the most accomplished philosopher – is exempted from this requirement for this more productive engagement. This understanding is what gives Iamblichus' arguments their demotic flavor: if every soul is embodied, and if religious cult that is engaged with materiality affords the opportunity to begin the process of psychic re-orientation, then arguments against religious cult advanced by the likes of Porphyry succeed only in shutting out both the class of philosophers and spiritual adepts *and* the great mass of humanity from any possibility of ascent. In a vigorous reply to Porphyry's basic position, Iamblichus famously counters that such views entail too sharp a separation of divinity from the world, rendering the world a place of barrenness in which no initial avenues of ascent may be found:

This doctrine constitutes the ruination of sacred ritual and theurgical communion of gods with men, by banishing the presence of the higher classes of being outside the confines of the earth. For it amounts to nothing else but saying that the divine is set apart from the earthly realm, and that it does not mingle with humanity, and that this realm is bereft of divinity; and it follows, according to this reasoning, that not even we priests would have learned anything from the gods, and that you are wrong to interrogate us as if we had some special degree of knowledge, if in fact we differ in no way from other mortals.²³⁶

Thus, even given the apparent dualism of passages such as those noted above, in which matter is an imprisoning shell that must be burned away, we must also consider how Iamblichus' insistence on materially grounded, universal religious cult is rooted in an

²³⁶ *DM* 28.6-10. See Brown (1978) 101. Iamblichus is elsewhere quite explicit in his aims: "The purpose of the present discourse is not to provide precepts for such [a theurgically advanced] man (for he is superior to all legislation), but to provide a set of rules (νομοθεσίαν) for those who need regulation."

awareness that *all* souls experience embodiment, and that all souls must be afforded occasion to have their orientation toward matter and embodied experience repaired in the direction of wholeness.

In the course of the long and fascinating discussion of sacrifice in book five of *De Mysteriis*, while granting the possibility that we may become “wholly soul” (ὅλοι ψυχῆ) and that we may be “raised up in intellect” (μετέωροι ... τῷ νῶ) – a state in which we “traverse the heights in the company of all the immaterial gods”²³⁷ – Iamblichus nonetheless insists that such a state is not attainable by most men, who are generally “confined in a hard-shelled body,” and corporeal (σωματοειδεῖς).²³⁸ “Highly purified men” (ἀποκεκαθάρμενοι ἄνθρωποι)²³⁹ are extremely rare; one might expect to meet with *one*, or at best very few. Nevertheless – despite the rarity of such exalted spiritual attainment – Iamblichus is willing to prescribe a “double mode of worship” (ὁ διπλοῦς τρόπος): one form, “simple (ἀπλοῦς) and immaterial (ἄσώματος) and purified (ἀγνός) from all generation” for the “unpolluted souls (ἄχράντοις ... ψυχαῖς); another, “filled with bodies and every sort of material business (ἐνύλου πάσης πραγματείας)” for the rest, those who are neither “pure” (μὴ καθαράς) nor free from generation.²⁴⁰ Iamblichus sees this, in fact, as an imperative. In his view, to fail to see the need for such an approach would effectively strip the world of meaningful religion, leaving men separated from their gods. Most people are deeply immured in reality’s material manifestation; they can little aspire to spiritual elitism of the rare kind. As such, without material cult, they are cut off completely from the gods at every level.²⁴¹

Thus religious practice informed by theurgic principles can be understood to offer a path of ascent to all willing participants; but it is important to emphasize that – although a “double mode” of worship may be prescribed – Iamblichus sees *every* soul as in need of proper theurgic engagement with materiality, despite the concessions to

²³⁷ μεθ’ ὅλων τῶν ἀύλων θεῶν μετεωροπολοῦμεν (*DM* 219.2-4).

²³⁸ *DM* 219.5.

²³⁹ *DM* 219.10-11. One of Iamblichus’ frequent references to Heraclitus.

²⁴⁰ *DM* 219.6-10.

²⁴¹ *DM* 220.

philosophical elite that as are occasionally evident. Ultimately, even the higher grade of theurgist is not exempt from participation in material rites. A theurgist of reasonable attainment might choose to exempt himself from more debased material worship, but material cult is still somehow necessary as “a basis for the more noble type – *for without these the superior type could not be attained to...*”²⁴² For Iamblichus, the materially-grounded forms of cult remain always fundamentally necessary even for philosophical and religious over-achievers. The goals of his discipline are conventional – being “united to the gods” and “[ascending] to the One” – but he will not split reality to accommodate the claims of an anti-materialist philosophical elite, to the exclusion of a more universal account of the soul’s predicament.

It is essential to note also that such claims are consistent with Iamblichus’ theoretical monism, his insistence on the continuity of all reality, and the derivative conviction that the manifest world is in some basic sense therefore good – insofar as it is an emanation of the One and a manifestation of pure mathematical ratios. But such claims also imply that the dispositions of some souls toward material reality can excel the dispositions of others. If one soul experiences matter as an evil, such an experience must be viewed in terms of that particular soul’s condition, rather than in terms of matter interpreted as unqualified evil. Thus matter’s evil is *relative* to the condition of any given soul, where relativity is measured in terms of the particular soul’s orientation toward transcendent *wholeness* over diffuse material *differentiation*. Before understanding how a cultic engagement with material reality can paradoxically heal souls that are bound by matter, we must first examine how souls first become bound. For Iamblichus, this has to do with the role of the *daemonic* in cosmogony. He describes the order (*taxis*) of the *daemons* as follows:

It is not a primary initiator of action, but submits itself to the service of the good will of the gods it follows, revealing in action their invisible goodness, while likening itself to it, producing creations which are in its image, giving expression to the ineffable

²⁴² ὡς ὑπόθεσιν ... τῶν τιμιωτέρων -- ἀνευ γὰρ αὐτῶν οὐκ ἂν ποτε παρεγένοντο τὰ ὑπερέχοντα (DM 225.7-8).

and causing the formless to shine forth in forms, bringing out onto the level of manifest discourse that which is superior to all reasoning, and receiving already that degree of participation in beauty which is innate to them, while providing and conveying it unstintingly to the classes of being that come after it.²⁴³

The *daemons* are thus agents that mediate that transit of *form* into *matter*. They are indispensable inasmuch as they produce creations – specifically described here as *demiurgic* products (δημιουργήματα) – that conform (ἀφομοιούμενα) to the otherwise unseen good (τὸ ἀφανές ... ἀγαθόν) of the gods. Hence formless (τὸ ἀνείδειον) receptacle of nature is invested with forms, and what transcends *logos* (τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντα λόγον) is given expression in “manifest discourse [*logoi*]” (εἰς λόγους φανερούς). Plainly the *daemons* perform the work of the Demiurge, here conceived in terms of supplying *logos* to an otherwise neutral, formless natural receptacle.

One aspect of this basic role is their function as agents that bind souls to bodies. Their nature is “fit for finishing and completing encosmic natures, and it exercises oversight on each thing coming into existence.” More specifically, “One must assign to *daemons* productive powers that oversee nature and the bond uniting souls to bodies.”²⁴⁴ Thus the same agents responsible for introducing form into matter are also tasked with drawing souls downward into their embodied experience. Here we can begin to see a bit of the ambivalence surrounding the daemonic in Iamblichus’ system. On the one hand, they perform an essential – and fundamentally good – demiurgic role; on the

²⁴³ οὐ πρωτουργὸν οὖσαν, ὑπηρετικὴν δὲ τινα τῆς ἀγαθῆς βουλήσεως τῶν θεῶν συνεπομένην, καὶ ἐκφαίνουσιν εἰς ἔργον τὸ ἀφανές αὐτῶν ἀγαθόν, ἀπεικαζομένην τε πρὸς αὐτό, καὶ τὰ δημιουργήματα ἐπιτελοῦσαν πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ ἀφομοιούμενα, τό τε γὰρ ἄρρητον αὐτοῦ ὄητόν καὶ τὸ ἀνείδειον ἐν εἶδεσι διαλάμπουσιν, καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντα λόγον αὐτοῦ εἰς λόγους φανερούς προσάγουσαν, καὶ δεχομένην μὲν ἤδη τῶν καλῶν τὴν μετουσίαν συμπεφυκυῖαν, παρέχουσιν δ’ αὐτὴν ἀφθόνως τοῖς μεθ’ ἑαυτὴν γένεσι καὶ διαπορθμεύουσιν. (DM 16.11-17.5).

²⁴⁴ ἀπεργαστικὴν μὲν εἶναι τὴν τῶν δαιμόνων καὶ τελεσιουργὸν τῶν περικκοσμίων φύσεων καὶ ἀποπληρωτικὴν τῆς καθ’ ἕκαστον τῶν γιγνομένων ἐπιστασίας ... Δυνάμεις τε τοῖς μὲν δαίμοσι γονίμους, ἐπιστατικάς τε τῆς φύσεως καὶ τοῦ συνδέσμου τῶν ψυχῶν εἰς τὰ σώματα ἀφοριστέον (DM 67.9-11; 67.12-68.1). Cf. Shaw (1995) 40, for an economical handling of these passages.

other hand, they draw souls downward into the disorienting experience of embodiment. The problem to be resolved in theurgy is how the descended soul may be re-oriented.

First, though, it is worth noting that this Iamblichean ambivalence toward the *daemonic* and the materiality that it governs has deep roots in other Platonizing religious tradition. That is to say, Iamblichus as a religious theorist does not present the first case of paradox in characterizing human interaction with the material and the demonic. Friedrich Cremer and Hans Lewy have demonstrated how similar is Iamblichus' thought on the nature of the *daemonic* and materiality to the cosmology implicit in the *Chaldean Oracles*, fragmentary texts whose assimilation into a coherent corpus can be only controversially dated. The parallels are evident primarily in connection with an apparently dualist attitude that, as in the case of Iamblichus, turns out to be more of a qualified monism. In placing the Chaldean texts alongside Iamblichus' thought we can perceive how the latter's ambivalence toward matter, and his corresponding ambivalence toward the *daemons* who are closely linked to matter, stand in interesting parallel to a "Chaldean" tradition of framing material reality and the *daemons* governing it as both obstacle and, paradoxically, ritual instrument. As in the case of Iamblichus, the *Oracles* offer a relative view of materiality, where the degree of matter's "goodness" is contingent entirely on the disposition of the soul encountering it, such that from the perspective of both texts, matter is seen to thwart *and* mediate the soul's re-orientation. The tradition of the *Oracles* captures this duality with its implicit theory that the quality of any given soul's embodiment can be seen as an *index* of the condition of the soul itself; *i.e.*, the measure of the soul's adaptation to matter signifies the degree of its re-orientation to the cosmos.

In a critical passage of *De Mysteriis*,²⁴⁵ (as he attempts to distinguish theurgy from divination), Iamblichus specifically invokes "Chaldean prophets."²⁴⁶ According to these authorities, beings that are "gods in the true sense" associate with good men in cultic contexts, "and they remove from them every vice and passion." When such gods "shine

²⁴⁵ *DM* 175.12-180.4.

²⁴⁶ *DM* 176.2.

forth," they cause "that which is evil and daemonic" to scatter, such that the practicing theurgist is purified, "freed from passions, and from every unruly impulse." On the other hand, "as many as are themselves guilty of crime ... owing to the debility of their proper activity or the deficiency of their inherent power" fail to obtain contact with such gods, attaching themselves rather to "evil spirits" and becoming "akin to the wicked *daemons* to whom they have become attached."²⁴⁷ Under such circumstances, "impious blunders of wickedness ... are introduced in a disorderly manner into the sacred works...." Those who so consort with *daemons* "who are deceitful and causes of licentiousness are obviously in conflict with the theurgists," whereas for theurgists themselves there is "a pure participation in ... goods" as they "are filled from above with the fire of truth."²⁴⁸

The *Chaldean Oracles* share this ambivalent view toward matter and the *daemonic*. Fiercely dualist at first glance, only upon closer examination do the *Oracles* disclose a view of matter as an indicator of the soul's condition, rather than as a straightforward hindrance. Initially, Chaldean theology seems to regard matter univocally as a "worker of evil."²⁴⁹ Elsewhere the body is "the root of evil," and "the descent to earth is the severing of ourselves ... where both jealousy and envy must be rejected ... for being material, they have matter as a nurse."²⁵⁰ Often the texts intone admonitions, such as,

Do not hasten to the light-hating world, boisterous of matter,
where there is murder, discord, foul odors, squalid illnesses,
corruptions, and fluctuating works. He who intends to love the
Intellect of the Father must flee these things.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ DM 176.3-177.5.

²⁴⁸ DM 177.10-178.9.

²⁴⁹ τὴν ὕλην εἰσάγουσιν ὡς κακίας ἐργάτιν (Psellus, *Opusc. logica, physica, allegorica, alia* 3.136-7).

²⁵⁰ Ρίζα τῆς κακίας τὸ σῶμα ... τὸ δὲ καταβαλεῖν εἰς γῆν, τὸ ἀφ' ἡμῶν ἐκκόψαι ... εἰς ἦν καὶ ζῆλον καὶ φθόνον καταβλητέον ... ὕλικὰ γὰρ ὄντα τὴν ὕλην ἔχει τιθήνην (Proclus, *Eclogae de philosophia chaldaica*, in Des Places (1971), p. 208, Majercik trans.).

²⁵¹ Μηδ' ἐπὶ μισοφαῖ κόσμον σπεύδειν λάβρον ὕλης,
ἔνθα φόνος στάσιές τε καὶ ἀργαλέων φύσις ἀτμῶν
αὐχμηραὶ τε νόσοι καὶ σήψεις ἔργα τε ῥευστά·
ταῦτα χρεῶ φεύγειν τὸν ἐρᾶν μέλλοντα πατρὸς νοῦ. (134 Des Places, Majercik trans.).

Elsewhere, in a doubtful fragment, we are similarly advised,

Flee swiftly from earthly passions, flee far away, you who possess the superior eye of the soul and the steadfast rays, so that the great, heavy reins of the body might be held in check by a pure soul and the ethereal radiance of the Father.²⁵²

Given such a grim view of material reality, it is perhaps no surprise to find it haunted by *daemons* with whom it is dangerous to consort. The oracle advises: “For you must not gaze at them until you have your body initiated. Being terrestrial, these ill-tempered dogs are shameless.” As such, “they enchant soul, forever turning them away from the rites.”²⁵³ The imagination behind the *Oracles* delights in canine metaphor, as we see elsewhere: “From the hollows of the earth leap chthonian dogs, who never show a true sign to a mortal.”²⁵⁴ These dogs are expressly linked to matter and are furthermore defined as its offspring: “[Nature] persuades us to believe that the demons are pure, and that the offspring of evil matter are good and useful.”²⁵⁵

As severe as such a view might seem, we would be wrong to conclude that the worldview embraced by the *Oracles* is strictly dualist. As Hans Lewy’s study shows, the *Oracles* actually offer a more nuanced view of matter, suggesting that it might be an indicator of a soul’s standing rather than a mere impediment to its ascent, a point which is made particularly clear in their deployment of the figure of Hecate as a mythologized Platonic World Soul, with special emphasis on the function of the World Soul in forming and presiding over material, embodied nature. In the world of the *Chaldean Oracles*, as

²⁵² Φεῦγε τάχος χθονίων παθέων ἄπο, τηλόσε φεῦγε,
ψυχῆς ὄμμα φέριστον ἔχων καὶ ἀκλινέας αὐγὰς,
σώματος ὡς ἀνέχοιτο μέγα βρίθοντα χαλινὰ
ἐκ καθαρῆς ψυχῆς τε καὶ αἰθερῆς πατρὸς αἴγλης (213 Des Places, Majercik trans.).

²⁵³ Οὐ γὰρ χρὴ κείνους σε βλέπειν πρὶν σῶμα τελεσθῆς·
ὄντες γὰρ χθόνιοι χαλεποὶ κύνες εἰσὶν ἀναιδεῖς
καὶ ψυχὰς θέλγοντες ἀεὶ τελετῶν ἀπάγουσιν (135 Des Places, Majercik trans.).

²⁵⁴ ... ἐκ δ’ ἄρα κόλπων
γαίης θρώσκουσιν χθόνιοι κύνες οὐποτ’ ἀληθῆς
σῆμα βροτῶν δεικνύντες (90 Des Places, Majercik trans. Psellus, *PG*, 122, 1140 b 12 – c 2, explains that “the oracle is about demons involved in matter.”).

²⁵⁵ [ἢ φύσις] πείθει πιστεύειν εἶναι τοὺς δαίμονας ἀγνοῦς,
καὶ τὰ κακῆς ὕλης βλαστήματα χρηστὰ καὶ ἐσθλά (88 Des Places, Majercik trans.).

Lewy has shown, Hecate is conceived as a personification of the World Soul. As “she who has mouths, faces, visages on every side,” she mirrors the function and the double orientation of the World Soul, who occupies the boundary between the noetic and material realms, and who may therefore be viewed as oriented both “toward the intelligible world, from the Intellect of which she is ‘illuminated,’ and toward the sensible world, to which she transmits her ‘light.’”²⁵⁶ As Lewy suggests, the most careful explanation of this dual orientation of the World Soul is offered by Plotinus:

And the offspring of Intellect is a rational form and an existing being, that which thinks discursively; it is this which moves round Intellect and is light and trace of Intellect and dependent on it, united to it on one side and so filled with it and enjoying it and sharing in it and thinking, but, on the other side, in touch with the things which came after it, or rather itself generating what must necessarily be worse than soul.²⁵⁷

Thus the soul mediates between the higher *Nous* above and the generated world below. That the Chaldean texts refer to Hecate as *Physis* and *Ananke* suggests their kinship to earlier Platonist thought, where the World Soul is often termed *physis* because of its function in governing in the cosmic body. Plotinus neatly divides the World Soul, retaining its upper portion on high while placing its lower portion within the sensible world to which it mediates form. This lower half of the World Soul Plotinus terms *physis*.²⁵⁸ So far, the Chaldean Hecate appears linked to earlier Platonist concepts of the World Soul (*Psyche*) and of Nature (*Physis*), particularly from the perspective of a divided World Soul defined by Plotinus. It remains to explain the link to *Ananke* and *Heimarmene*, “Necessity” and “Fate,” as they are connected by Platonists to the work of the World Soul. Middle Platonist thinkers appear to have extended the World Soul’s involvement with Nature to include governance of the natural world, and therefore of

²⁵⁶ Lewy (1978) 355.

²⁵⁷ Νοῦ δὲ γέννημα λόγος τις καὶ ὑπόστασις, τὸ διανοούμενον· τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ τὸ περὶ νοῦν κινούμενον καὶ νοῦ φῶς καὶ ἵχνος ἐξηρημένον ἐκείνου, κατὰ θάτερα μὲν συνηγμένον ἐκείνῳ καὶ ταύτῃ ἀποπιμπλάμενον καὶ ἀπολαῦον καὶ μεταλαμβάνον αὐτοῦ καὶ νοῦν, κατὰ θάτερα δὲ ἐφαπτόμενον τῶν μετ’ αὐτό, μᾶλλον δὲ γεννῶν καὶ αὐτό, ἃ ψυχῆς ἀνάγκη εἶναι χεῖρονα· (*Enn.* 5.1.7.42-48. trans. Armstrong).

²⁵⁸ *Enn.* 3.8.4.

the human souls inhabiting it as well. This move appears to stem from a reading of a passage in Plato's *Timaeus*, where the demiurge reveals to newly created souls "the nature () of the universe, and explains the them the rules of fate ()."²⁵⁹ Nature and Fate, in this reading, both become the realm of the World Soul's operation. Within this understanding of the World Soul as a complex of *Psyche – Physis – Heimarmene*, the Chaldean texts frame the goddess Hecate, who would thus mirror the dual relationship of the World Soul to individual human souls in the embodied world. Like the World Soul, she could be seen as both the occasion for the soul's existence (the source of its good), as well as the hindrance present to the soul in material reality (*physis*) and fate (*heimarmene*). How the Chaldean tradition came to adopt the figure of Hecate as figuring the world soul is not entirely clear, though Lewy speculates that she may have been borrowed from magical disciplines, and notes further that we can begin to perceive her elevation to the status of a more universal goddess in other cult contexts.²⁶⁰

Whatever the case, it is plain that this goddess takes over many of the characteristics of the World Soul for the purposes of the *Oracles*, and that the Chaldean tradition was likely the first explicitly to link the mythic attributes of Hecate to the metaphysics of Plato's World Soul. The connection probably stems from the recognition of similarity between Hecate's function as "princess of demons," who "commands the dark powers which enslave the corporeal existence of men" – thus "[extending] her dominion over all natures, which their fear of the demons had given up to her" – and the Platonic World Soul, who is by this period associated with destiny and necessity, as we have seen. The key to understanding the appeal of Hecate, however, lies in the fact of the World Soul's duality. The World Soul, by virtue of its orientation toward both the noetic and sensible realms, "personifies not only the compulsion of natural existence, but also the freedom of the mind."²⁶¹ It is perhaps a natural move to link Hecate with a psychic hypostasis so conceived since Hecate, too, partakes of this "ambivalence of metaphysical potency."

²⁵⁹ *Ti.* 41e2. Lewy (1978) 357.

²⁶⁰ Lewy (1978) 363-64.

²⁶¹ *ibid.* 365.

She occupies the boundary between noetic and sensible, between the pure life of the intellectual soul and the world of embodiment. By virtue of her attributes, variously filtered and interpreted by cultic and philosophical tradition, she is able to take on – for purpose of the *Chaldean Oracles*, the mediating functions of the World Soul, such that she could function in relation to individual souls in a manner calibrated to each one. For those oriented toward materiality and subject to demons, her activity would be oppressive; for those alert to the possibilities of intellect and transcendence, she could be a help. As Lewy puts it:

The Chaldean Hecate encountered the human souls in forms always adequate to their internal conditions: for those sunk in body she was necessity; for the erring, demonic temptation; for the renegade, a curse; for those who recalled their divine nature, a guide; and for those who returned home, a grace.²⁶²

This continuous presence of Hecate to the human soul reflects the underlying metaphysical reality that the function of Hecate is the function of the World Soul, from which individual human souls are essentially derived and projected into the embodied world, and toward which they are drawn back in their ascent. Hecate should thus probably not be equated directly with “matter” *per se*, as Gregory Shaw suggests, but as *Physis* she surely falls within the theurgists’ realm of generation, and as such can rightly be viewed polyvalently as a “mirror of the embodied soul ... an index of the soul’s spiritual condition” and thus evil “only in proportion to the soul’s attachment to its material existence.”²⁶³ Clearly then, Chaldean cosmology, like Iamblichean theurgy, tends more toward monism than may be initially apparent. Hecate-as-Nature or Hecate-as-Necessity is also Hecate-as-Soul: depending on one’s proper understanding of and orientation toward sensible reality – and hence one’s proper relationship with the *daemons* over which Hecate presides – one’s experience of embodiment and material reality could be alternately disorienting and chaotic, or healing and salvific.

²⁶² *ibid.* 365.

²⁶³ Shaw (1995) 42.

The tradition of the *Chaldean Oracles* can thus be seen to possess a certain explanatory power with respect to Iamblichus' later, more fully developed version of theurgy. In both cases, an ambivalence toward matter and governing *daemones* that is sometimes expressed in startlingly dualist language is worked out in favor of a fundamental monism, wherein the soul, properly "turned" and re-oriented, may interact with the *daemonic* more positively and thus be rescued from a mere enslavement to matter. It remains to explore what conditions govern a correct orientation toward matter and its governing *daemones*, and by what tokens the practicing theurgist might know that he was transcending material imprisonment by properly re-orienting his soul toward a more harmonious relation to *daemones* and the divine principles informing the natural order.

6. Divine Matter and Iamblichean ritual

In Iamblichean thought, like that of the Chaldean texts, the materially manifested world made possible through the demiurgic activity of *daemons* must itself become the site of the soul's ritually effected re-orientation. From the monist view of a *good* material order animated by *daemons* who endow matter with differentiating *logoi*, follows the conclusion that the created order thus affords virtually infinite opportunities for re-connecting to the divine: "Since it was proper not even for terrestrial things to be deprived of participation (*κοινωνίας*) in the divine, earth also has received [from participation] a share in divinity such as is sufficient for it to be able to receive the gods (*χωρηῆσαι τοὺς θεοὺς*)."²⁶⁴ A "pure and divine form of matter," is not only an acceptable component, but even a necessary contributor to correct practice. Iamblichus' justification of this claim is triumphantly emanationist, and supplies a lucid practical description of what is implied by his monist metaphysics. In this vision, all lower,

²⁶⁴ ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἔδει καὶ τὰ ἐν γῆ μηδαμῶς εἶναι ἄμοιρα τῆς θείας κοινωνίας, ἐδέξατο τινα ἀπ' αὐτῆς θείαν μοῖραν καὶ ἡ γῆ, ἰκανὴν οὖσαν χωρηῆσαι τοὺς θεοὺς (*DM* 233.6-8).

subordinate beings are vindicated by virtue of their being informed and embraced by higher realms:

In the highest levels of beings, the abundance of power has this additional advantage over all others, in being present to all equally in the same manner without hindrance; according to this principle, the primary beings illuminate even the lowest levels, and the immaterial are present immaterially to the material. And let there be no astonishment if in this connection we speak of a pure and divine form of matter; for matter also issues from the father (πατρός) and creator (δημιουργοῦ) of all, and thus gains its perfection (τελειότητα), which is suitable to the reception of gods (πρὸς θεῶν ὑποδοχήν). And, at the same time, nothing hinders the superior beings from being able to illuminate (ἐλλάμπειν) their inferiors, nor yet, by consequence, is matter excluded from participation (μετουσίας) in its betters, so that such of it as is perfect (τελεία) and pure (καθαρά) and of good type (ἀγαθοειδής) is not unfitted to receive the gods.²⁶⁵

What is most fascinating about such as passage is Iamblichus' willingness to state rather directly the consequences of his metaphysics, even in the face of anticipated objection ("And let there be no astonishment..."). By virtue of an emanationist scheme that sees lower levels stemming cleanly from higher, it is possible for Iamblichus to assert, rather audaciously, a matter that is "perfect" and "pure," a matter that is "illuminated" by the gods and therefore suitable as a "receptacle" for divinity.

This principle will receive its highest elaboration in Iamblichus in his elaboration of a theory of the *symbolon* as divine manifestation in the world. Here, however, Iamblichus prefers to move from the abstract to the particular, proceeding to a curiously detailed recitation of some of the materials involved in theurgic practice. In keeping with the theme of a pure and divine matter as capable of "receiving" the gods, he enumerates a series of things that, given a certain "perfection and purity" can function as a "receptacle" for the divine:

Observing this, and discovering in general, in accordance with the properties of each of the gods, the receptacles adapted to them, the theurgic art in many cases links together stones, plants, animals,

²⁶⁵ (DM 232.12-233.6)

aromatic substances, and other such things that are sacred, perfect and godlike, and then from all these composes an integrated and pure receptacle.²⁶⁶

Such an understanding applies also to other areas of cult life, extending beyond what we might initially recognize as ritual to “the construction of dwellings for the gods” and “the consecration of statues.”²⁶⁷ Matter is here foundational to the performance of proper cult, so long as it is properly selected with an eye to its “purity,” where purity appears to correspond to its reception of a given divinity. Matter thus conceived is essential in its functioning as a bridge between the human and the divine:

there is no other way in which the terrestrial realm or the men who dwell here could enjoy participation in the existence that is the lot of the higher beings, if some such foundation be not laid down in advance.²⁶⁸

Even religious visions fall within the reach of this understanding. According to certain secret Hermetic discourses, “a certain kind of matter (ὕλη τις)” is imparted by the gods “through sacred visions (διὰ τῶν μακαρίων θεαμάτων),” we can infer that it must be “of a like nature (συμφυής)” with the gods who bestow it. As such, the sacrifice of such material rouses up those very gods to manifestation (ἐπι τὴν ἔκφασιν), summons them to reception, welcomes them when they appear, and ensures their perfect representation.”²⁶⁹ Matter then, is selected with an eye to evoking the particular divine response; particular material corresponds to a particular divinity. The same rule applies

²⁶⁶ (DM 233.9-13).

²⁶⁷ “One must not, after all, reject all matter, but only that which is alien to the gods, while selecting for use that which is akin to them, as being capable of harmonizing with the construction of dwellings for the gods, the consecration of statues, and indeed for the performance of sacrificial rites in general.”

Οὐ γὰρ δὴ δεῖ δυσχεραίνειν πᾶσαν ὕλην, ἀλλὰ μόνην τὴν ἀλλοτρίαν τῶν θεῶν τὴν δὲ οἰκείαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐκλέγεσθαι, ὡς συμφωνεῖν δυναμένην εἰς τε θεῶν οἰκοδομήσεις καὶ καθιδρύσεις ἀγαλμάτων καὶ δὴ καὶ εἰς τὰς τῶν θεῶν ἱερουργίας (DM 234.1-4).

²⁶⁸ Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν ἄλλως τοῖς ἐπὶ γῆς τόποις ἢ τοῖς δεῦρο κατοικοῦσιν ἀνθρώποις μετουσία ἂν γένοιτο τῆς τῶν κρειπτόνων λήψεως, εἰ μὴ τις τοιαύτη καταβολὴ πρώτη προενιδρυθείη (DM 234.4-6).

²⁶⁹ πείθεσθαι δὲ χρὴ τοῖς ἀπορρήτοις λόγοις ὡς καὶ διὰ τῶν μακαρίων θεαμάτων ὕλη τις ἐκ θεῶν παραδίδεται· αὕτη δὲ που συμφυής ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἐκείνοις τοῖς διδοῦσιν· οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡ τς τοιαύτης ὕλης θυσία ἀνεγείρει τοὺς θεοὺς ἐπὶ τὴν ἔκφασιν, καὶ προσκαλεῖται εὐθέως πρὸς κατάληψιν, χωρεῖ τε αὐτοὺς παραγιγνομένους καὶ τελείως ἐπιδείκνυσι (DM 234.7-11).

to the selection of cultic materials in particular geographical regions, where the produce of a given area corresponds to the divinities presiding over it. Such correspondence must be observed since “in all cases their own creations are particularly pleasing to the creators.”²⁷⁰ Matter that is coessential with whatever things may fall within the “jurisdiction” of a particular divinity, then, is instrumental in establishing a synergy with that divinity. Thus, “whether it is a case of animals or plants or any other products of the earth that are administered (διακυβερνᾶται) by higher beings, they have no sooner received a share in their authority (ἐπιστασίας) than they procure for us indivisible communion (κοινωνίαν) with them.”²⁷¹ What is more, as is perhaps implied in the above catalogue of “stones, plants, animals, aromatic substances,” cultic engagement with matter need hardly be limited to conventional, communal sacrifices. A range of cult acts employing “pure” substances of various kinds can serve to link us to divinity. Iamblichus makes this explicit when he asserts that “some among such things, when preserved and kept intact, serve to increase the kinship (οἰκειώσιν) of those who preserve them with the gods – that is to say, those which, in remaining intact (ἀκέραια), preserve the power of community (δύναμιν τῆς κοινωνίας) between gods and men.”²⁷²

Others, however, make the kinship (οἰκειότητα) more prominent (λαμπροτέραν) through being sacrificed (καθαγιαζόμενα), these being those whose resolution (ἀνάλυσιν) into the first principle of their primary elements (τὴν τῶν πρώτων στοιχείων ἀρχήν) makes them akin (συγγενῆ) to the causal principles (αἰτίους) of the higher beings, and thus more honored by them (ἰεροπρεπεστέραν); for as this kinship is progressively brought to perfection, the benefits deriving from it become ever more perfect also.²⁷³

Here we encounter an explanatory passage similar to the passage on burnt offering noted above, in which a seemingly dualist understanding of matter resulted in the prescription that fire purge it away. In the present context, though, we see that burn

²⁷⁰ ἀεὶ μὲν γὰρ τοῖς ποιούσι τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἔργα διαφερόντως ἐστὶ κεχαρισμένα (DM 235.3-4).

²⁷¹ (DM 235.5-7).

²⁷² (DM 235.7-10).

²⁷³ (DM 235.11-15).

offering, in which the victim is reduced to “the first principle of [its] primary elements,” a state ripe for interaction (or “kinship”) with the “causal principles” of higher beings, is only one option among many cultic options enabling human interaction with the causal principles latent in the material world.

Iamblichus is notoriously at his most evasive when discussing the “mechanics” of cult informed by theurgy – precisely what materials are to be used and how – as the preceding discussion might suggest. What is central to his theory, however, is the idea that the material world, whose disruptive force in the soul’s embodiment brings about Platonic *anastrophe*, categorically must play a role in “righting” the inverted soul. The range of physical mechanisms by which this improvement in the soul’s condition might be brought about are presumably manifold (expressed as the many possibilities for a “pure receptacle”) but the underlying theory is fairly uniform. Iamblichus’ most arresting articulation of that theory comes in his development of a framework for understanding the idea of the *symbolon* in theurgic cult. I will argue that here Iamblichus actually goes beyond understanding “pure” matter as simply a “receptacle,” and that he must – as a function of his own metaphysics, which require of him the conclusion that the material world is an *immediate* manifestation of *perfect principles* – conclude that the *symbolon* is a manifestation, a *making present* of the divine within the material world. It was precisely this point, perhaps already latent in religious culture, that Christian thinkers would find appealing.

7. *Eikon and Symbol as Means of the Soul’s Ascent*

Central to the understanding Iamblichus’ theory of the soul’s ascent through theurgy is the complex of ideas represented by the terms *eikon*, *symbolon*, and *synthema*. Here I shall argue that these terms actually do represent a coherent attempt to articulate an theory of divinity made manifest in the world, and that as such they follow reasonably from Iamblichus’ consistent monism. Strictly speaking, the *eikon*, or “image,” represents that which is divinely manifested in the world, whatever is perceptible and

may be identified by the knowledgeable theurgist as the site of divine presence. *Symbolon* and *synthema* are terms that are roughly synonymous already in the *Chaldean Oracles*, and in the *De Mysteriis* they appear to remain so.²⁷⁴ They designate Platonic forms in a later articulation characteristic of the *Oracles* and related to Middle Platonism. Where the *eikon*, then, is the outward, material manifestation of divine *symbolon*, knowledge (*gnosis*) of which enables the proper selection of objects and rites (*eikones*) whose deployment makes possible the assimilation – through the mediation of a material object – of the theurgist’s soul to the demiurgic power that enforms and frames the world. If the terms *eikon* and *symbolon* sometimes appear to be invoked in a confused way, I will argue that this is due to a somewhat paradoxical need to blur the distinctions between them deliberately, within the context of a metaphysical monism. That is to say, given that Iamblichus hopes to make plausible the idea of transcendence mediated through matter, he actually gains from eliding any distinction between divine *manifestation (eikon)* in the world and the mediating bridge that links material reality to the transcendent realm. The *image* is thus a material manifestation of a link to hypercosmic transcendence. The blurring of this conceptual line is sustainable perhaps only for a mind committed to the sacredness of the material cosmos.

It is useful to note that these terms have another life within the disciplines of Neoplatonic textual exegesis. Iamblichus was surely aware of the application of the *symbolon* by Porphyry in his *Cave of the Nymphs* as an “allegorical literary image that conveys a hidden message.”²⁷⁵ His Pythagorean commitments also give him certain knowledge of the tradition of describing the utterances of Pythagoras and his circle as “symbols” conveying a secret wisdom.²⁷⁶ Thus there is a long tradition prior to the third century of understanding *symbola* in terms of veiled linguistic manifestation of inner mysteries. Iamblichus takes matters further, deriving from this earlier tradition a more

²⁷⁴ In neither the *Chaldean Oracles* nor the *Corpus Hermeticum* is *symbolon* expressly connected with ritual acts. See Struck (2004) 216-17.

²⁷⁵ *ibid.* 214.

²⁷⁶ *ibid.* 214.

precisely defined ritual application of the term.²⁷⁷ Here I shall invoke the term's use in exegetical contexts only to suggest that there is an informative if somewhat imprecise parallel between their use in exegesis and their use in a theurgic context: *eikon* and *symbolon* in the disciplines of Neoplatonic allegory, where *eikon* applies to texts with more "manifest" allegorical meaning and *symbolon* to those of more "veiled" signification, might allude to a similar distinction in the metaphysics of theurgy, where similarly the *eikon* "manifests" the mysterious *symbolon*. In a 1976 article John Dillon undertook to explain what he thought to be a three-tiered Pythagorean system of allegorical interpretation adopted and further developed by Iamblichus, then taken up by later Neoplatonists and applied to the exegesis of Platonic dialogues. Dillon's hope seems to be that the terms' meanings, and their subsequent application to exegetical projects, may be precisely defined; the problem, as he discovers, is simply that in none of the cases that he cites – drawn for the most part from the works of Proclus – do the key terms of *symbolon* and *eikon* appear to be applied with any consistency. He readily concedes that in "more normal Greek usage" terms such as *symbolon* and *eikon* could be used interchangeably, but he cannot quite shake the instinct to search beneath such imprecision – which he finds throughout Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* – for a lucid Pythagorean system of classifications, into which the important terms of allegorical exegesis can all be neatly slotted.²⁷⁸

Dillon first locates the traces of this system in Proclus' *Timaeus* commentary, where the question at hand is the proper exegesis of *Timaeus* 17BC and Socrates' recapitulation of his previous day's discourse on the ideal state.²⁷⁹ Proclus, cataloging the interpretations of his predecessors, notes that Iamblichus supplies an allegorizing reading in which the recapitulation serves as a kind of *prolegomena* to the contemplation of nature, wherein the narrative of the state serves as an image – an *eikon* – of the order

²⁷⁷ Note Struck's (2004) recognition of Iamblichus' adaptation of the term, suggesting an equivalent in the term "talismán" understood as "a token with some form of efficacious link to what it is supposed to represent" (204).

²⁷⁸ Dillon (1976) 257-258.

²⁷⁹ *In Ti.* I 29, 31ff. Diehl. See Dillon (1976) 248-49.

of the Universe. Proclus traces this thinking to the Pythagorean habit of instructing students first through “similitudes” (ὅμοια) and “images” (εἰκόνες), then through “symbols” (σύμβολα), before moving on at the last to “complete knowledge,” which is attainable on after the students’ souls and vision have been purged in the first two steps, and they become capable of contemplating intelligibles. In this same passage, Proclus carefully distinguishes between the summary of the *Republic* as an *eikon* that “prepares us to understand the orderly creation of the Universe” and the Atlantis myth, which functions rather as a *symbol*.²⁸⁰ Dillon develops a distinction between the two terms that he believes is further supported by Proclus’ thoughts expressed elsewhere, in his discussion of the exegesis of myth presented in his commentary on the *Republic*. There, *eikones* are understood to represent their *paradeigmata* or prototypes more immediately and accurately, without any encumbering discordant elements; *symbola*, on the other hand, do not reflect the essences of the transcendent beings to which they refer, although they must nevertheless retain a certain resemblance to them.²⁸¹ Thus a distinction between *eikon* and *symbolon* is established, according to which an *eikon* appears to be more or less a mirror of its archetype, while a *symbolon* – at more of an exegetical remove – requires more of an elucidation before its archetype can be readily perceived. Unfortunately Proclus does not observe his own Pythagorean distinction. Prior to his seemingly careful distinction between *eikon* and *symbolon* in the *Timaeus* commentary, he has already casually asserted that *both* the recapitulated *Republic* and the Atlantis myth

²⁸⁰ Dillon (1976) 248-49.

²⁸¹ *In R.* pp. 72-73. See Dillon (1976) 251ff. To some extent the very tendency toward interpreting myths *symbolically* – and Proclus suggests in the *Timaeus* commentary that *all* myths are *symbola* – derives from the need to purge them of those more sordid elements that made them less than ideal reflections of philosophically conceived divine life; but Dillon is surely correct in pointing out that the real issue is simply that myths often do not transparently gesture toward transcendence. Rather, a mythical story might seem to have “a self-contained meaning, not directly pointing to any truth beyond itself, in a way that a conscious allegory should.” Thus a “Platonic myth” – by which we understand a narrative that has been, in a sense, philosophically pre-programmed as allegorical, virtually interprets itself – as an *eikon* of sorts; whereas a “poetic myth” appears to have no orientation to loftier reference points at all, and thus presumably requires a more nuanced exegesis – as a *symbolon* of sorts.

as *eikones*: they both “[represent] the order of the Universe δι’ εἰκόνων.”²⁸² What is more, and in the most maddening way for those hunting after consistency, he elsewhere claims that the Atlantis myth describes “the causal principles of creation ... ‘in images through symbols.’”²⁸³ This tendency to use terms interchangeably makes Dillon’s task of “trying to distinguish the essence of the Pythagorean system from the looser usage that obscures it” rather difficult,²⁸⁴ and he finds that this frustration with the inconsistent application of terms carries over into the search for a more clear exposition in the writings of Iamblichus. Dillon takes note of the “comprehensive survey” of Pythagorean symbols in the *Protrepticus*,²⁸⁵ but observes also the lack of explanation of the term *eikon*. A similar lack is noted in the *Vita Pythagorica*, where the only distinction maintained is that between the deployment of *symbola* and the use of direct instruction, and where all reference to the desired three-tiered system is absent.

The present argument is not concerned with exegesis, still less with a precise explication of a three-tiered Pythagorean system of exegesis; nevertheless, it is worth noticing the particular life of such terms in an exegetical context: after all, the very purpose of the three-fold system, as Proclus lays it out, is finally to enable a purified soul’s contemplation of intelligibles. This fact suggests that *eikon* / *symbolon* as terms of exegesis might reasonably be seen as continuous with *eikon* / *symbolon* as terms of metaphysics. I do not mean to assert too neat a parallel; nevertheless, it is arresting that the loose application of the terms in Proclus is also arguably present in the *De Mysteriis*, where we find a similar, somewhat frustrating interchangeability of terms. In this connection I will suggest that there is a parallel between the exegete’s *eikon* as an *outward* narrative that reasonably reflects the lineaments of a prototype, and the use of the term *eikon* in theurgic contexts to reconceptualize the *symbolon* as a straightforwardly perceptible thing. That is, *eikon* is *symbolon* under the aspect of its plain visibility. All

²⁸² Dillon (1976) 249.

²⁸³ ἐν εἰκόσι διὰ τινῶν συμβόλων (94, 27f.); Dillon (1976) 249; 253.

²⁸⁴ 258. Elsewhere he notes the “sad fact” that if one “checks assiduously through Diehl’s index [of *in Ti.*] under *eikon* and *symbolon* right through Book I of the commentary one will find the two terms used indiscriminately for characters, events, and even words and phrases” (254).

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may perceive the “image,” thought not all may perceive the “image” as a “symbol.” In a sense, the distinction observed by Proclus between *eikon* as the “simplest” manifestation and *symbolon* as a sign of deeper mystery might simply be a mirror of this metaphysical preoccupation. In the *De Mysteriis*, of course, the “text” under exegesis is not a dialogue of Plato, but rather all of material reality, which presents through symbols the images that manifest divine power.

In the *De Mysteriis*, whether or not they may always appear adequately distinguished, the terms *eikon* and *symbolon* may be taken to express ideas entirely consistent with Iamblichus’ monist outlook. Gregory Shaw, identifying them with Platonic formal principles, neatly traces an arc of thought from the *Chaldean Oracles* to Iamblichus’ metaphysics of theurgy, suggesting that when

Platonic Forms were transformed by the Middle Platonists into the “thoughts” of the creator and these, in turn, were understood to be “powers” extending in the cosmos, it was perhaps inevitable that these demiurgic powers would be “discovered” in their manifest expressions and adapted in some manner to benefit embodied souls.²⁸⁶

Shaw goes on to identify the Iamblichean doctrine of *synthemata* as the “practical culmination of this development.” *Symbola* and *synthemata* are synonymous in the Chaldean oracles, and are understood to be “sown ... throughout the cosmos” by the Demiurge. Likewise, as Ruth Majercik points out, they may be regarded as analogous to the forms, which in Middle Platonist thought are understood to be the “thoughts of the Father” disseminated through the world.²⁸⁷ Also crucial is the idea, already present in the *Oracles*, that the *symbolon* / *synthema* is anagogic as well as cosmogonic: they both enform the world and summon the soul to the transcendent source of reality.²⁸⁸ That is to say, *symbola* preserve both a generative and hieratic function: forms manifest as

²⁸⁶ (1995) 165. See also Dillon (1977) 55.

²⁸⁷ *Chaldean Oracles* fr. 108., esp. Majercik (1989) on fr. 108; See Shaw (1995) 162.

²⁸⁸ *Chaldean Oracles* fr. 109; see Shaw (1995) 162.

symbola are engaged by the theurgist in his hieratic work.²⁸⁹

If we thus understand material reality to be straightforwardly a manifestation of transcendent forms – where the world in its particularity is proportioned by demiurgically mediated principles – then it follows for Iamblichus that specific outward instances of materiality stand into proximity to those informing principles. In essence, any material surface can be seen as a veil held before formal principle. Of course, for Iamblichus, not just any object or surface will do – though he invokes a curious and wide range; he frequently insists on a *gnosis*, presumably a knowledge of the form underlying any object, that would be required for standing as a serious adept or initiate. Passages in the *De Mysteriis* such as those indicating a need for a precise knowledge of the particular objects or locales associated with given divinities perhaps hint at what such *gnosis* amounts to – certainly moreso than passages cataloging objects that would appear to critics as magical charms, such as “little pebbles, rods, or certain woods, stones, wheat and barley meal” – passages akin to lists found in the *Greek Magical Papyri*, where certain items are also acknowledged as “symbols.”²⁹⁰ Where such knowledge is obtained, the material world can supply a great variety of keys to unlock the world of transcendent principle, enabling the soul’s assimilation. In this context we should note Iamblichus’ qualification of such catalogs of charms, such as his careful explanation that the theurgic art,

discovering in general ... in accordance with the properties of each of the gods, the receptacles adapted to them ... in many cases links together stones, plants, animals, aromatic substances, and other such things that are sacred, perfect and godlike, and then from all these composes an integrated and pure receptacle.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Shaw (1995) notes that Smith (1974) demurs at the identity of *form* and *symbolon / synthema*, arguing rather that the latter terms for Proclus and Iamblichus relate to *form* merely analogically (107 n.11). Surely convincing is Shaw’s reply that a “cosmological” understanding of forms would be “proper to a philosophic discourse,” while an “anagogic” understanding would be germane to a theurgic discourse – essentially positing *symbolon / synthema* as form *theurgically considered* (in accordance with Iamblichus’ own insistence on careful distinction between “theological,” “theurgical,” and “philosophical” discourse. Cf. *DM* 7.3-5).

²⁹⁰ *DM* 141.11-12. See Struck (2004), p. 214, who notes parallels at *PGM* 4.559, 7.786, 4.230-40, 8.13.

²⁹¹ Ταῦτα τοίνυν κατιδοῦσα ἢ θεουργικὴ τέχνη, κοινῶς τε οὕτωςι κατ’ οἰκειότητα ἐκάστῳ τῶν θεῶν τὰς προσφόρους ὑποδοχὰς ἀνευρίσκουσα, συμπλέκει πολλάκις λίθους βοτάνας ζῶα

This claim comes in the aftermath of his wish that no one marvel “if ... we speak of a pure and divine form of matter,” issuing from the “father and creator of all.”²⁹² Such matter gains its perfection from being derived of the creator, and is thus “suitable to the reception of the gods.” Certain instances of material manifestation are suitable as “receptacles” (ὑποδοχαί) of divine presence, and it is the task of the skilled theurgist to learn and know these instances – and what is more, to possess a knowledge adequate to orchestrating the varieties of divine receptacle in a single theurgic ritual, as the passage appears to suggest with its claim that “from all these” the craft “composes an integrated and pure receptacle” (ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων ὑποδοχὴν ὀλοτελῆ καὶ καθαρὰν ἀπεργάζεται). As Shaw puts it, “As cause of a specific order, the god contained all its symbols and the theurgist had to re-create the entire collection in his ritual.”²⁹³ The knowledge required for such a project should be coextensive with an awareness of the correspondences between *symbolon* / *synthema* as formal links disseminated through reality and the manifest “images” (*eikones*) of those hidden principles, the object or material surface that the theurgist recognizes as manifesting a hidden principle. Such an approach supplies the theoretical understanding for explaining what theurgic “knowledge” might look like, where *eikon* and *symbolon* are not merely facets of a literary technique aiming to make transcendent reality noetically intelligible for the theurgist; they are components rather of a theory of *manifestation* – of viewing the world as a divine “text” conceived in terms of an outward “imaging” of inner principles, such

ἀρώματα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα ἱερά καὶ τέλεια καὶ θεοειδῆ, κάπειτα ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων ὑποδοχὴν ὀλοτελῆ καὶ καθαρὰν ἀπεργάζεται (DM 233.9-12).

²⁹² ἐὰν καὶ ὕλην τινὰ καθαρὰν καὶ θείαν εἶναι λέγωμεν ... ἀπὸ ... τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ δημιουργοῦ τῶν ὅλων (DM 232.13-233.233.1).

²⁹³ (1995) 166-7. Shaw goes on to note the same idea as expressed by Proclus in his *On the Hieratic Art of the Greeks* [*Peri tēs kath’ Hellenas Hieratikēs Technēs*] in CMAG, 6:150, 5-10: “Hence, in the mixture of many things the theurgists united the aforementioned [divine] elements and made the unity derived from the many things resemble that unity which is whole prior to the many.” Shaw goes on to note Proclus’ conviction that without the proper assemblage of elements related to a given god, the theurgist cannot successfully invoke him. This argument he finds similar to “Iamblichus’ teaching that one must honor *all* the powers or the gods must not be reached (DM 228, 19-229, 7).”

that to come into the precincts of the material, theurgic image is absolutely equivalent to coming into proximity to the underlying divine, formal principles themselves.

An early passage in the *De Mysteriis* may be a bit terminologically cloudy – with Iamblichus suggesting that certain “works of theurgy” function *like* symbols, or that they “preserve some other image” – where the terms *symbolon* and *eikon* are employed somewhat loosely; however, Iamblichus importantly makes explicit the analogy between the theurgic *eikon* and the manifestation of invisible form in the natural world:

Of the works of theurgy that are performed on any given occasion, some have a cause that is secret and superior to all rational explanation, others are like symbols consecrated from all eternity to the higher beings, others preserve some other image, even as nature in its generative role imprints (upon things) visible shapes from invisible reason-principles.²⁹⁴

These rites, rather ambiguously described as being “like symbols” (ὡς σύμβολα), are indissolubly linked to the gods; other, presumably similar rites “preserve some other image” (εἰκόνα τινὰ ἄλλην ἀποσώζει). However imprecise the usage, it seems clear that “symbols” and “images” here are not precisely the same. Even granting that to speak of some “other image” might suggest “image” as an alternative reading for “symbol” – a kind of casual *variatio* – what appears more striking is the close juxtaposition of “image” with a Platonic formulation for the physical manifestation of form. In the *Timaeus*, Plato describes the work of the Demiurge as it brings to completion the array of creatures to inhabit the world by “molding” (ἀποτυπούμενος) the nature of each in accordance with its “paradigm.”²⁹⁵ In the Iamblichean passage, “nature ... imprints [ἀπετυπώσατο] (upon things) visible shapes from invisible reason-principles,” where the “visible shapes” appear to correspond more or less to “image.”

²⁹⁴ Τῶν γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἐκάστοτε ἐπιτελουμένων τὰ μὲν ἀπόρρητόν τινα καὶ κρείττονα λόγου τὴν αἰτίαν ἔχει· τὰ δ' ὡς σύμβολα καθιέρωται ἐξ αἰδίου τοῖς κρείττοσι· τὰ δ' εἰκόνα τινὰ ἄλλην ἀποσώζει, καθάπερ δὴ καὶ ἡ γενεσιουργὸς φύσις τῶν ἀφανῶν λόγων ἐμφανεῖς τινὰς μορφὰς ἀπετυπώσατο (*DM* 37.6-10).

²⁹⁵ τοῦτο δὴ τὸ κατάλοιπον ἀπηργάζετο αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ παραδείγματος ἀποτυπούμενος φύσιν (*Tim.* 39E, 6-7). See Shaw (1995) 163-64, especially 163, n.4, for other instances of Iamblichus' use of this verb (ἀποτυπώω) to describe the endowment of matter with form.

In any case, what matters is the emergence of a coherent metaphysical framework, which the analogy to the *Timaeus* with respect to form and manifestation in the natural world supplies: *eikones* manifest “invisible reason principles” (τῶν ἀφανῶν λόγων) just as “visible shapes” (ἐμφανεῖς τινας μορφὰς) do in nature (ἡ γενεσιουργὸς φύσις). The *eikon* gives perceptible expression to the unseen principle.

In a much later passage, Iamblichus clarifies his reverence for the Egyptian hieratic arts, and in so doing makes some of these connections more explicit.

The following difficulties require the same theosophical Muse for their solution, but first of all, I would like to explain to you the mode of theology practiced by the Egyptians. For these people, imitating the nature of the universe and the demiurgic power of the gods, display certain [images] of mystical arcane and invisible intellections by means of symbols, just as nature copies the unseen principles in visible forms through some mode of symbolism, and the creative activity of the gods indicates the truth of the forms in visible [images].²⁹⁶

The Egyptians in their theurgic practice are thus understood to imitate “the nature of the universe” in their production of religious *arcana*, in a manner that suggests a parallel with the earlier passage where “image” supplies a visible manifestation of formal principle. This passage actually adds a dimension to the discussion insofar as it explicitly parallels hieratic and cosmogonic activity: the Egyptians create sacred images in the same manner as the Demiurge. They do so “just as nature copies [ἀπετυπώσατο] the unseen principles in visible forms through some mode of symbolism” (ὥσπερ καὶ ἡ φύσις τοῖς ἐμφανέσιν εἶδεσι τοὺς ἀφανεῖς λόγους διὰ συμβόλων τρόπον τινα ἀπετυπώσατο). Interestingly, moreover, the very same muddling of terminology that

²⁹⁶ Τῆς δ’ αὐτῆς θεοσόφου Μούσης κάκεινα δεῖται εἰς τὴν διάλυσιν τὰ ἀπορήματα· πρότερον δέ σοι βούλομαι τῶν Αἰγυπτίων τὸν τρόπον τῆς θεολογίας διερμηνεῦσαι· οὗτοι γὰρ τὴν φύσιν τοῦ παντός καὶ τὴν δημιουργίαν τῶν θεῶν μιμούμενοι καὶ αὐτοὶ τῶν μυστικῶν καὶ ἀποκεκρυμμένων καὶ ἀφανῶν νοήσεων εἰκόνας τινας διὰ συμβόλων ἐκφαίνουσιν, ὥσπερ καὶ ἡ φύσις τοῖς ἐμφανέσιν εἶδεσι τοὺς ἀφανεῖς λόγους διὰ συμβόλων τρόπον τινα ἀπετυπώσατο, ἡ δὲ τῶν θεῶν δημιουργία τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῶν ἰδεῶν διὰ τῶν φανερῶν εἰκόνων ὑπεγράψατο. (DM 249.9-250.5) I have altered the translation of Clarke, *et al.*, here in the interest of my own terminological consistency. They have translated εἰκόνας and εἰκόνων in the passage as “signs.”

Dillon finds so maddening in Proclus occurs in this very passage. We are told that just as “nature” (ἡ φύσις) copies the “unseen principles” (τοὺς ἀφανεῖς λόγους) in “visible forms” (τοῖς ἐμφανέσιν εἶδεσι) all “through some mode of symbolism” (διὰ συμβόλων τρόπον τινὰ), in just this same way, the Egyptians in their symbolic rites display “certain [images]” (εἰκόνας τινὰς) of “invisible intellections” through the use of *symbola* (διὰ συμβόλων). This formulation – like that of Proclus – may seem to leave rather vague the precise relationship of *eikon* to *symbolon*, leaving open as it does what it means to display an image “through” symbols, but it is surely significant that the *image* is what the Egyptians *manifest* outwardly just as *visible forms* are what physical Nature “copies” or *imprints*. Since in each case *symbola* assume a mediating role in the creation of outward image, we may infer that they participate in the formal dimension. Thus, that the Egyptian practitioners are understood to be imitating the work of the demiurge in the cosmos – as the present passage makes clear (τὴν δημιουργίαν τῶν θεῶν μιμούμενοι) – is itself an allusion to the Egyptian capacity to identify and direct form in the manipulation of *symbolon* to “create” reality. Iamblichus elsewhere shows his commitment to the idea that religious rites draw the practitioner into precisely this kind of cooperative harmony with divine entities. For this model of praxis to be viable, he must maintain the first principle that image and form are linked: the *eikon* is understood as a manifestation mediating the hidden principles or *symbola*.

The above passages already present a possible riposte to Porphyry’s charges that theurgy merely attempts to manipulate the gods who are themselves subject to passions, by suggesting a way in which the theurgist might be understood as coming into cooperative harmony with the work of the Demiurge.²⁹⁷ Elsewhere Iamblichus further distances theurgy from such charges by wedding it ever more closely to demiurgic activity:

Was not this cult established by law at the beginning
intellectually, according to the ordinances of the gods? It imitates
the order of the gods, both the intelligible and that in the heavens.
It possesses eternal measures of what truly exists and wondrous

²⁹⁷ For a thorough discussion of theurgy as cooperative demiurgy, see Shaw (1995) 45-57.

tokens, such as have been sent down hither by the creator and father of all, by means of which unutterable truths are expressed through secret symbols, beings beyond form brought under the control of form, things superior to all images reproduced through images, and all things brought to completion through one single divine cause, which itself so far transcends passions that reason is not even capable of grasping it.²⁹⁸

As we have seen, theurgic cult is an imitation of a divine order (μιμεῖται δὲ τὴν τῶν θεῶν τάξιν) in which humans are summoned to participate. Far from being a mere manipulation of transcendent forces from below, it is received from above, “according to the ordinances of the gods.” It “possesses eternal measures of what truly exists” (μέτρα τῶν ὄντων αἰδία) which here seem to parallel “wondrous tokens” (συνθήματα θαυμαστά),²⁹⁹ which themselves appear reflect Iamblichus’ adoption of the forms of Middle Platonism and the *Chaldean Oracles*. These *synthemata* are the means for giving outward expression (literally, *voice*) to truths otherwise “unutterable” (τὰ μὲν ἄφθεγκτα). What is somewhat more interesting is that this outward expression is realized “through secret symbols,” which are themselves curiously “unutterable” (διὰ συμβόλων ἀπορρήτων). What is challenging here is that both *synthemata* (“wondrous tokens”) and *symbola* (“secret symbols”) appear to function as *means* in the same process – that of manifesting hidden truths in the world. Here it would appear that Iamblichus,

²⁹⁸ οὐχ αὕτη μὲν κατὰ θεσμούς θεῶν νοερώς τε κατ’ ἀρχὰς ἐνομοθετήθη; μιμεῖται δὲ τὴν τῶν θεῶν τάξιν, τὴν τε νοητὴν καὶ τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ. Ἔχει δὲ μέτρα τῶν ὄντων αἰδία καὶ συνθήματα θαυμαστά, οἷα ἀπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων δεῦρο καταπεμφθέντα, οἷς καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄφθεγκτα διὰ συμβόλων ἀπορρήτων ἐκφωνεῖται, τὰ δὲ ἀνειδέα κρατεῖται ἐν εἶδεσι, τὰ δὲ πάσης εἰκόνας κρείττονα δι’ εἰκόνων ἀποτυποῦνται, πάντα δὲ διὰ θείας αἰτίας μόνης ἐπιτελεῖται, ἥτις τοσοῦτον κεχώρισται τῶν παθῶν, ὥστε μηδὲ λόγον αὐτῆς δυνατὸν εἶναι ἐφάπτεσθαι (DM 65.2-11).

²⁹⁹ Along with Clarke, *et al.*, (79 n.112) I read συνθήματα (Thomas Gale’s conjecture) for the ἐνθήματα of the MSS, although I resist understanding συνθήματα merely as “the various magical substances and combinations of substances that form the basis for theurgic practice,” since the passage seems to point to their transcendent origin. They are described as having been “sent down hither from the father of all,” which would make them analogous to form in Middle Platonism; furthermore, they precede in the sequence the expression of the inexpressible through symbols. In context, they seem analogous to form – to the “eternal measures” that parallel them in this passage, and to the *symbola* of the *Chaldean Oracles*, explained by Majercik (1989) to be synonymous to *symbola* (note on fr. 108).

continuing the in the Middle Platonist and Chaldean tradition, is pairing *synthema* and *symbolon*, where *symbolon* is the “theurgic” side or conceptual obverse of *synthema*, i.e., what *form* in effect “becomes” when engaged by the theurgist in his act of cooperative demiurgy: a form transformed into an active link enabling the theurgist’s participation in shaping the manifest cosmos.³⁰⁰ Thus this articulation further develops the demiurgic-hieratic parallel first evident in the passage in praise of Egyptian priests. That is to say, rather than adducing the phenomenal world and its demiurgic formation as an *analogy* for theurgy, Iamblichus has begun to write of theurgic practice and cosmic creation as if the were the *same process*. Quite plainly, when Iamblichus writes of “beings beyond form brought under the control of form” and “things superior to all images reproduced through images” – all of which transpires through the ultimate single agency of “one single divine cause” – his language can now be applied with equal force both to theurgic practice *and* the demiurgic work of creation. Here, although the language of imprinting “invisible intellections” and “unseen principles” has given way to “unutterable truths” – a move toward a new language that other thinkers would

³⁰⁰ This idea of viewing *symbolon* and *synthema* as parallel is supported elsewhere (DM 246.12-247.5), where we read of the theurgist’s cosmic mastery “through the power of the ineffable *synthemata*” (διὰ τὴν δύναμιν τῶν ἀπορρήτων συνθημάτων) – a mastery which is obtained for him by “knowledge of the ineffable symbols” (ἀπορρήτων συμβόλων ἢ γνῶσις). The present passage (DM 65.2-11) would suggest rather that it is the “knowledge” of the ineffable *synthemata* – which are after all descended from the paternal Mind – which grants access to the effective “power” of the ineffable *symbola*. Casual inversions such as these suggest that we are probably correct in viewing *symbolon* and *synthema* as obverse terms – one perhaps “theurgic,” the other perhaps “philosophical” – applying with equal force to the world of form. The complete second passage reads:

“The theurgist, through the power of the arcane symbols, commands cosmic entities no longer as a human being or employing a human soul but, existing above them in the order of the gods, uses threats greater than are consistent with his own proper essence – not, however, with implication that he would perform that which he asserts, but using such words to instruct them how much, how great and what sort of power he holds through his unification with the gods, which he gains through knowledge of the ineffable symbols.” Ὁ θεουργὸς διὰ τὴν δύναμιν τῶν ἀπορρήτων συνθημάτων οὐκέτι ὡς ἄνθρωπος οὐδ’ ὡς ἀνθρωπίνη ψυχῇ χρώμενος ἐπιτάττει τοῖς κοσμικοῖς, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐν τῇ τῶν θεῶν τάξει προϋπάρχων μείζοσι τῆς καθ’ ἑαυτὸν οὐσίας ἐπανατάσσει χρῆται· οὐχ ὡς ποιήσων πάντα ἅπερ δισχυρίζεται, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ τοιαύτῃ τῶν λόγων χρήσει διδάσκων ὅσην καὶ ἡλικὴν καὶ τίνα ἔχει τὴν δύναμιν διὰ τὴν πρὸς θεοὺς ἔνωσιν, ἣν παρέσχηκεν αὐτῷ τῶν ἀπορρήτων συμβόλων ἢ γνῶσις. (DM 246.12-247.5)

embrace, a language of the material world as giving expression or “voice” to a “word” and supplying articulation to what would otherwise be transcendent silence – it is nevertheless clear that we are in the same philosophical territory. The same presuppositions about form-principle and material manifestation apply, the only difference being that Iamblichus has now elided theurgy completely with what had previously seemed merely analogous: theurgy is now creation in which *symbol-synthema* manifests *eikon*.

Elsewhere – in a passage crucial to our understanding of Iamblichean terms – we see Iamblichus engage directly the problem of perceiving divinity in the sensible world. Here Porphyry, in asserting that any visions associated with theurgy should be presumed deceptive and implying that theurgy entails a false confidence in perception, attempts to undermine confidence in the *eikon* as a “true” manifestation of reality. For Porphyry, the argument that divinity and transcendence can be reliably manifest in the sensible world is the fool’s precondition for the viability of encosmic coercion or manipulation. Simply put, the idea of “visions” makes possible the idea of magic, within which category Porphyry plainly regards theurgy. As Iamblichus’ reply points out, the heart of such (erroneous) arguments is the fiercely dualist conclusion that only the unfettered intellect can touch upon the divine. Although he seems ready to concede a certain prudent skepticism where “visions” are concerned, the logical pressure of his own position simply requires him to defend the reality of divine visions, since his commitment to the idea of material *symbolon* / *eikon* as manifestation of divine reality flows from the basic premise that the transcendent is actually linked to the sensible world:

Granting, then, that ignorance and deception are faulty and impious, it does not follow on this that the offerings made to the gods and divine works are invalid, for it is not pure thought that unites theurgists to the gods. Indeed what, then, would hinder those who are theoretical philosophers from enjoying a theurgic union with the gods? But the situation is not so: it is the accomplishment of acts not to be divulged and beyond all conception, and the power of the unutterable symbols, understood solely by the gods, which establishes theurgic union.

Hence, we do not bring about these things by intellection alone; for thus their efficacy would be intellectual, and dependent upon us. But neither assumption is true. For even when we are not engaged in intellection, the symbols themselves, by themselves perform their appropriate work, and the ineffable power of the gods, to whom these symbols relate, itself recognizes the proper images of itself, not through being aroused by our thought. For it is not in the nature of things containing to be aroused by those contained in them, nor of things perfect by things imperfect, nor even of wholes by parts. Hence it is not even chiefly through our intellection that divine causes are called into actuality; but it is necessary that these and all the best conditions of the soul and our ritual purity to pre-exist as auxiliary causes; but the things which properly arouse the divine will be the actual divine symbols. And so the attention of the gods is awakened by themselves, receiving from no inferior being any principle for themselves of their characteristic activity.³⁰¹

In response to Porphyry, Iamblichus argues that “we do not bring these things about by intellection alone”; it is rather “the power of the unutterable symbols, understood solely by the gods, which establishes theurgic union.” The divine *symbola* – in this passage made expressly parallel to *synthemata* in terms of their role – “by themselves perform their appropriate work.” What is more, in a move suggestive of the blurring of definitional boundaries discussed above, Iamblichus notes that divine

³⁰¹ Ἐστω μὲν γὰρ ἡ ἀγνοία καὶ ἀπάτη πλημμέλεια καὶ ἀσέβεια, οὐ μὴν διὰ τοῦτο ψευδῆ ποιεῖ καὶ τὰ οἰκειῶς τοῖς θεοῖς προσφερόμενα καὶ τὰ θεῖα ἔργα, οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ ἔννοια συνάπτει τοῖς θεοῖς τοὺς θεουργοὺς· ἐπεὶ τί ἐκώλυε τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφοῦντας ἔχειν τὴν θεουργικὴν ἔνωσην πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς; νῦν δ’ οὐκ ἔχει τό γε ἀληθὲς οὕτως· ἀλλ’ ἡ τῶν ἔργων τῶν ἀρρήτων καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν νόησιν θεοπρεπῶς ἐνεργουμένων τελεσιουργία ἢ τε τῶν νοουμένων τοῖς θεοῖς μόνον συμβόλων ἀφθέγκτων δυνάμεις ἐντίθησι τὴν θεουργικὴν ἔνωσην. Διόπερ οὐδὲ τῷ νοεῖν αὐτὰ ἐνεργοῦμεν· ἔσται γὰρ οὕτω νοεῖν αὐτῶν ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἀφ’ ἡμῶν ἐνδιδομένη· τὸ δ’ οὐδέτερόν ἐστιν ἀληθές. Καὶ γὰρ μὴ νοούντων ἡμῶν αὐτὰ τὰ συνθήματα ἀφ’ ἑαυτῶν δοῦν τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον, καὶ ἡ τῶν θεῶν, πρὸς οὓς ἀνήκει ταῦτα, ἄρρητος δυνάμεις αὐτὴ ἀφ’ ἑαυτῆς ἐπιγιγνώσκει τὰς οἰκειᾶς εἰκόνας, ἀλλ’ οὐ τῷ διεγείρεσθαι ὑπὸ τῆς ἡμετέρας νοήσεως· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔχει φύσιν τὰ περιέχοντα ὑπὸ τῶν περιεχομένων οὐδὲ τὰ τέλεια ὑπὸ τῶν ἀτελῶν οὐδ’ ὑπὸ τῶν μερῶν τὰ ὅλα ἀνακινεῖσθαι. Ὅθεν δὴ οὐδ’ ὑπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων νοήσεων προηγουμένως τὰ θεῖα αἴτια προκαλεῖται εἰς ἐνέργειαν· ἀλλὰ ταύτας μὲν καὶ τὰς ὅλας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρίστας διαθέσεις καὶ τὴν περὶ ἡμᾶς καθαρότητα ὡς συναίτια ἅττα προὑποκειῖσθαι χρή, τὰ δ’ ὡς κυρίως ἐγείροντα τὴν θεῖαν βούλησιν αὐτὰ τὰ θεῖα ἐστὶ συνθέματα· καὶ οὕτω τὰ τῶν θεῶν αὐτὰ ὑφ’ ἑαυτῶν ἀνακινεῖται, ὑπ’ οὐδενὸς τῶν ὑποδεεστέρων ἐνδεχόμενά τινα εἰς ἑαυτὰ ἀρχὴν τῆς οἰκειᾶς ἐνεργείας. (DM 96.9-97.7)

power, “to whom these [*synthemata*] relate,” recognizes in the *synthemata* “the proper images [*eikonas*] of itself.” Here the *eikon* almost appears to be drawn into the definitional ambit of the *symbolon-synthema*, a gesture that suggests Iamblichus’ subtle intention to blur the distinction between essence and manifestation. The *image* is to be understood as a divine thing alongside the *form*. In this rather rhapsodic treatment, human cooperation is present, though relegated to the level of pre-existent “auxiliary causes,”³⁰² so as to make clear transcendent reality’s independence from human contrivance while retaining a place for the theurgist’s *gnosis*, which at its most basic is presumably an awareness of the *eikones* and *symbola* that sort with particular divinities. Theurgy is divine activity, in which the theurgist may be summoned into assimilation with divine agencies by the proper invocation of *eikones* / *symbola* known by divine power as “the proper images of itself,” to which divine power responds by summoning “divine causes...into actuality,” and essentially being actively present itself.

Plainly then, it has been necessary for Iamblichus to defend the legitimacy of divine visions – the sensible experience of *images* in the world, on the grounds that his articulation of theurgy relies on the premise that *image* is the face of a link to the divine, *symbolon-synthema* of the divine, which is always the site of particular transcendent actualization in the world. Within the limits of such an outlook, the possibility of visions must be defended, as indeed all possible instances of theophany. Visions could

³⁰² It is a charge that Iamblichus is frequently at pains to refute, as he does when Porphyry has suggested the incoherence of claiming to invoke the gods as superiors, only then to boss them about as inferiors: “On the one hand, it is performed by men, and as such observes our natural rank in the universe; but on the other, it controls divine symbols, and in virtue of them is raised up to union with the higher powers, and directs itself harmoniously in accordance with their dispensation, which enables it quite properly to assume the mantle of the gods. It is in virtue of this distinction, then, that the art both naturally invokes the powers from the universe as superiors, inasmuch as the invoker is a man, and yet on the other hand gives them orders, since it invests itself, by virtue of the ineffable symbols, with the hieratic role of the gods.” τὸ μὲν ὡς παρ’ ἀνθρώπων προσαγόμενον, ὅπερ δὴ τηρεῖ καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν τάξιν ὡς ἔχει φύσεως ἐν τῷ παντί, τὸ δὲ κρατυνόμενον τοῖς θείοις συνθήμασι καὶ ἄνω μετέωρον δι’ αὐτῶν τοῖς κρείττοσι συναπτόμενον, περιαγόμενόν τε ἐμμελῶς ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκείνων διακόσμησιν, ὃ δὴ δύναται εἰκότως καὶ τὸ τῶν θεῶν σχῆμα περιτίθεσθαι. Κατὰ τὴν τοιαύτην οὖν διαφορὰν εἰκότως καὶ ὡς κρείττονας καλεῖ τὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ παντός δυνάμεις, καθόσον ἐστὶν ὁ καλῶν ἀνθρώπος, καὶ ἐπιτάττει αὐταῖς αὐθις, ἐπειδὴ περιβάλλεται πῶς διὰ τῶν ἀπορρήτων συμβόλων τὸ ἱερατικὸν τῶν θεῶν πρόσχημα. (DM 184.1-10)

go wrong, to be sure, thought presumably for the theurgist of adequate *gnosis* this would not be the case. From Iamblichus' perspective, theurgy is defensible within the intellectual framework of *image* and *form* – of *eikon* and *symbolon-synthema* – *manifestation* and *actualization* of divine power, a position only possible within the terms of a durable metaphysical monism.

As we proceed to Christian articulations of sacramental theory, the simple question to bear in mind is whether such approaches reflect the idea that the *symbolon*, or the complex of *eikon* – *symbolon*, as an actualization of transcendent principle, functions as a link to corresponding divinity – whether the symbol channels access to transcendent principle. First we shall consider whether for Origen, a thinker preceding Iamblichus by some years, a divine *symbolon* might manifest a divine image, opening access on the plane of material reality to a god conceived *as* ultimate rational principle, and fully realized and projected into material existence. Christian ideas about the *Logos* and its incarnation would supply the conceptual material enabling an interrogation of eucharist in precisely such terms.

Chapter IV: Origen and the Adaptation of Pagan Cult

1. Introduction: *The Logos, the Rational Creature and Material Cult*

In Origen's view, rational beings are fallen from their true life and constrained by the limits of embodied experience. They require healing and ascent that can be mediated only by the divine *Logos*, which itself has taken on flesh to effect this mediation. The soul's condition is thus remedied by a re-orientation toward the *Logos*, effected through a scripturally and ecclesiastically mediated encounter, in which the attainment of knowledge is, for Origen, a kind of therapy enabling the soul's ascent and re-assimilation to the divine *Logos* from which its life derives. Origen's thought thus may appear to work within a familiar Platonic scheme, where embodied experience is often narrated as a confinement to an illusory world, ascent from which is the rational creature's ideal end. His language often draws upon the reservoir of this tradition, in which matter itself is regarded with ambivalence if not outright hostility, and in which the aim of the philosophical life is escape from the hindrances imposed on the soul by embodiment. We should be cautious, though, in too neatly attributing to Origen this Platonic narrative of the "soul" and its fall, not least because more extreme dualism sits uneasily alongside Christianity's commitment to embodiment. In keeping with this Christian tradition, Origen must retain a certain dualist rejection of the material world and the body, while simultaneously respecting the body and material reality as the site of the soul's remedy. Such commitments give rise in Origen's thought to what might best be termed a *variation* on the Platonic narrative of the soul's fall – a variation that is more monist, more open to a favorable view of material reality than an initial "Platonizing" reading of his work might suggest. Such a reading yields the insight that

in Origen's view, human individuals – human "souls" – have no proper existence without material embodiment. Deriving from this conviction is the possibility of reconciling an incarnate god, rationally conceptualized as *Logos*, with human beings conceived as essentially incarnate rational creatures, rather than as fallen incorporeal "souls" encased in a material element. I shall argue in this chapter that such an alignment of embodied rational beings with an embodied *Logos* is extended by Origen into the material sacramentalism of the church, a project that he sustains in some measure by resorting to cultic terminology that was already laden with assumptions about materiality, and that would later find its more full theoretical development in the work of thinkers like Iamblichus. Particularly important in this regard is the fact that Origen insinuates his appropriation of pagan cult language into a vigorous polemic *against* magic and *daemonic* cult. That is, at precisely the point where Origen's rhetoric most vigorously asserts *difference*, his argument moves deftly to appropriate language and categories suggestive of *likeness*, as if the very volume of the polemic were calibrated to obscure the act of appropriation.

By no means do I mean to suggest that Origen is consciously a proto-theurgist, or that his thought should be seen as lineally antecedent to the more developed theories of Iamblichus later in the third century. The differences in orientation between the two men are considerable and obvious: the ardent, militant Christian apologist on the one hand, eager to sweep away the false religions of the Mediterranean and to replace them with the Christian novelty that he touts as older and more venerable still than anything traditional cults could offer; and the conservative pagan on the other, grieved at the decline of traditional cults, and concerned to close the widening breach between elite, philosophical practice and the time-honored religious cults of the ancients. That said, there are considerable and interesting parallels, as well. Both thinkers are opposed to elitism in the philosophical-religious life, and undertake to vindicate practices for the common person; both are occupied with the problem of material reality and embodiment as both obstacle and aid to the aspiring soul, and believe likewise that paths lie open for the ascent of rational beings from their earthbound condition; both

believe that the reality of embodiment *dictates* religious engagement with material reality, within a context of carefully disciplined religious cult, which serves as a mechanism making possible that ascent. Also, much like Iamblichus in his response to Porphyry, Origen must answer a critique by a redoubtable intellectual foe, the second century philosopher Celsus, who had impugned Christianity as a vulgar, degraded menace to the shared cultural values of the Mediterranean world, a set of superstitions and fideisms unworthy of serious philosophical consideration. Celsus objected particularly to Christianity's commitment to divine incarnation and universal bodily resurrection, and as a corollary, found absurd any claims that materiality might mediate divinity rather than hinder its reception. As a response – in a manner that is broadly similar to the approach adopted by Iamblichus – Origen must find a way of casting Christianity as acceptable, and indeed superior, within the philosophical terms of his age, a task that he approaches by way of a cosmology that views material reality as a good, even inseparable element of a created order. Matter itself is reconfigured in a way that allows for its positive role in incarnation, in resurrection – and most critically for this discussion – in the developing sacramental system in the church. He furthermore develops a theory of human nature and human person, as well as a theory of the incarnate *Logos* that would have the effect of rescuing embodiment from dualism, and of redeeming material reality itself from its straitened place within more dualist thought.

Such parallels are mostly broad, and the likenesses that I mean to sketch here are mostly of a narrow, theoretical nature, and are best viewed from a perspective informed by the insight that religious thinkers of this age drew upon a broad range of shared ideas in their several efforts toward articulating their cultic commitments. To read Origen in this way we must simply disregard ancient and modern disputes over the perceived problem of his Hellenism, with their implicit challenge that “Christianity” is proportionally diminished by the addition of each new quantum of “Hellenism.” Such a polarity, whose origins I have previously described as founded upon a persistent myth of Christian origins, with its assumption that “pure” Christianity emerges when “paganism” is peeled away, actually may obscure insight when applied to a thinker like

Origen, who was anything but timid about his investment in Greek intellectual traditions. With the elimination of such useless taxonomies, we may examine with greater care the ways in which Origen's thought may constitute an adaptive engagement with the same questions that vexed his contemporaries, and the ways in which it may *not* differ in its theoretical basis from solutions already posed by traditional religious and philosophical culture.

In basic outline, the issues to be considered here are: (2) Origen's cosmology and spiritual anthropology, in which human beings are conceived not as incorporeal individual identities subsisting in a Platonic shadowland prior to embodiment, but rather unitively, as rational natures for whom embodiment is an essential component of discrete existence. Within such a scheme, human beings as identities or persons have no proper existence or life as incorporeals, and are therefore not conceived merely as body-soul composites in the world. Nevertheless, Origen retains a conceptual distinction between "rational" soul and material nature, enabling him to insist on the universality of embodiment while explaining the "rational" element as the point of contact between rational beings and the incorporeal *Logos* of God, and indeed as the pivot of human identity. Such a view of the human condition entails the conclusion that matter, insofar as it is considered in itself, is not evil – since to conceive of rational creatures without it is impossible – and prepares the way for a theory of the incarnate *Logos* that may be understood in terms of universal access to divine life for all rational, embodied creatures, and whose logic produces justification of material sacrament. (3) Origen's attempt to defend embodiment on traditional Platonic ground, an aim that he pursues by way of caricaturing Celsus as an anti-traditionalist whose thought fails to grasp the vindications of embodied reality that the Platonic tradition contains. Such an argument, not achieved without a certain *legerdemain*, enables (4) Origen's move to found the first step of the rational being's ascent on embodiment's very universality, invoking the *Logos* incarnate as endorsement of the body as a site of holiness and sanctification, and materiality as a manifestation of transcendence. Central to this argument is Origen's conception of the rational soul as created "in the image of God," a point which,

combined with a prior assumptions concerning the qualitative superiority of some bodies over others, serves both to elevate the standing of the human body, and more importantly, to link the embodied rational creature to its prototype, the *Logos* itself, whose image the rational creature bears, and who becomes embodied precisely in order to bridge the distance separating embodied souls and divine transcendence. Such a view of divine incarnation and spiritual anthropology enables (5) Origen's replacement of traditional religious forms with a Christian variant, a process that – crucially – retains much of the basic content of prior attitudes to cult, despite Origen's replacement of mediating *daemons* with non-mediating angels, and the supplanting of mediating *daemonic* rites with eucharistic mediation, conceived as an extension of the incarnation of the *Logos*, but indebted also to traditional, pagan religious notions, expressed in terms of symbol and image. In connection with this position I shall also argue that Origen's explicit rejection of magical and theurgic acts is actually accompanied by the *retention* of much of the intellectual framework attending such acts, including especially the idea of the *symbolon* as a divine presence.

In the end, Origen retains an idea of cultic efficacy that is predicated on the “symbolic” function of materiality in religion rites – a function that is common to both pagan and Christian rites as he describes them; however, in his conception, Christian rites retain “symbolic” efficacy while pagan rites must lose it, a fact stemming from Christianity's embrace of an incarnate *Logos*, which serves to liberate matter to function “symbolically” in a way that, according to Origen, pagans cannot claim. Nevertheless, the language and thought about cult that he chooses to employ reflect a traditional understanding of the operations of cult.

2. *Cosmology and Spiritual Anthropology: Corporeality and Rational Beings*

To understand Origen's view of materiality in mediating the ascent of rational creatures to God, we must first situate his understanding of the rational soul with the frame of his cosmological outlook. In essence, Origen does not view matter as an

obstacle to the soul's return to God; to the contrary, his view of the fallen rational creature tends so sharply toward a monist unity of rational essence and matter that he can scarcely even conceive of the soul as stable in a bodiless state. Put more simply, in Origen's view, there are no souls, properly speaking, without bodies. The "soul" is rather a construct that receives its definition and content from the conviction that rational human nature has suffered a "fall" from rational divine life into materiality, a fall that is understood as the very creation of the material world.³⁰³ Prior to this fall, there are only rational principles, the *logoi* that constitute the framework and basis for all material creation to follow, and that subsist in the life of God – indeed whose life is indistinguishable from divine life.³⁰⁴ As such, although Origen will often describe grosser embodied states in pejorative terms, he does not see material embodiment *per se* as an evil; he sees it rather as the condition of every soul, whatever the stage of its journey back toward the divine life characteristic of the providential, pre-material creation. In such a view matter is conceived as an *index*, rather than a *cause* of the soul's condition.³⁰⁵

The crucial distinction in Origen's construction of the "fall" as creation is between God's *providential* and his *constructional* creation, that is, between the "creation" of the rational principles (*logoi*) and relations that stand prior to material cosmic creation, and which make the latter possible, eternally sustaining it.³⁰⁶ To grasp this providential,

³⁰³ Edwards (2002) argues that Origen embraced body, soul, and spirit as discrete components of humanity, and suggests that he resisted allegorizing these components since they formed the theoretical basis for his approach to exegesis. They seem quite literally to be the "parts" of a person that can be disassembled. He further notes that some texts, frequently concerned with the fate of "souls" immediately after death, do not hesitate in farming them out to certain psychic topographies. The *Dialogue with Heraclides* apportions the spirit of the crucified Christ to God, his soul to Hades, and his body to the tomb. As to whether the soul is actually *incorporeal* in such scenarios of literal fracturing is a question that Origen leaves open, as Edwards notes (*dial.* 7.1-8.17. Edwards [2002] 89).

³⁰⁴ For this reading of pre-lapsarian human nature in terms of *logoi*, the rational principles and relations subsisting in the Wisdom of God, I am heavily indebted to P. Tzamalikos' *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time* (2006) 39-118.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Scott (1991) 140.

³⁰⁶ See the detailed exposition of Tzamalikos (2006) 39-64. "We have a creation of *logoi*, that is, of relations, of possibilities, of principles and constitutive and cohesive causes, of laws and

pre-material creation is to understand what is in some sense both the origin and destination of rational creatures. It is a creation that is understood to take place within the divine life, where certain divine “objects of contemplation” (θεωρήματα) or “concepts” (ἐννοήματα) come to subsist within the divine Wisdom, adorning Wisdom in their multiplicity and embracing the “reasons” (λόγοι) of all things. In this providential creation, the will of God brings about a repletion of Wisdom with these incorporeal principles. Wisdom, embracing these incorporeal principles that are conceived as the framework of the material world, is herself a conception of the Son – that is, a way of conceiving the Son of God based on the hierarchy of scriptural predicates applied to the Son and carefully delineated in Origen’s exegesis³⁰⁷ – the Son who is the “invisible image of the invisible God,”³⁰⁸ and who is thus conceptualized as the “Wisdom” of God and the “Word” (*Logos*) of God, who shares perfectly in the Father’s divinity without diminishing it,³⁰⁹ pre-existing the creation of the material cosmos and dwelling eternally with God.³¹⁰ This is not to assert a simple identity, as if

causalities of all kinds” (44). Tzamalikos further notes *C.Cels.* 6.65, where Origen argues that material creation is held in existence by the continual willing of the *Logos*.

³⁰⁷ See Tzamalikos (2006) 58-61.

³⁰⁸ *Princ.* 1.2.6. Translation is that of Butterworth (1966) throughout. While citation of the *Princ.* runs up against the perennial problem of Rufinus rather free translation, composed as part of an effort to defend Origen against later detractors, it should be noted that modern studies, while acknowledging its liberties, have found little that appears to be deliberate distortion. Fragments taken from the writings of Jerome or Justinian, however, and often included in Koetschau’s text and Butterworth’s translation, ought plainly to be read with greater caution. See Edwards (2002) 5. I shall proceed from the assumption that the case for any given point is stronger where material from *Princ.* is demonstrably akin to surviving Greek texts.

³⁰⁹ They are foolish “who imagine for themselves certain emanations, splitting the divine nature into parts and, so far as they can, dividing God the Father.” *qui prolationes quasdam sibi ipsi depingunt, ut divinam naturam in partes vocent et deum patrem quantum in se est dividant* (*Princ.* 1.2.6.172-174).

³¹⁰ The is construed Son as divine agent, but is ever qualified as co-eternal: “We recognize that God was always the Father of his only-begotten son, who was born indeed from and draws his being from him, but is yet without any beginning, not only of that kind which can be distinguished by periods of time, but even of that other kind which the mind alone is wont to contemplate in itself and perceive, if I may say so, with the bare intellect and reason.” *...nos semper deum patrem novimus unigeniti filii sui, ex ipso quidem nati et quod est ab ipso trahentis, sine ullo tamen initio, non solum eo, quod aliquibus temporum spatiis distingui potest, sed ne illo quidem, quod sola apud semet ipsam mens intueri solet et nudo, ut ita dixerim, intellectu atque animo conspiciari.* (*Princ.*

“Son,” “Wisdom” and “Logos” were mere synonyms, although at times Rufinus’ rendering of *De Principiis* suggests something of a straightforward alignment.³¹¹ Rather, Wisdom and *Logos*, as scriptural conceptions of the one Son, entail no distinction in essence, but rather in aspect. Origen places these conceptions in a descending order, starting with Wisdom and *Logos*, and descending through “life,” “truth,” “justice,” and so forth, where each subordinate conception is subsumed by the higher, and defined as a more focused and refined aspect of the higher. Thus it is possible to say that “the *Logos* is the Wisdom of God manifested in such a way that she can be perceived by rational creatures. Creation contains rationality, and it is through this rationality that creation manifests God’s wisdom.”³¹² Thus it is possible to see Origen’s careful working out of relations between Son, Word, and Wisdom as central to his larger account of divine creativity. Thus it is entirely fitting to describe the *logoi* as “precious stones” adorning the “body of Wisdom”³¹³ or to speak of Wisdom herself as “multi-embroidered” bearing the “objects of contemplation as a decoration.”³¹⁴ Likewise sensible is a passage in *De*

1.2.2). For an economical discussion of early Christian *Logos*-theology, and Origen’s place within it, see Jenson (1997): Justin Martyr is an earlier expositor for whom the *Logos* is a mediating principle, “subordinate in divinity ... God from the viewpoint of temporal beings but temporal from the viewpoint of God,” and who can therefore inform and engage the temporal world in a manner that the timeless, transcendent God does not. Origen contributes to this theology by developing the notion that the *Logos* is the actualization of God’s own perfect self-knowledge whose own subsistence is therefore defined in terms of his contemplation of the Father, and whose “generation,” furthermore, is eternal. The Word of God is thus made an eternal hypostasis generated timelessly within the very life of God – ideas that would be central to subsequent Christian theological reflection (Jenson 97-99).

³¹¹ Such as he makes the Father unintelligible without the Son as co-eternal Word: “Let him who assigns a beginning to the Word of God or the wisdom of God beware lest he utters impiety against the unbegotten Father himself, in denying that he was always a Father and that he begat the Word and possessed Wisdom in all previous times or ages....” *Qui autem initium dat verbo dei vel sapientiae dei, intueri ne magis in ipsum ingenitum patrem impietatem suam iacet, cum eum neget semper patrem fuisse et genuisse verbum et habuisse sapientiam in omnibus anterioribus vel temporibus vel saeculis....* (*Princ.* 1.2.3).

³¹² Tzamalikos (2006) 59. “Again, the *Logos* is God’s wisdom that creates life and rationality.” Tzamalikos goes on carefully to note that “there is no difference in essence between Wisdom and *Logos*; neither is there any ontological classification of them, simply because there is no substantial distinction between them at all. The distinction is only an intellectual one.”

³¹³ *C.Cels.* 6.77. Text cited in Tzamalikos (2006) 54.

³¹⁴ *Cf. Eph.* 3.10; *C.Cels.* 5.37. Texts cited in Tzamalikos (2006) 53.

Principiis where Wisdom is conceptualized as *Logos* precisely insofar as she “fashions beforehand and contains within herself the species and causes of the entire creation,” functioning as a kind of pre-existent template, within the reasons of all creation come into their proper relations.³¹⁵ Wisdom is thus not only an agent for the creation of the material world, but also the divine venue for the creation of rational nature prior to the material world’s generation.³¹⁶ This “prior,” providential creation, conceptually preceding the creation of the cosmos itself, and the theoretical place of Wisdom within it, is further elaborated in a fragment from the *Commentary on John*:

The Son of God is also called Wisdom (σοφία), made as a beginning of his ways towards his works, according to the Proverbs; which means that wisdom existed only in relation to him, of whom she was wisdom, having no relation to anyone else at all; but the Son of God himself became God’s benevolent decision and willed to bring creatures into being. This wisdom then willed to establish a creative relation to the future creatures; this is precisely the meaning of the saying that she was made the beginning of God’s ways.³¹⁷

Here Wisdom is a subsisting divine hypostasis who *becomes* (γενόμενος) divine benevolence insofar as God wills the existence of creatures (κτίσματα). This initial creation, in which Wisdom moves out of that exclusive relation (σχέσις) to that one

³¹⁵ “Now just as we have learned in what sense wisdom is the ‘beginning of the ways’ of God and is said to have been created, in the sense, namely, that she fashions beforehand and contains within herself the species and causes of the entire creation, in the same manner also must wisdom be understood to be the Word of God.” *Quali autem modo intelleximus sapientiam ‘initium viarum’ dei esse, et quomodo creata esse dicitur, species scilicet in se et rationes totius praeformans et continens creaturae: hoc modo etiam verbum dei eam esse intellegendum est (Princ. 1.2.3).*

³¹⁶ “This Son, then, is also the truth and the life of all things that exist; and rightly so. For the things that were made, how could they live, except by the gift of life? Or the things that exist, how could they really and truly exist, unless they were derived from the truth? Or how could rational beings exist, unless the Word or reason had existed before them? *Hic ergo filius etiam omnium quae sunt veritas est et vita; et recte. Nam quomodo viverent quae facta sunt, nisi ex vita? vel quomodo veritate constarent ea quae sunt, nisi ex veritate descenderent? vel quomodo rationabiles esse possent substantiae, nisi verbum vel ratio praecederet? (Princ. 1.2.4)*

³¹⁷ λέγεται δὲ καὶ σοφία ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ υἱός, ἀρχὴ ὁδῶν τοῦ θεοῦ κτισθεῖσα κατὰ τὴν τῶν Παροιμιῶν γραφὴν, ὅτι ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ σοφία, πρὸς τὸν οὐ ἔστι σοφία ὑπάρχουσα, οὐδεμίαν σχέσιν πρὸς ἕτερόν τινα εἶχεν, ἀλλ’ εὐδοκία θεοῦ γενόμενος τὰ κτίσματα ὑπάρξει ἡβουλήθη. ἡθέλησεν οὖν ἀναλαβεῖν αὐτὴ ἡ σοφία σχέσιν δημιουργικὴν πρὸς τὰ ἐσόμενα καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ δηλούμενον διὰ τοῦ ἐκτίσθαι αὐτὴν ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν τοῦ θεοῦ (*fr* John I. Text quoted and translated in Tzamalikos [2006] 48).

“whose wisdom she is,” and into a relationship with “creatures,” is demarcated from a second, in which “this Wisdom” (αὕτη ἡ σοφία) wills to take up a further, *demiurgic* relation (σχέσις δημιουργική) to creatures yet to be (τὰ ἐσόμενα). It is view given deeper substance elsewhere in the commentary, where Origen argues that

if someone is able to comprehend a bodiless existence comprised of the various objects of contemplation which embrace the principles [λόγους] of the universe – an existence which is living and animate, as it were – he will understand the wisdom of God prior to all creation, which appropriately says of herself, “God created me the beginning of his ways for his works.” It is because of this creation that the whole creation has been able to subsist, since it has a share in the divine wisdom according to which it has been created...³¹⁸

The coeternal Son is thus conceptualized as Wisdom, an incorporeal essence (ἄσώματος ὑπόστασις) comprised of “intricate objects of contemplation” (ποικίλων θεωρημάτων) that contain all the governing principles (λόγοι) of creation, and timelessly subsisting in a manner that transcends the created world (ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν κτίσιν). The passage furthermore makes explicit the claim that this prior world – the world of pure rational principles and relations – is a “creation” that is the necessary precondition for the subsistence of the cosmos: it is the “creation” by means of which “creation” subsists (Δί’ ἣν κτίσιν δεδύνηται καὶ πᾶσα κτίσις ὑφεστάναι).³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Εἰ δέ τις οἶός τέ ἐστιν ἄσώματον ὑπόστασιν ποικίλων θεωρημάτων περιεχόντων τοὺς τῶν ὄλων λόγους ζῶσαν καὶ οἰονεὶ ἔμψυχον ἐπινοεῖν, εἴσεται τὴν ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν κτίσιν σοφίαν τοῦ θεοῦ καλῶς περὶ αὐτῆς λέγουσαν· «Ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισέ με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ». Δί’ ἣν κτίσιν δεδύνηται καὶ πᾶσα κτίσις ὑφεστάναι, οὐκ ἀνένδοχος οὕσα θείας σοφίας, καθ’ ἣν γεγένηται (*comm*John 1, 34. Text quoted and translated in Tzamalikos [2006]).

³¹⁹ See also *C. Cels.* 5.39. In his *Expositio in Proverbia*, Origen further elaborates, depicting the Wisdom of God as “a subsistent being who exists before the aeons and existed before creation as a timeless being; when she established a relation to creatures, then she became the beginning of God’s ways, both of the constructional and providential; so this beginning has been yoked together with the creatures, as she became their beginning, relating herself to them by creating them; yet this wisdom is timeless and exists as a substantial subject with God before all aeons.” Οὐσία οὕσα ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ σοφία, πρὸ αἰώνων γεγένηται, καὶ πρὸ κτίσεως ἀἴδιος ἦν· ὅτε δὲ σχέσιν πρὸς τὰ γεννητὰ ἐδέξατο, τότε ἀρχὴ τῶν ὁδῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ γέγονε τῶν ποιητικῶν καὶ προνοητικῶν· σύζυγος οὖν ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῖς κτίσμασιν ὧν γέγονεν ἀρχὴ, τουτέστιν ἡ πρὸς τὰ γεννητὰ σχέσις· ἡ δὲ σοφία ἀἴδιος, οὐσιωδῶς πρὸ αἰώνων παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ ὑπάρχουσα (*exProv* 8, text quoted in Tzamalikos [2006] 39).

It should already be evident how such reasoning naturally applies to particular beings in the created order, as well. If we conceive of creation as, in a primary sense, “the concepts of God” which are, in a secondary sense, “somehow substantified and [come] into actuality,” then it is a straightforward matter that all existing things are traceable in their origins to created *logoi* subsisting in the divine life – that “one by one the reasons of those ruled are in God’s Logos and in his Wisdom.”³²⁰ That is, every existing being derives from and subsists under governing rational principles that are created within the life of God, and contemplated as adorning constituents of divine Wisdom. Crucially, these “reasons” subsisting in a primary state are not “essences” – *i.e.*, they are not “essentialized” or “substantified” (οὐσιωμένων) until their participation in the created cosmos. That is to say, the rational, embodied creature in the world has as his point of origin an incorporeal principle in the life of God, though it is not a life of a fully individuated essence or hypostasis. Origen’s is not a world of incorporeal essences occupying a pre-material Platonic shadowland prior to declining into material bodies.³²¹ Indeed, he rejects such a claim categorically in his treatment of Jesus’ claim to be “not of this world.” Origen here notes that it is difficult to explain Jesus’ meaning, and he hesitates to try, lest one incur the “risk of giving some men the impression that we are affirming the existence of certain imaginary forms which the Greeks call ‘ideas.’ For it is certainly foreign to our mode of reasoning to speak of an incorporeal world that exists solely in the mind’s fancy or the substantial region of

³²⁰τὰ ἐννοήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ ... οὐσιωμένων πως ἐπακολουθεῖν καὶ εἰς ἔργον ἐρχομένων ... οἱ καθ’ ἓνα λόγοι τῶν διοικουμένων εἰσὶν ἐν τῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγῳ καὶ τῇ Σοφίᾳ αὐτοῦ (*commEph*, Fr. VI, pp.240-41, text quoted in Tzamalikos [2006] 49).

³²¹ Origen’s distinction is between the *γένεσις* of providential creation and the *γέννησις* or *κτίσις* of the constructional creation. See *frMatt* 11, *selPs* 32. To be sure, the providential creation entails the “making of the substance” of rational creatures – a making that is “in Wisdom” (*selPs* 32, *PG* 12.1305); but this is entirely distinct from the creation of discrete essences, as Origen makes explicit in his description of a “living Wisdom” that mediates the creation of distinct, living, material beings: “And it must be said that after having created a living Wisdom, so to speak, he entrusted her to present, from the types in her, shape and form to existing things and to matter, and I attend especially to whether this holds true also for individual essences.” Καὶ λεκτέον ὅτι κτίσας, ἴν’ οὕτως εἶπω, ἔμψυχον σοφίαν ὁ θεός, αὐτῇ ἐπέτρεψε ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ τύπων τοῖς οὐσι καὶ τῇ ὕλῃ <παρασχεῖν καὶ> τὴν πλάσιν καὶ τὰ εἶδη, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐφίστημι εἰ καὶ τὰς οὐσίας (*commJohn* 1.19, cited in Tzamalikos [2006] 85-86, 88).

mind.”³²² Origen’s conception of human nature in its providential condition must be grasped in light of this understanding. The creation of humankind in the “image of God”³²³ does not involve molding from earth and is therefore not material, being rather “greater than all bodily existence.”³²⁴ This non-material humanity, which still transcends the category of *essence* at this particular stage, Origen explicitly defines elsewhere in a manner that excludes the notion of individual hypostases, arguing that it is not human individuals but rather human *nature* that is created within the Wisdom of God: “The story of Adam and his sin will be interpreted philosophically by those who know that Adam means *anthropos* (man) in the Greek language, and that in what appears to be concerned with Adam Moses is speaking of the nature of man.”³²⁵ Here, in the scriptural language describing the death of all humanity in Adam we are to understand “the divine word as speaking not so much about an individual as of the whole race.”³²⁶ Origen can be seen to preserve this tendency to abstract this original humanity from its bodily manifestations wherever other texts give him occasion to comment on *Genesis*, in which he locates a distinction between abstracted human nature and particular human identities that is preserved in the Hebrew distinction between *man-woman* (particular human identities) and *male-female* (universal human nature). In reflecting back on *Genesis* in his *Commentary on Matthew*, Origen notes that

“in the case of those who are formed “*after the image*,” the words were not “*husband and wife*” but “*male and female*.” But we have also observed this in the Hebrew, for man is indicated by the word “*is*,”

³²² *ne forte aliquibus praebeatur occasio illius intellegentiae, qua putent nos imagines quasdam, quas Graeci ideas nominant, adfirmare: quod utique a nostris rationibus alienum est, mundum incorporeum dicere, in sola mentis fantasia vel cogitationum lubrico consistentem* (Princ. 2.3.6. Text cited in Tzamalikos [2006] 94).

³²³ See *Gen.* 1.26-27.

³²⁴ τὸ ‘κατ’ εἰκόνα Θεοῦ’ ... κρεῖττον πάσης σωματικῆς ὑποστάσεως (*dial*; BGF, v.16, p. 374; citation from Tzamalikos [2006] 40). The same distinction, framed in terms of Paul’s differentiation between the inner and outer man, may be found in the *Commentary on the Canticle* Prologue 2.4-5. See Tzamalikos (2006) 41.

³²⁵ οὕτω δὲ καὶ περὶ τοῦ Ἀδάμ καὶ περὶ τῆς ἀμαρτίας αὐτοῦ φιλοσοφήσουσιν οἱ ἐγνωκότες ὅτι καθ’ ἑλλάδα φωνὴν ὁ Ἀδάμ ἀνθρωπός ἐστι, καὶ ἐν τοῖς δοκοῦσι περὶ τοῦ Ἀδάμ εἶναι φυσιολογεῖ Μωϋσῆς τὰ περὶ τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου φύσεως (*C. Cels* 4.40; cf. 7.50).

³²⁶ οὐχ οὕτως περὶ ἐνός τινος ὡς περὶ ὅλου τοῦ γένους ταῦτα φάσκοντος τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου

but male by the word “*zachar*,” and again woman by the word “*essa*,” but female by the word “*agkeba*.” For at no time is it “*woman*” or “*man*” “*after the image*,” but the superior class, the male, and the second, the female.³²⁷

Thus, quite straightforwardly, fully individuated *man* and *woman* are *not* the elements bearing the divine image, which is reserved for the separate category of *male-female*. Only an abstracted humanity is in the “*divine image*,” properly speaking, and as such, the Son as *Logos* and Wisdom, is conceivable both as the perfect image of God³²⁸ to which the rational human being can be assimilated, and as a repository of all rational principles and relations that constitute God’s providential creation.³²⁹ Within the parameters of such a scheme, there are as yet no human individuals *per se*, and as such no question of embodiment can even arise. Man “*in the image*” is a kind of pure rationality, transcendent not only of “*soul*” but of identity itself; identity, on the other hand, is conceivable only in the fall, and may be predicated only of embodied rational creatures.³³⁰ Origen may thus be seen to stake out a position that excludes dualism.

³²⁷ ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν κατ’ εἰκόνα οὐκ ἀνὴρ καὶ γυνὴ εἴρηται, ἀλλὰ «ἄρρεν καὶ θῆλυ». τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ἐν τῷ Ἑβραϊκῷ τετηρήκαμεν· ἀνὴρ μὲν γὰρ δηλοῦται τῇ ΙΣ φωνῇ, ἄρρεν δὲ τῇ ΖΑΧΑΡ· καὶ πάλιν γυνὴ μὲν τῇ ΕΣΣΑ φωνῇ, θῆλυ δὲ τῇ ΟΥΝΚΗΒΑ· οὐδέποτε γὰρ γυνὴ κατ’ εἰκόνα οὐδὲ ἀνὴρ, ἀλλ’ οἱ μὲν διαφέροντες ἄρρεν οἱ δὲ δεῦτεροι θῆλυ (*CommMatt* 14, 16). Tzamalikos (2006) 42.

³²⁸ “The Father’s image is reproduced in the son, whose birth from the father is as it were an act of his will proceeding from the mind.” *imago patris deformatur in filio, qui utique natus ex eo est velut quaedam voluntas eius ex mente procedens* (*Princ.* 1.2.6.163-164). “Rather, must we suppose that as an act of will proceeds from the mind without either cutting off any part of the mind or being separated or divided from it, in some similar fashion has the Father begotten the Son, who is indeed his image.... *Magis ergo sicut voluntas procedit e mente et neque partem aliquam mentis secat neque ab ea separatur aut dividitur: tali quandam specie putandus est pater filium genuisse, imaginem scilicet suam....* (*Princ.* 1.2.6.178-183).

³²⁹ Edwards notes that it is this distinction between a primary creation of the “*inner man*,” and a secondary creation of the outer, embodied man, that gives rise to the assumption that the initial creation must have been of *incorporeal souls*, and hence the assumption of Origen’s straightforward Platonism (2002) 89.

³³⁰ Reading the passage on the incorporeality of the Trinity, Edwards argues that the soul even at its highest – as “*pure mind*” prior to the fall – must be conceived as at least tenuously embodied, an argument adduced in support of the claim that Origen believed in no prior world of *incorporeal souls*: “If strict incorporeality is so deciduous, it follows that there can be no timeless realm – at least no peopled realm of pure intelligences such as commonly alleged to have been posited by Origen....” (2002) 96. This account, though, while correct in judging that there is no prior realm

When we *think* of rational creatures, we introduce a division between an incorporeal element and a corporeal element that is purely an intellectual exercise. As Origen stresses, “it is only in idea and in thought that a material substance is separable from [rational beings], and although this substance seems to have been produced for them or after them, yet they have never lived, nor do they live without it.”³³¹ Such rational creatures are therein completely distinct from the divine life, since “life without a body is found in the Trinity alone.”³³²

For Origen, reality in its wholeness may be described as three-tiered: (1) the transcendent life of God; (2) God’s “providential” creation in which God creates all of

that is “peopled,” properly speaking, does not take into account Origen’s narrative of the providential creation, which is by no means an outlook that requires belief in “an infinite series of worlds before the present one,” as Edwards implies it does. He does glance at Origen’s idea of created *logika*, but argues that their neuter gender precludes their serious standing as discrete identities, which is surely correct, though he sees no connection between them and the principles and relations that are the constituents of *human nature* prior to the “fall” and creation of distinct human beings. He rejects *logika* on the further grounds that Origen denies a Platonic world of “forms” or “ideas,” which is also true; but the *logika* need not be simply forms or the “ideas” of God to be created principles that subsist in the life of divine Wisdom prior to “falling” to bring about the coherence of embodied rational beings (96).

³³¹ It was hardly unprecedented in Origen’s time to conceive of human identity in terms of “mind” or “soul,” and yet to deny the possibility of incorporeal existence for such. “Aristotle ... urged the pursuit of contemplation on the grounds that the mind is what we truly are, and yet his premiss that every nature is a composite of form and matter forbade him to endorse the Platonic notion of a separable soul.” Other thinkers, too – Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus – in various ways and to varying extents, saw the human being principally as “soul” rather than as *composite*, but were nevertheless bedeviled by a need to keep the soul, or at least *part* of it, in some kind of attenuated embodiment (Edwards [2002] 95, citing *Nicomachean Ethics* 1178a).

³³² [*necessitas consequentiae ac rationis coartat intellegi*] ... *materialem vero substantiam opinione quidem et intellectu solo separari ab eis et pro ipsis vel post ipsas effectam videri, sed numquam sine ipsa eas vel vixisse vel vivere: solius namque trinitatis incorporea vita existere recte putabitur* (*Princ.* 2.2.2. Text quoted in Tzamalikos [2006] 94-95). Scott (1991) comes very close to Tzamalikos’ view, suggesting, for instance, that Origen “regarded it as an essential characteristic of any created rational nature that it exist in a body,” and offering this interpretation as a riposte to Jerome and Justinian, who proposed that Origen believed in a thoroughly incorporeal soul that fell into embodiment through sin, to be returned to thorough incorporeality in the final reconciliation. God, in this reading of Origen, “is an incorporeal unity” while “rational creation is always material multiplicity.” Furthermore, Origen himself uses the term “incorporeal” to designate only the soul’s separation from an *earthly* body, not to designate its absolute condition (153-54). See also Edwards (2002), who affirms embodiment even for “mind,” and denies the possibility of any prior existence for human beings that is incorporeal.

the principles and relations that will function as the armature of “subsequent” material creation, and which “live” only in the divine life as the adornments of divine Wisdom; (3) the “fallen” world of material creation.³³³ Within this scheme, when we speak of rational beings we must do so bearing in mind that we are speaking not of pre-existing hypostases who through a defect have fallen from their proper or original standing; rather, we are speaking of beings who have no discrete essential existence prior to the coming to be of a material creation. The rational creature is thus conceived in unitive terms, with the sole reservation that the incorporeal “element” – understood theoretically and not as a constituent part – represents the point of affinity between God and the world.³³⁴

Origen is notoriously evasive about presenting the details of the fall, and in sketching a thoroughgoing theory of the soul, but he is quite open about the grounds of his reservations. He fears lest he reveal ultimate mysteries in speaking of such matters, even if he should accurately enunciate a “true doctrine.”³³⁵ It is clear, though, that he views the incorporeal principles that have their life “in Wisdom” as *not* consubstantial with God.³³⁶ At the same time, these *created* incorporeals cannot be conceived of as *not living*, as might be suggested by the Philonic notion of “ideas” or “forms” in the mind of God. As Tzamalikos rightly points out, such an idea renders the very idea of a “fall” absurd.³³⁷ The incorporeal principles must in some sense be living and Origen seems to construct their paradoxical life as the timeless life of Christ – a life that is so participatory that it is not defined as discrete identity, though it is not consubstantial either.³³⁸ It is not a paradox that can be easily resolved, but it is sufficient to note that it is from this state that the “fall” occurs. *Contra Celsum*, in the context of a discussion of the advent of evil,

³³³ Tzamalikos (2006) 70-71.

³³⁴ *ibid.* 95.

³³⁵ *ibid.* 66-69; see especially *commJohn* 20.2.

³³⁶ See *commJohn* 13.25. Text cited in Tzamalikos (2006) 72.

³³⁷ Tzamalikos (2006) 73. Indeed, Origen argues in *commJohn* that the destruction that the fallen devil’s destruction of the human race – here again distinguished from individual creatures – is an actual “death” of something “living”; as Origen puts it, “Strictly speaking, no one can be said to be dead unless he lived before” (*commJohn* 20.25. Text quoted in Tzamalikos [2006] 77-78).

³³⁸ *ibid.* 74.

supplies a celebrated locus, in which Origen describes the fall as a “moulting” from the body of Wisdom, wherein “one” falls away and is subsequently followed by others who decline by his pernicious lead.³³⁹ In *De Principiis*, Origen presents an allegorical reading of *Ezekiel*, in which the Prince of Tyre is said to have been “stainless in [his] days ... until the time that iniquities were found in [him.]” Where previously he was “in the midst of fiery stones,” he is cast down from “the mountain of God.”³⁴⁰ *Contra Celsum* picks up the imagery, where Origen assimilates a mystical theory of resurrection to Jesus’ own descriptive language of his body as a “temple.” The “righteous,” in this scheme, are “every sort of chosen and precious stone,” and the “temple” of the resurrected Lord “will be rebuilt with living and precious stones.” Origen continues, “This obscurely refers to the doctrine that each of those who are united in the same logos ... is a precious stone of the entire temple of God.”³⁴¹ Often in the Greek texts the language describing the fall of “one” is less pejorative, though this is not uniformly the case. Where Rufinus’ Latin refers to “an adverse power,” Origen elsewhere refers simply to “one,” who “fell from bliss.” Classing this “one” as one among many “rulers” (ἀρχόντων), he notes that “while he was in divine reality, he fell.”³⁴² In *Contra Celsum*, it is in the train of this “one,” now evil (πονηρός), that others follow. Those who follow are re-fashioned in the image of this first one who fell, who was “earthly” and deserved to be something molded by the Lord, made to be mocked by his angels, and who is thus the one “from whom the images of that earthly man come and receive their imprint.”³⁴³ As Tzamalikos puts it, “As far as we [sc. humans] are concerned, our true substance, too, is in our being according to the image of the creator, but the substance resulting from guilt is in the thing molded, which was received from the dust of the earth.”³⁴⁴ Crucially, though, this advent of bodily nature, despite its adaptation to a *mythos* of a fallen devil, is not

³³⁹ *C.Cels.* 6.43

³⁴⁰ *Princ.* 1.4.4. Text quoted in Tzamalikos (2006) 75.

³⁴¹ *C.Cels.* 8.19, 20. Text quoted in Tzamalikos (2006) 80.

³⁴² *commJohn* 32.18. Text quoted in Tzamalikos (2006) 75-76.

³⁴³ *commJohn* 20.22. Text quoted in Tzamalikos (2006) 78.

³⁴⁴ 78.

described in strictly pejorative terms. A material world is a necessary thing; it is “material because of those who need material life.”³⁴⁵

The present argument does not intend to resolve all of the mysteries of the fall, as Origen conceives it. What is clear, though, and what is reinforced by Origen’s imagery, is that what falls is equivalent to the ornaments that adorn the body of Wisdom in the providential creation, which are *not* differentiated individual hypostases prior to the fall, which is the event that precipitates “multitude of number,” “schism,” and “division.”³⁴⁶ That is to say, for Origen the fall is simply not a straightforward narrative of “pre-existing personal incorporeal rational creatures, which received a body.”³⁴⁷ Even when Origen adopts the Platonic metaphor of “moulting” in *Contra Celsum*, he is careful to distinguish his outlook from Plato’s, claiming that it has “an ineffable and mystical sense, which is higher than the notion of Plato who holds that the soul comes down and moults ‘until it finds something solid.’”³⁴⁸ In fact, he deliberately rejects the notion of a transcendent world of independent essences, rather viewing such differentiation as characteristic of the material creation. For Origen, individual essences are created only when rational principles fall from God, and even then their essence is defined in terms of *relation* to God. The fallen creature in its rational being is changeable in its responsiveness to God, by virtue of its mind and will, which stand in affinity to the *Logos* who is the source of its being. In like manner, the material body, too, is changeable, adaptable to the condition of the rational being and to the purposes of God.³⁴⁹ The essence of the creature, then, is not conceived as a preceding entity that is subsequently clothed in flesh, but rather in terms of a rational *relating* to divine *Logos*, where the degree of the relation or affinity is indicative of the material quality of the being. Thus we may conclude that whatever is of a personal, individual essence is *always corporeal*; that the subsistence of any independent person is – conceptually

³⁴⁵ *commJohn* 19.20. Text quoted in Tzamalikos (2006) 78. Cf. Scott (1991) 140.

³⁴⁶ Tzamalikos (2006) 79. See Scott (1991) 153-54.

³⁴⁷ *ibid.* 81.

³⁴⁸ *C.Cels.* 4.40. Text quoted in Tzamalikos (2006) 81; cf. *Phaedr.* 246B.

³⁴⁹ See *Princ.* 3.6.7. Text cited in Tzamalikos (2006) 91.

understood – a weaving together of the corporeal and the non-corporeal, where the two terms denote a conceptual distinction rather than an actual dualism.

Although rational beings are understood to exist in unitive rather than in composite terms, they are nevertheless conceived in terms of elements. The conceptual element that is common to every rational being is the “rational essence” (λογικὴ οὐσία) that supplies an affinity to God. “Soul” is Origen’s term for “a state of mind applying to human being only;”³⁵⁰ hence it is possible to define a “man” as a “soul using a body.” When confronting the implicit dualism in such a statement, though, we ought to bear in mind Origen’s claim elsewhere that although soul and body may be construed as “contrary by nature,” (φύσει ἐναντία) a human being is in reality “one unity” (μίαν κοῤῥᾶσιν).³⁵¹

Such an understanding of the human person as a unity that properly exists only in a state of fallen embodiment – such that Origen may say elsewhere that a rational being is “an existence which rationally capable of feeling and movement”³⁵² – may help us in grasping why it is that elsewhere Origen seems to construe the term “soul” as if it were applicable only to a fallen condition, such as in his explanation in *De Principiis* of beings whose ardor “cooled” such that they fell away from divine contemplation. “Soul” (*psyche*) in this construction becomes for Origen a term etymologically derived from the idea of “coolness,” and represents not so much the soul’s original state as the condition into which it falls:

If therefore the things which are holy are termed fire and light and fervent things while their opposites are termed cold, and the love of sinners is said to grow cold, we must ask whether perhaps even the word soul, which in Greek is *Psyche*, was not formed from *psychesthai*, with the idea of growing cold after having been in a divine or better state, and whether it was not derived from thence because the soul seems to have grown cold by the loss of its first natural and divine

³⁵⁰ Tzamalikos (2006) 97.

³⁵¹ *commJohn* 13L. Text quoted in Tzamalikos (2006) 97.

³⁵² *Princ.* 8.8.2. Text quoted in Tzamalikos (2006) 96.

warmth and on that account to have been placed in its present place with its present designation.³⁵³

As the argument unfolds, it becomes evident that Origen views rational “souls” in their original state principally as “mind,” – *nous / mens* – a view that is perhaps not surprising given his view of the “providential” creation just surveyed. Though he frequently seems willing to invoke language suggestive of classical models of the soul’s partition, as if viewing the mind (*nous / mens*) as the soul’s higher part,³⁵⁴ its “rational essence,” he hesitates to apply the term “soul” to such a condition. Bodiless rationality cannot be “soul,” a term theoretically reserved for a fallen condition: “When the mind departed from its original condition and dignity it became or was termed a soul (*anima*), and if ever it is restored and corrected it returns to the condition of being a mind (*mens*).”³⁵⁵ At times he is open even to explaining the fallen soul in terms of the accumulation of other faculties, such that it functions as “a kind of medium between the weak flesh and the willing spirit” – not quite mind, but certainly not flesh.³⁵⁶

Though such an outlook may be redolent of certain traditional concerns over which “parts” of the soul are proper to the material world, and which to the world of

³⁵³ *Si ergo ea quidem, quae sancta sunt, ignis et lumen et ferventia nominantur, quae autem contraria sunt, frigida, et ‘caritas’ peccatorum dicitur ‘refrigescere’, requirendum est ne forte et nomen animae, quod graece dicitur ψυχή, a refrigescendo de statu diviniore ac meliore dictum sit et translatum inde, quod ex calore illo naturali et divino refrixisse videatur, et ideo in hoc quo nunc est et statu et vocabulo sita sit. (Princ. 2.8.3).*

³⁵⁴ He inquires whether it is the soul, properly speaking, that may be saved, or even whether it may be “called a soul” when it is saved: *si cum ad beatitudinem venerit, iam anima non dicitur?* (2.8.2) He further speculates that “perhaps that which is being saved is called a soul, but when it is saved it will be called by the name of its more perfect part.” *ita fortassis etiam hoc quod salvatur anima dicitur; cum autem iam salva facta fuerit, ex perfectioris partis suae vocabulo nuncupabitur* (2.8.3). Origen is in part concerned to reconcile his own psychology to Pauline distinctions between soul (*anima*) and spirit / mind (*spiritus / mens*), noting that “Paul ... joins and associates the mind rather than the soul with the Holy Spirit.... He does not say, I will pray with the soul, but with the spirit and the mind.” *Paulus ... mentem magis quam animam spiritui sancto coniungit et sociat.... Et non dicit quia anima orabo, sed ‘spiritu et mente’* (Princ. 2.8.2).

³⁵⁵ ... *mens de statu ac dignitate sua declinans, effecta vel nuncupata est anima; quae si reparata fuerit et correctata, redit in hoc, ut sit mens* (Princ. 2.8.3).

³⁵⁶ *unde videtur quasi medium quiddam esse animam inter ‘carnem infirmam’ et ‘spiritum promptum’* (Princ. 2.8.4).

intelligibles,³⁵⁷ Origen's thought surely strives to move beyond such tendencies toward partition. Informed by his unitive view of the human person, where the disposition of "rational natures" becomes the index of their relation to God, he rather envisions a cosmos layered with fallen rational beings, where each ascending tier of reality – from the Devil and demons, to angels and archangels – is characterized by a degree of heightened participation in rationality, and where ascent to God – just as further descent – remains possible, with the responsibility for such ascent resting upon the free will of each rational soul. In the course of explaining how rational beings, subjected to "corrections" (*emendationes*) supplied by still higher powers (angels and still loftier agents), may thereby advance to higher levels of reality, Origen concludes that

it appears to follow from this ... that every rational nature can, in the process of passing from one order to another, travel under each order to all the rest, and from all to each, while undergoing the various movements of progress or the reverse in accordance with its own actions and endeavors and with the use of its own power of free will.³⁵⁸

Jerome states the matter differently, in manner that seems deliberately calculated to rouse the specter of metempsychosis, but the sense of fluidity is nonetheless maintained: "souls that are born on this earth of ours would either come from the lower world again to a higher place and assume a human body, in consequence of their desire for better things, or else would descend to us from better places."³⁵⁹ The Origenist cosmos

³⁵⁷ He does subscribe to the Christian distinction between mind (*nous*), which is fallen, and unfallen spirit (*pneuma*), just as he is Platonic in viewing the mind as incorporeal. Scott (1991) 116; Cf. Crouzel (1956) 131, Bettencourt (1945) 9.

³⁵⁸ *Ex quo ... hoc consequentia ipsa videtur ostendere, unamquamque rationabilem naturam posse ab uno in alterum ordinem transeuntem per singulos in omnes, et ab omnibus in singulos pervenire, dum accessus profectuum defectuum ve varios pro motibus vel conatibus propriis unusquisque pro liberi arbitrii facultate perpetitur (Princ. 1.6.3).*

³⁵⁹ *... [animae] quae in ista terra nostra nascuntur animae, uel de inferno rursus meliora cupientes ad superiora ueniunt et humanum corpus adsumunt uel de melioribus locis ad nos usque descendunt...* (Princ. 4.3.10, Koetschau = Jerome, *Ep. ad Avitum* [124] 11). It is interesting to note the subtle difference between the translation of Rufinus (Princ. 1.6.3) and this fragment, since the former allows for straightforward ascent and descent between "orders," while Jerome, in quite a different vein, speaks of souls coming from below "to assume a human body," phrasing that seems

appears, then, to be a dynamic place, characterized by a great deal of movement toward and away from the divine *Logos* by rational creatures of all grades.

It is Origen's emphasis on *rationality* as the decisive factor linking the human soul to higher rational beings and finally to God-*Logos* – sustained by his conviction that all rational beings are created from the rational principles and relations (λόγοι) created within the life of the divine *Logos*, making them thus the image of the divine image – that accounts for his outlook's optimistic lineaments. Rational beings are inherently capable of choosing in accordance with their affinity to the *Logos* and therefore of returning to God. Origen regards this position as strengthened by a commitment to the shared substantiality of all created rational souls. From the premise that "everyone who shares in anything is undoubtedly of one substance and one nature with him who shares in the same thing," it follows that "the substance and the soul of man will be incorruptible and immortal," since this is beyond doubt the condition of the "heavenly powers," who participate in the "intellectual light" of the "divine nature."³⁶⁰ Since the rational souls of humans are similarly derived, they too are not destructible in their substance; but almost more importantly, it also follows from this careful alignment of rational natures – framed almost as *identity* of rational natures³⁶¹ – that

even if the mind through carelessness should fall away from the pure and perfect reception of God into itself, it nevertheless always possesses within some seeds as it were of restoration and recall to a better state, which become operative whenever the inner man, who is also termed the rational man, is recalled into the image and likeness of God who created him.³⁶²

calibrated to tease the implication of metempsychosis out of Origen's thought. For grounds for rejecting metempsychosis in Origen's thought, see Edwards (2002) 97-101.

³⁶⁰ *Omnis, qui participat alicuius, cum eo, qui eiusdem rei particeps est, sine dubio unius substantiae est uniusque naturae ... incorrupta sine dubio et immortalis erit etiam animae humanae substantia.... caelestes virtutes ... intellectualis [lux], id est divinae naturae.... (Princ. 4.4.9).*

³⁶¹ He denies, however, a precise identity between human rational natures and God, acknowledging instead only a "certain kinship" (*mart.* 47. Quoted in Scott [1991] 152).

³⁶² *... etiamsi per neglegentiam decidat mens ne pure et integre in se recipiat deum, semper tamen habeat in se velut semina quaedam reparandi ac revocandi melioris intellectus, cum 'ad imaginem et similitudinem' dei, qui creavit eum, 'interior homo', qui et rationabilis dicitur, revocatur (Princ. 4.4.9).*

Thus, in a very basic sense, the rational soul – by virtue of its inherent participation in divine nature – controls its own destiny even in its fallen, embodied condition:

All this shows that no one is stainless by essence or by nature, nor is anyone polluted essentially. Consequently it lies with us and with our own actions whether we are to be blessed or holy, or whether through sloth and negligence we are to turn away from blessedness into wickedness and loss....³⁶³

Within the parameters of such a view, it is clear that Origen does not see the material creation as a hindrance to the soul's ascent so much as failures internal to rational natures themselves. His commitment to a vision of the cosmos populated by varieties of rational natures, all of varying condition, profoundly shapes his view of the manifest world itself, prompting him to see the differentiation and variety encountered in the natural world precisely in terms of his narrative of fallen souls. Quite explicitly he accounts for "the great diversity of the world" by means of the "variety and diversity of the motions and declensions of those who fell away from that original unity and harmony in which they were first created by God."³⁶⁴ In a manner that reflects his optimistic view of the rational soul's potential, such created differentiation is viewed in generally favorable terms. Through the providence of God, this variety of creatures, "diverse though the motions of their souls may be ... nevertheless combine to make up the fullness and perfection of a single world, the variety of their minds tending to one end, perfection."³⁶⁵ God has ordered the world in order to preserve, simultaneously, the free will of individual souls, and the coherent stability of the world, the divine aim being "the salvation of his entire creation."³⁶⁶ Origen here invokes the Stoic idea of the World Soul as a useful support. As varied as the world may appear, it is nevertheless properly

³⁶³ *per hoc ostenditur neque substantialiter vel naturaliter esse aliquem immaculatum neque substantialiter esse pollutum. Et per hoc consequens est in nobis esse atque in nostris motibus, ut vel beati et sancti simus, vel per desidiam et negligentiam ex beatitudine in malitiam perditionemque vergamus.... (Princ. 1.5.5).*

³⁶⁴ *[tanta] huius mundi [diversitas] ... [diversitas] ac [varietas] motuum atque prolapsuum eorum, qui ab illa initii unitate atque concordia, in qua a deo primitus procreati sunt, deciderunt.... (Princ. 2.1.1)*

³⁶⁵ *... diversis licet motibus animorum, unius tamen mundi plenitudinem perfectionem que consumment, atque ad unum perfectionis finem varietas ipsa mentium tendat (Princ. 2.1.2).*

³⁶⁶ *pro salute universarum creaturarum suarum (Princ. 2.1.2).*

conceived as “an immense, monstrous animal, held together by the power and reason of God as by one soul.”³⁶⁷

It should occasion no surprise that in explaining matter theoretically, and in deriving from that explanation a graded taxonomy of material bodies, Origen arrives at conclusions consistent with this providential outlook. In a manner consistent with the view of rational natures already adumbrated, he proposes that souls are always conjoined to bodies, and that they are separable only in theory. In defining matter *per se*, Origen adopts a conventional view: “Now by matter we mean that which underlies bodies, namely, that from which they take their existence when qualities have been applied to or mingled with them.” He goes on to explain that the four qualities of “heat, cold, dryness, and wetness,” when applied to “*hyle* or matter” in various proportions, are what “produce the different kinds of bodies.”³⁶⁸ He qualifies his discussion by noting that to postulate “matter” as such is a purely theoretical project, arguing that although it “has an existence in its own right without qualities, yet it is never actually found subsisting apart from them.”³⁶⁹ That is to say, matter without form can be theoretically asserted within a narrative of creation artificially sequenced for the benefit

³⁶⁷ ... *velut animal quoddam immensum atque inmane opinandum puto, quod quasi ab una anima virtute dei ac ratione teneatur* (Princ. 2.1.3).

³⁶⁸ *Materiam ergo intellegimus quae subiecta est corporibus, id est ex qua inditis atque insertis qualitatibus corpora subsistunt.... calidam, frigidam, aridam, humidam.... ὕλη, id est materiae.... diversas corporum species efficiunt* (Princ. 2.1.4). Though he uses the Aristotelian term, his conception clearly echoes that of the *Timaeus*, where matter is carefully distinguished from qualities as “mother and receptacle of the visible and perceptible generated world ... a certain form, invisible and shapeless, capable of receiving all, partaking in the intelligible in the most puzzling and elusive way;” τὴν τοῦ γεγονότος ὄρατοῦ καὶ πάντως αἰσθητοῦ μητέρα καὶ ὑποδοχὴν ... ἀνόρατον εἶδος τι καὶ ἄμορφον, πανδεχές, μεταλαμβάνον δὲ ἀπορώτατά πη τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ δυσάλωτότατον.... (Ti. 51A). Origen never denies the peripatetic theory of matter, in which “prime matter is the substrate of the properties which unite with it to constitute the sensible particular,” although one can perceive here the rudiments of a defense of an idealist theory, in which matter is nothing prior to “a congeries of properties” (Edwards [2002] 94-95). He may have had a preference for the latter approach, since all agree that properties are created by God. Such a theory would therefore have the virtue of compelling even those who assert the *uncreatedness* of matter to embrace its createdness by God, since without properties nothing can be said to be (See Princ. 4.7[34]. p. 358.1-8 Koetschau, text cited in Edwards [2002] 63).

³⁶⁹ *Haec tamen materia quamvis ... secundum suam propriam rationem sine qualitatibus sit, numquam tamen subsistere extra qualitates invenitur* (Princ. 2.1.4).

of discourse, but in actuality there is never a moment in the world's eternal coming-to-be in which it exists without form, or fails to manifest varied qualities. In a turn that parallels this classical difficulty in pondering matter without form, and that surely derives from his refusal to posit the existence of individual, incorporeal rational identities, Origen here appears to encounter difficulty in separating material embodiment from "soul," as he directly poses the question, "whether it is possible for rational beings to endure altogether without bodies when they have reached the height of holiness and blessedness, – a thing which to me indeed seems very difficult and well-nigh impossible – or whether it is necessary that they should always be joined to bodies."³⁷⁰ Thus, in much the same way that "pure" matter is posited only theoretically, merely for the convenience of discourse, so Origen appears inclined to understand the separation between the soul's bodiless and embodied existence as *merely a theoretical one*.³⁷¹ If only the persons of the Trinity may be properly described as bodiless, he argues,

then logical reasoning compels us to believe that, while the original creation was of rational beings, it is only in idea and thought that a material substance is separable from them, and that though this substance seems to have been produced for them or after them, yet never have they lived or do they live without it; for we shall be right in believing that life without a body is found in the Trinity alone.³⁷²

This passage of Rufinus' Latin is reminiscent of the Greek material considered above: the created order is not characterized by dualism, and insofar as rational

³⁷⁰ ...*si possibile est penitus incorporeas remanere rationabiles naturas, cum ad summum sanctitatis ac beatitudinis venerint, quod mihi quidem difficillimum et paene impossibile videtur; an necesse est eas semper coniunctas esse corporibus (Princ. 2.2.1).*

³⁷¹ An assertion that he makes pointedly later: "This, however, should be noted, that a substance never exists without quality, and that it is by the intellect alone that this substance which underlies bodies and is capable of receiving quality is discerned to be matter" *Verumtamen illud scire oportet, quoniam numquam substantia sine qualitate subsistit, sed intellectu solo discernitur hoc, quod subiacet corporibus et capax est qualitatis, esse materia (Princ. 4.4.7).*

³⁷² ...*necessitas consequentiae ac rationis coartat intellegi principaliter quidem creatas esse rationabiles naturas, materialem vero substantiam opinione quidem et intellectu solo separari ab eis et pro ipsis vel post ipsas effectam videri, sed numquam sine ipsa eas vel vixisse vel vivere: solius namque trinitatis incorporea vita existere recte putabitur (Princ. 2.2.2).*

beings exist, they are not compounds that are divisible into elements, except in theory. There is no bodiless existence of rational creatures.

This endorsement of perpetual embodiment naturally entails the view that matter be infinitely plastic, and that it be qualitatively adaptable to fallen rational beings in all of their respective degrees, such that

when [material substance] ministers to more perfect and blessed beings, it shines in the splendor of ‘celestial bodies’ and adorns either the ‘angels of God’ or the ‘sons of the resurrection’ with the garments of a ‘spiritual body.’ All these beings go to make up the diverse and varied condition of the world.³⁷³

All grades of being in Origen’s continuous arc of rational beings are thus conceived as “embodied” in some sense, and Origen has deployed a theory of matter to justify such a claim – a claim that the very multiplicity and variation experienced in the world justifies. “Bodily substance,” Origen insists, “is capable of change and can pass from any given quality into any other.” This claim he bases on the universal experience that

from water and earth, air and heat, various kinds of fruit are produced in the various kinds of trees, and that fire, air, water and earth are changed alternately into one another and that one element is resolved into another in virtue of a sort of mutual relationship, and further that from the food of men or of animals the substance flesh

³⁷³ ...cum vero perfectioribus ministrat et beatioribus, in fulgore ‘caelestium corporum’ micat et ‘spiritualis corporis’ indumentis vel ‘angelos dei’ vel ‘filios resurrectionis’ exornat, ex quibus omnibus diversus ac varius unius mundi complebitur status (Princ. 2.2.2). According to his later critic Methodius (De Res. 1.22.4f., text cited in Scott [1991] 154), Origen did hold theories about the soul’s material “vehicle” (ὄχημα) that would enclose it as a “garment” (περιβολή) after death. As A. Scott (1991) notes, “this was the only body of the soul before its incorporation and after its departure from the body of the flesh,” noting further that Origen held every being in heaven to have some sort of body, generally regarded as like that of the stars. The “astral” or “aetherial” body of the resurrected human being is not theoretically distinguished from the bodies of stars, angels, or even that of the risen Christ, and is termed indiscriminately “ethereal,” (αιθέριος) “heavenly” (οὐράνιος) and “luminous” (αὐγοειδής) [154-57]. It is further noted that Origen assigns the term *skhema* to the visible souls of Samuel and Lazarus in the underworld, and that he assigns the *eidōs* of the body to soul after death, suggesting the for Origen, the body, in some form, “is the guarantee of personal dignity, the premiss of immortality in the only life that God vouchsafes to us” – an understanding that excludes any incorporeal life (Edwards [2002] 109).

comes into existence and that the seminal moisture is changed into solid flesh and bones.³⁷⁴

The experience of the world as a place of variety, multiplicity, flux, and change seem to require the conclusion that physical embodiment, too, can be conceived as a fluid, plastic kind of condition, and one that can be therefore reasonably predicated on the condition of any given soul.

Origen's views thus appear to stem from two philosophical perspectives. On the one hand – from a purely theoretical angle – just as form and matter are separable only in theory, so body and soul are separable only theoretically. On the other – from something of an empirical angle – he observes physical bodies in the world to be manifold, and characterized by a great deal of flux and change, and speculates that we may therefore assign bodies of varying grades to corresponding souls. Both speculative metaphysics and empirical observation play a role; but it is also clear that Origen intends to honor his scriptural commitments. Here, the Pauline narrative of resurrection militates against the idea of incorporeal existence. When Origen speculates that, “if all things can exist without bodies, doubtless bodily substance will cease to exist when there is no use for it,”³⁷⁵ his reflection on Paul's descriptions of “corruption” putting on “incorruption” in *I Cor.* prevents his endorsing such a view. To this mystical account of resurrection, in which the corrupt and mortal body may be qualitatively changed by the soul's exposure to the incorrupt and immortal “wisdom and word and righteousness of God,” Origen applies the sliding scale of material embodiment that he has been developing, arguing that the apostle's claims are really to be understood in terms of a distinction between “carnal” and “spiritual” matter:

³⁷⁴ ...cum etiam ex aqua et terra, aere vel calore per diversa arborum genera diversos proferri ostendimus fructus, vel cum ignem, aerem, aquam terram que mutari in semet ipsa invicem ac resolvi aliud in aliud elementum mutua quadam consanguinitate docuimus, sed et cum de escis vel hominum vel animalium probavimus substantiam carnis existere vel humorem seminis naturalis in carnem solidam ossaque converti. Quae omnia documento sunt quod substantia corporalis permutabilis sit et ex omni in omnem deveniat qualitatem (*Princ.* 4.4.6).

³⁷⁵ Si autem omnia possunt carere corporibus, sine dubio non erit substantia corporalis, cuius usus nullus existet (*Princ.* 2.3.2).

Referring in the first place to bodily matter in general, that matter which, in whatever form it is found, whether carnal as now or as hereafter in the subtler and purer form which is called spiritual, the soul always makes use of, he says, 'This corruptible must put on incorruption.'³⁷⁶

Here is a scriptural warrant for more subtle, ethereal embodiment. Responding to an anticipated objection that the final overthrow of death must entail the assumption of a bodiless state, Origen first entertains the idea that souls "must first be supposed to abide in bodies more pure and subtle" – bodies which are deathless; but curiously, he does not deploy this idea as a principal basis for his claim to perpetual embodiment. Somewhat paradoxically, he advances instead the idea of flux and instability that he finds inherent in his own model, instability that is contingent on the rational, free will that triggers the souls fall in the first instance:

It will be seen to be a necessity that, if bodily nature were to be destroyed, it must be restored and created a second time. For it is apparently possible that rational creatures, who are never deprived of the power of free will, may once again become subject to certain movements.³⁷⁷

Elsewhere he furthers this claim that a pure disembodiment is a state almost too unstable to be maintained, suggesting that

³⁷⁶ <ad> *generalem primo causam respiciens materiae corporalis, cuius materiae anima usum semper habet in qualibet qualitate positae, nunc quidem carnali postmodum vero subtiliori et puriori, quae spiritalis appellatur, ait: "Necesse est corruptibile hoc induere incorruptionem".... (Princ. 2.3.2).* Origen interprets Paul's description of an "incorruption" that is to be put on (I Cor. 15.53-56) as referring to a purified soul, as if Paul had said, "This body, with its corruptible nature, must receive the clothing of incorruption, that is, a soul that possesses in itself incorruption...." *necesse est naturam hanc corruptibilem corporis indumentum accipere incorruptionis, animam habentem in se incorruptionem (Princ. 2.3.2.63-64).* Once vested with a remedied soul, such a body, "which one day we shall possess in a more glorious form ... will ... in addition to being immortal, become also incorruptible." *quod aliquando gloriosius habebimus, tunc ad id quod inmortale est accedit, ut etiam incorruptibile fiat (66-68).*

³⁷⁷ *Videbitur enim esse necessarium ut, si exterminata fuerit natura corporea, secundo iterum reparanda sit et creanda; possibile enim videtur ut rationabiles naturae, a quibus numquam aufertur liberi facultas arbitrii, possint iterum aliquibus motibus subiacere....* Or, in the surviving Greek fragment, where there is no specific mention of free will: "I think that there will then be a dissolution of bodily nature into non-existence, to come into existence a second time if rational beings should fall again." (*Princ. 2.3.3; Justinian Ep. ad Mennam [Mansi IX.529]*).

if bodily nature were to be destroyed, it must be restored and created a second time. For it is apparently possible that rational creatures, who are never deprived of the power of free will, may once again become subject to certain movements... These movements would again undoubtedly be followed by a variety and diversity of bodies, out of which a world is always composed; for it could never exist except as a result of variety and diversity, and this can in no way be produced apart from bodily matter.³⁷⁸

Paradoxically, as Origen points out, such freedom is granted by God precisely so that souls will not develop an excessive confidence in their own faculties, and will retain the awareness that God's grace only is responsible for their being drawn perpetually toward reconciliation. Thus the possibility or reality of a "second" fall exists *beneficially* for purposes of the soul's continued pedagogy.³⁷⁹

What emerges from these speculations appears at times to be a vision of successive levels of being, superimposed one upon another at varying removes from a divine apex, between which souls may ascend and descend depending on their respective dispositions toward God. Such a view makes sense of Origen's idea that God created the world as a place where fallen souls might undergo a temporary sojourn conducive to further ascent – or descent, as the case might warrant. Given the potential in every rational soul for re-orientation toward the *Logos*, and given the plasticity of matter and its adaptability to the condition of given souls, the conclusion for Origen is

³⁷⁸ *si exterminata fuerit natura corporea, secundo iterum reparanda sit et creanda; possibile enim videtur ut rationabiles naturae, a quibus numquam aufertur liberi facultas arbitrii, possint iterum aliquibus motibus subiacere, indulgente hoc ipsum deo, ne forte, si immobilem semper teneant statum, ignorent se dei gratia et non sua virtute in illo fine beatitudinis constitisse; quos motus sine dubio rursus varietas corporum et diversitas prosequetur, ex qua mundus semper adornatur, nec umquam poterit mundus nisi ex varietate ac diversitate constare; quod effici nullo genere potest extra materiam corporalem (Princ. 2.3.3.131-142).*

³⁷⁹ Elsewhere, Origen appears to make the case for a complete dissolution of the body, at the high point of the soul's purification, but even here he seems to leave open the possibility of seeing this phenomenon as only one phase of a continuing, cyclical process: "It must needs be that the nature of bodies is not primary, but that it was created at intervals on account of certain falls that happened to rational beings, who came to need bodies; and again, that when their restoration is perfectly accomplished these bodies are dissolved into nothing, so that this is forever happening" (Frag. 40 Koetschau = Justinian, *Ep. ad Mennam* [Mansi IX.532]).

naturally a whole spectrum of embodiment, in which every rational being, whatever its standing, may possess a suitable “covering”:

Since ... rational nature is changeable and convertible, so of necessity God had foreknowledge of the differences that were to arise among souls or spiritual powers, in order to arrange that each in proportion to its merits might wear a different bodily covering of this or that quality; and so, too, was it necessary for God to make a bodily nature, capable of changing at the Creator's will, by an alteration of qualities, into everything that circumstances might require.³⁸⁰

The assignment of a certain kind of body may thus be reasonably understood as proportionate to the degree of a soul's remove from the *Logos*. The lower the soul's descent, the more “earthly” its body, and yet by no means should material bodies be conceived as an evil or a hindrance. Matter is rather a neutral substrate whose bodily quality is the index of a rational creature's assimilation to the *Logos*, and always capable of being shed in favor of a more spiritualized form. Absent the possibility of a stable, bodiless state, matter's very destiny thus becomes a kind of spiritualization, in which redeemed humanity is naturally assumed to be embodied, much as the angels are.

Such a view of the universal embodiment of all rational creatures naturally leads, in the *Contra Celsum*, to a defense of Christianity that is grounded precisely in the universal experience of embodiment. This re-orientation of the rational soul to God, Origen argues, can and must be mediated by an *embodied* encounter with the *Logos*.³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ *quoniam ... mutabilis et convertibilis erat natura rationabilis, ita ut pro meritis etiam diverso corporis uteretur indumento illius vel illius qualitatis, necessario sicut diversitates praenoscebat deus futuras vel animarum vel virtutum spiritalium, ita etiam naturam corpoream faceret, quae permutatione qualitatum in omnia, quae res posceret, conditoris arbitrio mutaretur (Princ. 4.4.8).*

³⁸¹ Frede (1997) supplies a thorough, economical treatment of the difficulties involved in identifying Celsus, and of the motives that may have given rise to his *On the True Doctrine*. Origen appears to know little of Celsus apart from what the latter document contained, as is suggested by his initial uncertainty over which of two figures of previous generations might have authored the work (*C.Cels.* 1.8). He finally ascribes it to a long dead Epicurean who may have authored a treatise against magic (*C.Cels.* praef. 4; 1.68), and who is presumably the same Epicurean Celsus mentioned by Lucian as the author of such an anti-magical treatise (*Alexander* 25; 61; 21). He often seems unsure of this identification, however, as when he accuses Celsus of *concealing* his Epicureanism to avoid the charge of atheism (*C.Cels.* 1.8; 3.35). Celsus' views seem to mark him rather as a Platonist thinker concerned to refute Christian claims on the incarnation and the resurrection of the body; and more broadly, to attack what he perceives in Judaism and

This conviction that all rational beings, by virtue of the initial “creation” of human nature within the divine *Logos*, are capable of being “healed” by an encounter with that *Logos* is what gives Origen’s argument for Christianity much of its demotic flavor. It is axiomatic to him, as to Iamblichus, that the confinement of philosophical insight to a narrow and elite set effectively cuts off the greater part of humanity from access to the transcendence which is the soul’s proper destiny. Naturally he grants that “if every man could abandon the business of life and devote himself to philosophy, no other course ought to be followed but this alone”³⁸² – but such a course is impossible, for “partly owing to the necessities of life and partly owing to human weakness, very few people are enthusiastic about rational thought [λόγος].” He forthrightly prescribes Christian belief and discipline as remedy to this difficulty.³⁸³ Christianity offers approaches no less profound than those employed by philosophers: “We explain the obscure utterances of the prophets, and the parables in the gospels, and innumerable other events or laws which have a symbolical meaning.”³⁸⁴ Origen preserves for himself an elite place by virtue of his standing as a practitioner of these obscure interpretive arts, and his Christianity will disclaim none of them; but it will nevertheless embrace all of humanity, a conviction grounded in the belief that the essence of every rational being lies in its relation to the divine *Logos* in which it was created.

Origen is thus required to construct Christianity as a system of thought and disciplines simultaneously demotic and arcane, but he insists on ascribing to his project a universality that derives from the shared rational nature of human beings:

Christianity as an arrogant, parochial rejection of the shared religious and intellectual traditions of the Mediterranean world, which find their ideal repository in the Hellenism that sustains, and which is in turn sustained by, the political regime of the Roman Empire (Texts cited in Frede, 223-27; 232-33; 237-39).

³⁸² εἰ μὲν οἷόν τε πάντας καταλιπόντας τὰ τοῦ βίου πράγματα σχολάζειν τῷ φιλοσοφεῖν, ἄλλην ὁδὸν οὐ μεταδιωκτέον οὐδενὶ ἢ ταύτην μόνην (C.Cels. 1.9).

³⁸³ “What better way of helping the multitude could be found other than that given to the nations by Jesus?” ποία ἂν ἄλλη βελτίων μέθοδος πρὸς τὸ τοῖς πολλοῖς βοηθῆσαι εὐρεθείη τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς ἔθνεσι παραδοθείσης;

³⁸⁴ ἐξέτασις τῶν πεπιστευμένων καὶ διήγησις τῶν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις αἰνιγμάτων καὶ τῶν ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις παραβολῶν καὶ ἄλλων μυθίων συμβολικῶς γεγενημένων ἢ νενομοθετημένων.

Or are you, Greeks, to be allowed to call adolescent boys and slaves and stupid men to study philosophy, while if we do this our action does not arise from love to our fellow-men, although we desire to heal every rational soul by the medical treatment of the Logos and to reconcile them to God, the Creator of all things?³⁸⁵

Here we see applied the now familiar insight that every “rational nature” (πᾶσαν λογικὴν φύσιν) has a presumptive connection to the *Logos* of God. Quite straightforwardly, this connection entails the conclusion that *all* such rational creatures may receive healing from the *Logos* (τῆ ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου ἰατρικῆ), and that they might thereby be *assimilated* (οἰκειῶσαι) to God. This universalizing argument enables Origen to argue, *a fortiori*, that the *Logos*’ accessibility to the lowly, makes it the more attainable for the learned:

For the word promises to heal even such people if they come, and makes all men *worthy of God*. It is a lie that those who teach the divine word [λόγος] want to *convince only the foolish, dishonourable, and stupid, and only slaves, women, and little children*. Not only does the gospel [λόγος] call these that it may make them better, but it also calls people much superior to them. For the Christ is the Saviour of all men and especially of believers, whether intelligent or simple-minded.³⁸⁶

Here the *Logos* is both as the content of what is taught, *and* the summoning and healing agent; it is simultaneously message and healing messenger, whose very universal accessibility means that even the average person can have – *in the world* – access to philosophical formation which is itself a divine encounter enabling ascent to God.

³⁸⁵ Ἡ ὑμῖν μὲν, ὦ Ἕλληνες, ἔξεστι μειράκια καὶ οἰκότριβας καὶ ἀνοήτους ἀνθρώπους ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν καλεῖν· ἡμεῖς δὲ τοῦτο ποιῶντες οὐ φιλανθρώπως αὐτὸ πράττομεν, τῆ ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου ἰατρικῆ πᾶσαν λογικὴν φύσιν θεραπεῦσαι βουλόμενοι καὶ οἰκειῶσαι τῷ δημιουργήσαντι πάντα θεῷ;

³⁸⁶ Καὶ γὰρ τοὺς τοιούτους προσελθόντας ἐπαγγέλλεται θεραπεύειν ὁ λόγος, πάντας ἀξίους κατασκευάζων τοῦ θεοῦ. Ψεῦδος δὲ καὶ τὸ μόνους ἡλιθίους καὶ ἀγεννεῖς καὶ ἀναισθητοὺς καὶ ἀνδράποδα καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ παιδάκια πείθειν ἐθέλειν τοὺς διδάσκοντας τὸν θεῖον λόγον. Καὶ τούτους μὲν γὰρ καλεῖ ὁ λόγος, ἵνα αὐτοὺς βελτιώσῃ· καλεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὺς πολλῶ τούτων διαφέροντας· ἐπεὶ «σωτὴρ ἐστὶν πάντων ἀνθρώπων» ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ «μάλιστα πιστῶν», εἴτε συνετῶν εἴτε ἀπλουστέρων (C.Cels. 3.48-49).

Origen was surely right to regard such claims as somewhat broad-minded by ancient intellectual standards.³⁸⁷

Because Christianity presents an embodied *Logos* whose teaching is calibrated to the capacities of all people, it is possible to claim that only Jesus was able “to give the educated a conception of God which could raise their soul from earthly things,” while he likewise enabling simple people “to live a better life,” by granting access to “doctrines about God such as they had the capacity to receive,”³⁸⁸ since he “came down to the level even of the more defective capacities of ordinary men and simple women and slaves, and, in general, of people who have been helped by none but by Jesus alone.”³⁸⁹ The gains offered by Jesus are thus not a novelty, but rather an extension throughout humanity of the wisdom previously reserved for the few. In context, Origen is responding here to the celebrated claim for divine inaccessibility in Plato’s *Timaeus*,³⁹⁰ adduced by Celsus as a warrant against the nonsensical idea that God may now be

³⁸⁷ Origen presumably takes this approach perhaps not so much because Celsus was an intellectual elitist, but rather to defend Judaism and Christianity from Celsus’ charge that they are narrow, parochial, and arrogant. In Celsus’ view, these are movements that undermine the very basis of the Roman political regime by undermining the ecumenical philosophical and religious assumptions that constitute a kind of contract for its stable continuity. Celsus’ “true account” is a narrative of shared cultural assumptions that derive from the wisdom of ancient sages whose insights are reflected and approximated in the similar convictions and practices of Mediterranean and peripheral cultures (Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian). Intellectuals in the Empire to some extent saw their role in terms of preserving and elaborating this wisdom of the ancients, within its ideal receptacle of Hellenism. Celsus’ contempt for Christianity is founded in his recognition that its adherents refuse the reciprocities that such a cultural arrangement entails; they cannot acknowledge the beliefs and practices – the particular gods and cults – of others as legitimate manifestations that accord with this “true account.” Therefore they are seen as threats to the very cultural order that the Empire sustains and that sustains the Empire (Frede [1997] 229-230; 237-39). It is in this light that we should grasp the horror of Origen’s attack even on refined prose, whose practitioners “confine what should be of benefit to the community to a very narrow and limited circle.” Even “the beautiful and refined style of Plato ... benefits but a few....” (*C.Cels.* 6.1-2).

³⁸⁸ ...βέλτιον αὐτοὺς βιοῦν μετὰ δογμάτων ὧν ἐδύναντο περὶ θεοῦ χωρεῖν (*C.Cels.* 7.41).

³⁸⁹ ἀλλὰ δι’ ὑπερβάλλουσαν φιλανθρωπίαν ἔχοντα μὲν δίδοναι τοῖς συνετωτέροις θεολογίαν, ἐπᾶραι τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τῶν τῆδε πραγμάτων δυναμένην, οὐδὲν <δ’> ἤττον συγκαταβαίνοντα καὶ ταῖς ὑποδεεστέραις ἕξεσιν ἰδιωτῶν ἀνδρῶν καὶ ἀπλουστέρων γυναικῶν οἰκετῶν τε καὶ ἀπαξᾶπλῶς τῶν ὑπὸ μηδενὸς ἢ Ἰησοῦ μόνου βεβοηθημένων.... (*C.Cels.* 7.41).

³⁹⁰ “Now to discover the maker and father of this universe would be difficult; and having discovered him, to explain him to all would be impossible.” τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντός εὐρεῖν τε ἔργον καὶ εὐρόντα εἰς πάντας ἀδύνατον λέγειν (*Ti.* 28c).

accessed by virtually anyone. Origen turns the argument for inaccessibility precisely *for* the needfulness of material divine incarnation:

I admit that Plato's statement which he quotes is noble and impressive. But consider whether there is not more regard for the needs of mankind when the divine word introduces the divine Logos, who was in the beginning with God, as becoming flesh, that the Logos, of whom Plato says that after finding him it is impossible to declare him to all men, might be able to reach anybody.... But we affirm that human nature is not sufficient in any way to seek for God and to find Him in His pure nature, unless it is helped by the God who is object of the search. And He is found by those who, after doing what they can, admit that they need him, and shows himself to those whom he judges it right to appear, so far as it is possible for God to be known to man and for the human soul which is still in the body to know God.³⁹¹

In this formulation, God, by a "divine word" (ὁ θεῖος λόγος) summons into activity the *Logos* that is God, and that is also "*flesh*." To put it with the economy that actually characterizes the passage, "The divine word introduces the God-Word-becoming-flesh (τὸν ... θεὸν λόγον γινόμενον σάρκα)" – a formulation deliberate in its casting the *Logos* as a divine hypostasis, and likewise rendering God accessible to those "still in the body," presumably even those of "defective capacities." Origen simply takes Plato's claim for divine inaccessibility and turns it on its head, arguing that if God cannot be reached by unassisted human intelligence, God's own intervention is necessary: the *Logos* must become a *Logos-in-flesh* so that divine teaching may be conveyed and healing effected for rational beings whose very existence is anchored to embodiment.³⁹² In this

³⁹¹ Μεγαλοφυῶς μὲν οὖν καὶ οὐκ εὐκαταφρονήτως τὴν ἐκκειμένην λέξιν ὁ Πλάτων προφέρειται. Ὅρα δὲ εἰ μὴ φιλανθρωπότερον ὁ θεῖος λόγος εἰσάγει τὸν «ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν» θεὸν λόγον γινόμενον σάρκα, ἵνα εἰς πάντας δυνατὸς ἢ φθάνειν ὁ λόγος, ὃν καὶ τὸν «εὐρόντα εἰς πάντας ἀδύνατον λέγειν» φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων.... ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀποφαινόμεθα ὅτι οὐκ αὐτάρκης ἢ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις ὅπως ποτανοῦν ζητῆσαι τὸν θεὸν καὶ εὐρεῖν αὐτὸν καθαρῶς, μὴ βοηθηθεῖσα ὑπὸ τοῦ ζητουμένου, εὐρισκομένου τοῖς ὁμολογοῦσι μετὰ τὸ παρ' αὐτοὺς ποιεῖν ὅτι δέονται αὐτοῦ, ἐμφανίζοντος ἑαυτὸν οἷς ἂν κρίνη εὐλογον εἶναι ὀφθῆναι, ὡς πέφυκε θεὸς μὲν ἀνθρώπων γινώσκεσθαι ἀνθρώπου δὲ ψυχὴ ἔτι οὐσα ἐν σώματι γινώσκειν τὸν θεόν (C.Cels. 7.41-42).

³⁹² Celsus is plainly revolted by the idea of incarnation, since as a doctrine it undermines the normative Platonist belief in the remoteness and inaccessibility of God. This common tendency

formulation, Origen reinforces the absolutely crucial idea that “rational essence” alone is not sufficient leverage to enable ascent to higher tiers of being, and that a timeless divine hypostasis, conceptualized as *Logos*, must assume material embodiment in order to reach rational beings whose existence is material. Thus, no matter the degree of irrational maladjustment, God can reach man, “so far as it is possible for God to be known to man and for the human soul which is still in the body to know God (ὡς πέφυκε θεὸς μὲν ἀνθρώπῳ γινώσκεσθαι ἀνθρώπου δὲ ψυχῇ ἔτι οὖσα ἐν σώματι γινώσκειν τὸν θεόν).”

In such a formulation, embodiment is transformed into the occasion for experiencing the healing offered by God. Celsus, just as he finds the doctrine of incarnation loathsome and incomprehensible, is likewise inimical to any claims on the body’s behalf, insisting rather on a radical separation of rational ascent from embodied experience. In the face of this kind of dualism, Origen directly advances the argument that embodiment *in no way* entails such a clear separation from the life of God rationally conceived. It is rather precisely the experience of the divine *in the body* that he strives to defend:

Then Celsus thinks that he ought not to discuss this with people who hope for a reward for their body, as they are absolutely and irrationally bound to a thing which cannot grant fulfillment of their hopes. He calls them boorish and unclean, saying that they are destitute of reason [χωρὶς λόγου] and come together for sedition. But if he is one who loves his fellow-men he ought to help even those who are most boorish. There is no limit prescribed for helping one’s fellow-men so that the more boorish men are excluded just like the irrational animals [ἀλόγων ζώων]. No. Our maker created us to be equally helpful to all men. Therefore it is worthwhile discussing these things both with boorish people, in order to convert them as far as possible to a

to remove God from interaction with the world presumably gives rise to “a compensating tendency ... to introduce mediating entities between the first principle and the world,” and “to fill the chasm between God and men with a hierarchy of spiritual beings” (Frede [1997] 230). The introduction of such mediating principles gives a trinitarian flavor to much philosophy of the time, pagan as well as Christian. Celsus sees incarnation as a gratuitous destruction of such an outlook, arguing that there is simply no reason consistent with a proper understanding of God that he would assume a body on earth (*C.Cels.* 4.2ff., cited in Frede [1997] 228-231).

more refined life, and with unclean people, to make them cleaner as far as possible, and with those who hold any view whatever being destitute of reason and sick in their soul, that they may no longer do anything without reason [χωρίς λόγου] and may not be sick in their soul.³⁹³

In plain evidence here is the idea of rationality as the factor uniting all humanity in their receptivity to the rational divine, framed in terms of his own *Logos* theology as a vigorous riposte to the dualism that he finds characterizing Celsus' thought. To the latter, it is foolish even to attempt communication with those who embrace the body, a "thing" (πράγμα) that is obviously hopeless.³⁹⁴ Those who place hope in it are in fact *dirty*; they are "unclean" and "rustic" (ἀγροίκους καὶ ἀκαθάρτους). Origen, argues not only that such impediments are all the more reason to help them, but strives to underscore an incoherence in Celsus position: to disqualify some on the grounds that they are "without reason" (χωρίς λόγου) is essentially unreasonably to class them as "irrational animals." For Origen, being "destitute of reason" is simply not a defining condition; in fact, it makes nonsense of his *definition* of a human being. Such destitution is really rather analogous to illness. Those who are ill in mind – those who "think" (φρονούσι) "apart from reason" (χωρίς λόγου) may be healed just as those who are ill in body. Such people, far from suffering a permanent debility, may yet be taught to act in accordance with reason and to experience corresponding health as rational beings. As in earlier passages, the *Logos* both summons to healing (ἐπαγγέλλεται θεραπεύειν ὁ λόγος), and serves as the very source of that healing for every "rational nature" (τῆ ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου ἰατρικῆ πᾶσαν λογικὴν φύσιν θεραπεῦσαι). It is a system of elegant

³⁹³ Εἴτ' οἶεται μὴ διαλέγεσθαι δεῖν τοῖς τὰ περὶ τοῦ σώματος ἐλπίζουσιν ὁ Κέλσος ὡς συντετηκόσιν ἀλόγως πράγματι ἀδυνάτω τυχεῖν τῶν ἐπιζομένων ὑπ' αὐτῶν, ἀγροίκους καὶ ἀκαθάρτους αὐτοὺς καλῶν καὶ χωρὶς λόγου συνόντας τῇ στάσει, δέον ὡς φιλόανθρωπον καὶ τοῖς ἀγροικότεροις βοηθεῖν. Οὐδὲ γὰρ τὸ κοινωνικὸν περιγέγραπται ὡσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων οὕτω καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀγροικότερων ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἴσης ὁ ποιήσας ἡμᾶς πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους πεποίηκε κοινωνικούς. Ἄξιον οὖν διαλέγεσθαι καὶ ἀγροίκοις καὶ ὅση δύναμις μετάγειν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τὸ ἀστειότερον καὶ ἀκαθάρτοις καὶ ποιεῖν αὐτούς, ὡς οἶόν τε ἐστί, καθαρωτέρους καὶ τοῖς χωρὶς λόγου ὅ τι ποτ' οὖν φρονούσι καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν νοσοῦσιν, ἵνα μηκέτι χωρὶς λόγου τι πράττωσι μηδὲ τὴν ψυχὴν νοσήσωσι (C.Cels. 8.50).

³⁹⁴ See Frede (1997) 231.

economy in which all who are “without *logos*” can now have *logos* by means of the generous condescension of God.

3. *The Defense of Materiality on Platonic Ground*

Origen’s outlook may be regarded as basically monist. Although the essence of the human is understood in terms of a rational nature’s relation to God, human beings are nevertheless inconceivable as discrete hypostases without embodiment. It is precisely this condition that necessitates the coming of the *Logos* in flesh as part of a divine economy of redemption. All of this notwithstanding, Origen plainly feels pressed to defend his outlook on more traditional philosophical grounds. That is, no matter his degree of departure from more dualist strains of thought, he strives to maintain an air of devotion to some of the more revered insights of Platonism. His defense of the material body takes shape to some degree within these limits.

In *Contra Celsum*, this project entails an insistence on Christian conformity to the demanding doctrines the Celsus sets down as normative. Toward this end, Origen cites a pastiche of passages from Plato’s *Republic* and *Timaeus*, presented with a framing commentary by Celsus, suggesting that we are to view the principles that they enunciate as central to Celsus’ *On the True Doctrine*:

Being and becoming are, respectively, intelligible and visible. Truth is associated with being, error with becoming. Knowledge concerns truth, opinion the other. Thought is concerned with what is intelligible, and sight with what is visible. For Mind knows that which is intelligible, the eye that which is visible. Accordingly, what the sun is to visible things, being neither the eye nor sight, but the cause of the eye’s vision and of the existence of sight and of the possibility of seeing visible things, which is the cause of all sensible things becoming, and is in fact itself the thing which enables itself to be seen, this is what God is to intelligible things. He is neither mind nor intelligence nor knowledge, but enables the mind to think and is the cause of the existence of intelligence and of the possibility of knowledge, and causes the existence of all intelligible things and of truth itself and of being itself, since he transcends all things and is

*intelligible by a certain indescribable power.*³⁹⁵

Here a sharp distinction is drawn between the world of intelligibles and the perceptible world of sense, with the relationship of God to intelligibles elaborated in terms of an analogy to the sun's relationship to visible things in the material world. Celsus' perspective on this outlook is then presented:

*These doctrines I have set forth for men of intelligence. If you understand any of them, you are doing well. And if you think that some spirit came down from God to foretell the divine truths, this may be the spirit which declares these doctrines. Indeed, it was because men of ancient times were touched by this spirit that they proclaimed many excellent doctrines. If you are unable to understand them, keep quiet and conceal your own lack of education, and do not say that those who see are blind and those who run are lame, when you yourselves are entirely lamed and mutilated in your souls and live for the body which is a dead thing.*³⁹⁶

His exasperation is unmitigated, admitting of no ambiguity in terms of what is *real* and what *unreal*; what is *true* and what is *false*; what is *knowledge* and what is mere *opinion*.³⁹⁷

The line between the world of the mind and the world of sense is sharply drawn and

³⁹⁵ Οὐσία καὶ γένεσις νοητόν, ὄρατόν· μετὰ οὐσίας μὲν ἀλήθεια, μετὰ δὲ γενέσεως πλάνη. Περί ἀλήθειαν μὲν οὖν ἐπιστήμη, περί δὲ θάτερον δόξα· καὶ νοητοῦ μὲν ἔστι νόησις, ὄρατοῦ δὲ ὄψις. Γινώσκει δὲ νοητόν μὲν νοῦς, ὄρατόν δὲ ὀφθαλμός. Ὅπερ οὖν ἐν τοῖς ὄρατοῖς ἥλιος, οὐτ' ὀφθαλμός ὦν οὐτ' ὄψις ἀλλ' ὀφθαλμῶ τε τοῦ ὄραῖν αἴτιος καὶ ὄψει τοῦ δι' αὐτὸν συνίστασθαι καὶ ὄρατοῖς τοῦ ὄρασθαι, πᾶσιν αἰσθητοῖς τοῦ γίνεσθαι, καὶ μὴν αὐτὸς αὐτῶ τοῦ βλέπεσθαι, τοῦτο ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς ἐκεῖνος, ὅσπερ οὐτε νοῦς οὐτε νόησις οὐτ' ἐπιστήμη, ἀλλὰ νῶ τε τοῦ νοεῖν αἴτιος καὶ νοήσει τοῦ δι' αὐτὸν εἶναι καὶ ἐπιστήμη τοῦ δι' αὐτὸν γινώσκειν καὶ νοητοῖς ἅπασιν καὶ αὐτῇ ἀληθείᾳ καὶ αὐτῇ οὐσίᾳ τοῦ εἶναι, πάντων ἐπέκεινα ὦν, ἀρρητῶ τινὶ δυνάμει νοητός (C. Cels. 7.45); cf. Resp. 534a, 508b; Ti. 29c.

³⁹⁶ Ταῦτ' εἴρηται μὲν ἀνθρώποις νοῦν ἔχουσιν· εἰ δέ τι αὐτῶν καὶ ὑμεῖς συνίετε, εὖ ὑμῖν ἔχει. Καὶ πνεῦμα εἴ τι οἴεσθε κατιὸν ἐκ θεοῦ προαγγέλλειν τὰ θεῖα, τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ταῦτα κηρύττον, οὗ δὴ πλησθέντες ἄνδρες παλαιοὶ πολλὰ κάγαθὰ ἠγγειλαν· ὦν εἰ μὴ δύνασθε ἐπαῖειν, σιωπᾶτε καὶ τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀμαθίαν ἐγκαλύπτετε καὶ μὴ λέγετε τυφλώττειν τοὺς βλέποντας καὶ χωλοὺς εἶναι τοὺς τρέχοντας, αὐτοὶ πάντη τὰς ψυχὰς ἀποκεχωλευμένοι καὶ ἠκρωτηριασμένοι καὶ τῶ σώματι ζῶντες, τουτέστι τῶ νεκρῶ.... (C. Cels. 7.45)

³⁹⁷ The world of true, transcendent essential being (οὐσία) is invisible and stable; the world of becoming (γένεσις) is visible and unstable. The transcendent world of being is approached via the mind (νοῦς); the sublunary world of becoming via the eye (ὀφθαλμός). Truth, knowledge, stable intelligibles (ἀλήθεια, ἐπιστήμη, νοητά), are identified with the world of being; error, mere opinion, unstable visibles (πλάνη, δόξα, ὄρατά) with the world of becoming.

rigorously policed, characterizing the shifting material world in a manner reminiscent of accounts of the soul's embodiment in the Platonic corpus. The posture is not so far removed from that of the *Phaedo*, where, we recall, the soul's inversion produces a failure to perceive the ultimate *unreality* of the physical world, and confines it to an irrational, debased, material existence; likewise in the *Phaedrus*, Plato locates intellectual perception of the forms in the condition prior to the soul's embodiment, and characterizes embodiment as an entrapment that lulls the soul's higher intellect. In these constructions, the soul is "compelled to adopt ... the same habits and mode of life" as the body, and as such has no part in the communion with the divine and pure and absolute."³⁹⁸ Very much in this vein, Celsus argues that the embrace of embodiment entails commitment to an order devoid of any basis for true knowledge, tainted by a delusive material flux that threatens to entice the soul with false judgments and misperceptions, and suited as a philosophical home only for those who "*live for the body which is a dead thing.*" People who so live are dirty and potentially seditious. They mistake the material world for true reality, and cannot plausibly have any part of that other world, where the divine sun illumines intelligibles.

In counterpoint to this understanding, Origen will develop an argument to prove his outlook's consistency with such lofty views. As a first gesture toward establishing the credentials of Christian believers, he undertakes to show that material reality is continuous with transcendence, doing so in a manner that strives to cross the boundary that Celsus is urgent to secure:

It is not merely a matter of theory when [believers] distinguish between being and becoming and between what is intelligible and what is visible, and when they associate truth with being and by all possible means avoid the error that is bound up with becoming. They look, as they have learnt, not at the things which are becoming, which are seen and on that account temporal, but at the higher things, whether one wishes to call them 'being,' or things 'invisible' because they are intelligible, or 'things which are not seen' because their nature lies outside the realm of sense-

³⁹⁸ *Phaed.* 83c, d; cf. *Phaedr.* 250c.

perception.³⁹⁹

Believers too, then, recognize both the distinction between material and non-material realms, and the principle that true reality lies beyond material reality's manifestation. They understand that, at best, the "things" of material reality are passing and temporal (πρόσκαιρα). Nevertheless, Origen intends to argue, with his suggestion that Christians perceive the relation that may be sketched between the seen and the unseen, that they actually embrace a *more* sophisticated view than Celsus. They go beyond his distinctions, perceiving material, visible, realities as the referents of an unseen world of truth and knowledge and stable intelligibles. Created things thus facilitate a rational ascent, even to contemplation of the divine simplicity:

It is in this way also that the disciples of Jesus look at the things that are becoming, so that they use them as steps to the contemplation of the nature of intelligible things. 'For the invisible things of God,' that is, the intelligible things, 'are understood by the things that are made' and 'from the creation of the world they are clearly seen' by the process of thought. And when they have ascended from the created things of the world to the invisible things of God they do not stop there. But after exercising their minds sufficiently among them and understanding them, they ascend to the eternal power of God, and, in a word, to His Divinity.⁴⁰⁰

By this account, uncreated, invisible things can be understood analogically from experience of created visible things; but Origen does not stop merely with the idea of suggestive analogy. Even among those "unseen things of God" (ἐν τοῖς ἀοράτοις τοῦ

³⁹⁹ οὐχ ἵνα λέξεσι μόναίς οὐσίαν ἀπὸ γενέσεως χωρίζωσι καὶ νοητὸν ἀπὸ ὄρατοῦ, καὶ τὴν μὲν ἀλήθειαν τῆ οὐσία συνάπτωσι τὴν δὲ μετὰ γενέσεως πλάνην παντὶ τρόπῳ φεύγωσι, σκοποῦντες, ὡς ἔμαθον, οὐ τὰ γενέσεως, ἀπερ ἔστι «βλεπόμενα» καὶ διὰ τοῦτο «πρόσκαιρα», ἀλλὰ τὰ κρείττονα, εἴτ' οὐσίαν αὐτά τις βούλεται καλεῖν εἴτε διὰ τὸ νοητὰ τυγχάνειν «ἀόρατα» εἴτε διὰ τὸ ἔξω αἰσθήσεως εἶναι αὐτῶν τὴν φύσιν «μὴ βλεπόμενα». (C. Cels. 7.46)

⁴⁰⁰ Οὕτω δὲ καὶ τοῖς γενέσεως ἐνορῶσιν οἱ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ μαθηταί, ὥστε οἰονεὶ ἐπιβάθρα χρῆσθαι αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὴν κατανόησιν τῆς τῶν νοητῶν φύσεως· «Τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα» τοῦ θεοῦ «ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου», τουτέστι τὰ νοητὰ, «τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα» ἐν τῷ νοεῖσθαι «καθορᾶται». Καὶ οὐχ ἴστανται γε ἀναβάντες ἀπὸ τῶν τοῦ κόσμου κτισμάτων ἐν τοῖς ἀοράτοις τοῦ θεοῦ· ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἰκανῶς ἐκείνοις ἐγγυμασάμενοι καὶ συνιέντες αὐτὰ ἀναβαίνουσιν ἐπὶ τὴν αἴδιον δύναμιν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀπαξάπλωσ τὴν θεότητα αὐτοῦ.... (C. Cels. 7.46). Cf. Rom 1.18-20.

θεοῦ) intellects do not simply come to rest, but progress ever upward to God's "unseen power," (ἐπὶ τὴν ἀϊδίον δύναμιν) and finally, unambiguously and simply, to his divinity (ἐπὶ ... ἀπαξαπλῶς τὴν θεότητα αὐτοῦ).

Origen obviously grasps that this argument, advanced against the firmly dualist formulations adopted by Celsus, is a view of ascent that many philosophers would find congenial. It reflects, in fact, the kind of cosmology we have seen to be characteristic of Plato in his more moderate moments, such as in the *Timaeus*, where the soul, after negotiating the initial shock of embodiment, stabilizes in its revolutions so that the mind prevails over the initial chaos. When such stability is "reinforced by right educational training, the man becomes wholly sound and faultless, having escaped the worst of maladies...."⁴⁰¹ In like manner, Plato's *Laws* suggests a worldview in which the proper orientation of the higher soul (the rational *nous*) to God – "the measure of all things" – in accordance with the principle that "like is dear to like," is precisely what secures a stable earthly order.⁴⁰² Origen's view is certainly more akin to this outlook, where the rational soul, though impaired by embodiment, is nevertheless naturally drawn to its creator, and gradually learns to reject lower things:

And the rational soul, which at once recognizes that which is, so to speak, akin to it, discards the images which it has hitherto thought to be gods, and assumes its natural affection for the creator.⁴⁰³

Here we can detect resonances of Origen's anthropology, wherein the *logos*-partaking "rational soul" (ἡ λογικὴ ψυχὴ) or "rational nature" (λογικὴ φύσις) has a presumed connection or kinship to the divine. Origen's plain intention here is to advertise his outlook as in keeping with a more "proper" Platonic outlook. Celsus, in turn, must come out looking like the apostate. If Christian hopes are to be termed "vain," argues Origen, then it must be granted that "the Pythagoreans and the Platonists are led away

⁴⁰¹ συνεπιλαμβάνηται τις ὀρθὴ τροφή παιδεύσεως, ὀλόκληρος ὑγιῆς τε παντελῶς, τὴν μεγίστην ἀποφυγῶν νόσον, γίγνεται (*ibid.* 44C).

⁴⁰² τῷ μὲν ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον...φίλον.... πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον (*Lg.* 716c).

⁴⁰³ Καὶ εὐθέως ὥσπερ εἰ τὸ συγγενὲς ἐπιγνοῦσα ἡ λογικὴ ψυχὴ ἀπορρίπτει μὲν ἅ τέως ἐδόξαζεν εἶναι θεοὺς φίλτρον δ' ἀναλαμβάνει φυσικὸν τὸ πρὸς τὸν κτίσαντα. (*C. Cels.* 3.40)

with vain hopes in believing the doctrine that the soul can ascend to the vault of heaven and in the region above the heavens gaze on the things seen by the blessed spectators.”⁴⁰⁴

In this approach, Origen is plainly trying to derive legitimacy from occupying Platonic ground, vindicating materiality much like Iamblichus, and presenting Celsus as a more radically dualist thinker than perhaps he actually is, particularly in his regarding every manifestation of materiality as qualitatively alike. In characterizing Celsus’ aversion to matter, Origen cites his most uncompromising statements on the question, retaining the colorful examples, such as the assertion that the bodies of bats, worms, frogs, and men are qualitatively indistinguishable. As Celsus puts it, “The soul is God’s work, but the nature of the body is different. In fact, in this respect there will be no difference between the body of a bat, or a worm, or a frog, or a man. For they are made of the same matter, and they are equally liable to corruption.”⁴⁰⁵ In contrast to this view, Origen attempts rather to defend distinctions within material embodiment. He counters that heavenly bodies are divine, although they are material and therefore – under Celsus’ construction – liable to perish:

To this argument of his I reply that, because the same matter underlies the nature of a bat, or a worm, or a frog, or a man, these bodies will not differ from one another, obviously these bodies will be no different from sun or moon or stars or heaven, or anything else which is called by the Greeks a visible god. For the same matter which underlies all bodies is strictly speaking without qualities and shape, though by what agencies Celsus thinks it receives its qualities I do not know, since he will not accept the view that anything corruptible is God’s work.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ οἱ τὸν Πυθαγόρου καὶ Πλάτωνος παραδεξάμενοι περὶ ψυχῆς λόγον, πεφυκίαις ἀναβαίνειν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀψίδα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ ὑπερουρανίῳ τόπῳ θεωρεῖν τὰ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων θεατῶν θεάματα. (C. *Cels.* 3.80).

⁴⁰⁵ ψυχὴ μὲν θεοῦ ἔργον, σώματος δὲ ἄλλῃ φύσις. Καὶ ταύτη γε οὐδὲν διοίσει νυκτερίδος ἢ εὐλῆς ἢ βατραχοῦ ἢ ἀνθρώπου σώμα· ὕλη γὰρ ἡ αὐτή, καὶ τὸ φθαρτὸν αὐτῶν ὅμοιον (C. *Cels.* 4.56).

⁴⁰⁶ λεκτέον καὶ πρὸς τοῦτον αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον ὅτι εἶπερ, ἐπεὶ ἡ ὕλη ἡ αὐτὴ ὑπόκειται νυκτερίδος ἢ εὐλῆς ἢ βατραχοῦ ἢ ἀνθρώπου σώματι, οὐδὲν διοίσει ἀλλήλων ταῦτα τὰ σώματα, δηλονότι οὐδὲν διοίσει τὰ τούτων σώματα ἡλίου ἢ σελήνης ἢ ἀστέρων ἢ οὐρανοῦ ἢ οὐτινοσοῦν ἄλλου λεγομένου παρ’ Ἑλλησιν αἰσθητοῦ θεοῦ. Ὑλὴ γὰρ ἡ αὐτὴ πᾶσι τοῖς

Such beliefs concerning embodied divinity, which Origen asserts as common to both Greeks and Hebrews, cannot be accommodated within the flattening found to be implicit in Celsus' claim that "the soul is God's work, but the nature of the body is different" – especially if all bodies, regardless of their place in the food chain, are regarded as qualitatively alike. As before, Origen's strategy is to alienate Celsus' thought from what has been traditionally held. He presumes that everyone would agree that the body of a star is not of the same order as the body of a bat or a frog.⁴⁰⁷ Only Celsus is isolated in his conviction that every instance of materiality is to be regarded as if one were confronting abstract, theoretical matter – matter that is viewed pejoratively as an uncreated ("not God's work") hindrance to the soul. Origen is thus able to assert that such an outlook makes a hash of biblical passages such as "The heavens shall perish, but thou remainest; they all shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed. But thou art the same."⁴⁰⁸ If the matter of the "heavens" is created by God, then Celsus may be caricatured as maintaining the position that the heavens are nonetheless *not* superior to the bodies of the lowest creatures:

However, this is a sufficient reply to Celsus' assertion that *the soul is God's work, but the nature of the body is different*. For it follows from his view that the body of a bat or a worm or a frog is no different from the matter of the aether.⁴⁰⁹

σώμασιν ὑποκειμένη τῷ ἰδίῳ λόγῳ ἄποιος καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος, τὰς ποιότητας οὐκ οἶδα κατὰ Κέλσον, τὸν μὴ θέλοντα φθαρτὸν τι ἔργον εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ, ὑπὸ τίνος λαμβάνουσα (C. *Cels.* 4.56).

⁴⁰⁷ Origen clearly regards the stars a rational, though fallen creatures, who are nevertheless of a superior order to humans, as their ethereal bodies amply attest. He also regarded their movements as rationally motivated, and beneficial for the world, an argument posed in opposition to the gnostics (Scott [1991] 130-31; 137; 147).

⁴⁰⁸ «Οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμενεῖς· καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται, καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἐλίξεις αὐτούς, καὶ ἀλλαγῆσονται. Σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ.» (C. *Cels.* 4.56). Cf. *Ps.* 102 (101) 27-28; *Heb.* 1.11-12.

⁴⁰⁹ Πλὴν ἀρκεῖ πρὸς τὸν Κέλσον καὶ ταῦτα ἀποφηνάμενον ὅτι ψυχὴ μὲν θεοῦ ἔργον, σώματος δὲ ἄλλη φύσις· οὗ τῷ λόγῳ ἠκολούθησε μηδὲν διαφέρειν νυκτερίδος ἢ εὐλῆς ἢ βατράχου σῶμα τοῦ αἰθερίου σώματος (C. *Cels.* 4.56).

Again blending Greek and Hebrew wisdom, Origen here simply reduces Celsus to the absurdity of arguing the equivalence of star-body and frog-body. Against such dualist simplicity Origen finds it easier to assert a complexity based in qualitative distinctions: “a philosophy [λόγος] which accounts for the diversity of bodies by the hypothesis that different qualities [ποιότητας] are given to them.” In elaboration of this point he continues:

For we also know that there are ‘both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies’ and that there is one glory of heavenly bodies and another of earthly bodies, and that not even that of heavenly bodies is the same; for there is one glory of the sun and another glory of the stars, and even among themselves, ‘one star differs from another in glory.’ Therefore also, as we believe in the resurrection of the dead, we affirm that changes occur in the qualities of bodies since some of them which have been ‘sown in corruption are raised in incorruption, and some sown in dishonor are raised in glory....’⁴¹⁰

Here the qualitative flexibility of matter that Origen espouses is brought to bear directly in defense of Christian doctrine, the central conviction being that matter is actually *changed* when the divine acts upon it; that it is, in fact, *qualitatively* different, such that any body thus formed or changed by divine activity must be classed differently from lower bodies:

All of us who have accepted the existence of providence maintain that the underlying matter is capable of receiving the qualities which the Creator wills to give it. And by God’s will a quality of one kind is imposed upon this particular matter, but afterwards it will have a quality of another kind, one, let us say, which is better and superior.⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ ...λόγον, διαφορὰν διδόντα διὰ τὰς ἐπικειμένας ποιότητας τοῖς σώμασι καὶ περὶ τὰ σώματα. Ἰσμεν γὰρ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὅτι ἐστὶ «καὶ σώματα ἐπουράνια καὶ σώματα ἐπίγεια», καὶ ἄλλη μὲν «ἐπουρανίων» σωμάτων «δόξα» ἄλλη δὲ «ἐπιγείων», καὶ οὐδὲ τῶν «ἐπουρανίων» ἢ αὐτῆ· «ἄλλη» γὰρ «δόξα ἡλίου» «καὶ ἄλλη δόξα ἀστέρων», καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς δὲ τοῖς ἄστροις «ἄστηρ ἀστέρος διαφέρει ἐν δόξῃ». Διὸ καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν «τῶν νεκρῶν» ἀποδεχόμενοι μεταβολὰς φαμεν γίνεσθαι ποιότητων τῶν ἐν σώμασιν· ἐπεὶ σπειρόμενά τινα αὐτῶν «ἐν φθορᾷ ἐγείρεται ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ», καὶ σπειρόμενα «ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ ἐγείρεται ἐν δόξῃ».... (C. Cels. 4.56)

⁴¹¹ Περὶ δὲ τοῦ τὴν ὑποκειμένην ὕλην δεκτικὴν εἶναι ποιότητων, ὧν ὁ δημιουργὸς βούλεται πάντες οἱ πρόνοιαν παραδεξάμενοι κατασκευάζομεν· καὶ βουλομένου μὲν θεοῦ ποιότης

To Celsus, predictably, he attributes the opposite view, that “that the qualities which by some unknown agency have been appointed to change from one character to another, are not the work of any divine Logos who changes the qualities in matter.”⁴¹²

Origen attempts to obtain more leverage for his argument for higher embodiment by exploiting Celsus’ claim that “*the soul is God’s work.*” Such a claim is inconclusive, argues Origen, “for he has not made it clear whether every soul is God’s work, or only the rational soul.”⁴¹³ He then accuses Celsus of failing to confine his argument only to the *rational* soul.⁴¹⁴ As we have seen, it is the rational element in the human person that, in Origen’s view, establishes the human being in a relation to God – making him thus a “work of God.” If non-rational souls are thus *not* God’s work (the concession just squeezed from Celsus), then it follows that “it is not true that every body has a nature which is different from that of the soul”⁴¹⁵ – that is, an animal soul is *unlike* a human soul insofar as it is *not* the work of God. Animal souls would thus be nearer in kind to debased matter, from which the rational, human souls would be correspondingly removed, by virtue of being unique in the distinction of being “God’s work.” Origen exploits this distinction to buttress qualitative distinctions among bodies, arguing that if “the body of each animal corresponds to its soul, then obviously the body of a being whose soul is God’s work would be superior to a body in which a soul dwells which is not God’s work.” In this way, a principle that we have already seen elaborated – that the quality of the body serves as an index of the soul’s standing – becomes the basis for

τοιαδί νῦν ἐστι περὶ τήνδε τὴν ὕλην ἐξῆς δὲ τοιαδί, φέρε’ εἰπεῖν, βελτίων καὶ διαφέρουσα (C. Cels. 4.57).

⁴¹² τὰς ποιότητας, οὐκ οἶδ’ ὀπόθεν οὕτω τεταγμένας ἐκ τῶνδε τάσδε γίνεσθαι, οὐχὶ θείου τινὸς λόγου ἔργον εἶναι, τὰς ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ ποιότητος ἀμείβοντος (C. Cels. 4.57).

⁴¹³ οὐ γὰρ ἐσαφήνισε, πότερον πᾶσα ψυχὴ θεοῦ ἔργον ἢ μόνῃ ἡ λογικῇ (C. Cels. 4.58).

⁴¹⁴ He does seem inclined to attribute such an elevated view of animal souls to Celsus, even noting passages in which the latter appears to assert the greater divinity of animal souls, who are “*dearer to God*” and “*have a purer idea of the Deity.*” θεοφιλέστερα ... τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ἔννοιαν ἔχειν καθαρωτέραν (C. Cels. 4.58); however, he finds that the argument is better served if Celsus is made to preserve a distinction between two types of soul.

⁴¹⁵ τὸ μηδὲ παντὸς σώματος ἄλλην εἶναι φύσιν (C. Cels. 4.58).

asserting the superiority of the *human* body.⁴¹⁶ “Thus it will be wrong to say that the body of a bat, or a worm, or a frog, will in no respect differ from that of a man.”⁴¹⁷ It is based on this kind of reasoning, Origen asserts, that people of reasonable wit would reverence the bodies of good men upon their decease, while disregarding or even defiling the bodies of the base; that they would venerate the tomb of Socrates while disregarding that of Anytus.⁴¹⁸

Origen’s final attempt at vindicating material being concerns the Platonic view of the material world as eternal. His tactic is to twist Celsus’ assertion that “*no product of matter is immortal*,”⁴¹⁹ making it appear to contradict this fundamental position, and thus making of Celsus a denier of the immortality of the world:

Now if the world is immortal, which is the opinion of those who say that only the soul is *God’s work* and that it originated from a bowl, let Celsus show that it did not originate from matter which has no qualities, remaining consistent with his opinion that *no*

⁴¹⁶ ἐκάστου ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμα ζώου ἀνάλογον τῇ ψυχῇ, δῆλον ὅτι οὐ ψυχὴ θεοῦ ἔργον ἐστὶ, διαφέροι ἂν τὸ ταύτης σῶμα σώματος, ἐν ᾧ οἰκεῖ ψυχὴ οὐκ οὔσα ἔργον θεοῦ. Origen elaborates this point further elsewhere, elaborating a sliding scale of correspondences even among humans. Invoking the physiognomists Zopyrus, Loxus, and Polemon, he speculates: “Suppose it is true that a certain soul which in accordance with certain mysterious principles does not deserve to be in the body of a completely irrational being, yet is not worthy to be in that of a purely rational being, puts on a monstrous body so that reason cannot be fully developed in one born in this way, whose head is out of proportion to the rest of the body, and is far too small; and suppose that another soul receives a body of such a kind that it is slightly more rational than the former instance, and another still more so, the nature of the body being more or less opposed to the apprehension of reason. Why then should there not be a certain soul that takes a body which is entirely miraculous, which has something in common with men in order to be able to live with them, but which also has something out of the ordinary, in order that the soul may remain uncontaminated by sin?” Εἰ γὰρ ἦδε μὲν ἡ ψυχὴ, κατὰ τινὰς ἀπορρήτους λόγους ἀξία γενομένη μὴ πάντῃ μὲν ἐν ἀλόγου γενέσθαι σώματι οὐ μὴν καὶ καθαρῶς ἐν λογικοῦ, ἐνδύεται σῶμα τερατῶδες, ὡς μὴδὲ τὸν λόγον συμπληρωθῆναι δύνασθαι τῷ οὕτως γεγενημένῳ καὶ ἀσύμμετρον ἔχοντι τὴν κεφαλὴν τῷ λοιπῷ σώματι καὶ πάνυ βραχυτέραν, ἑτέρα δὲ τοιόνδε σῶμα ἀναλαμβάνει, ὡς ὀλίγω ἐκείνου γενέσθαι λογικώτερα, καὶ ἄλλη ἐπι μᾶλλον, τῆς φύσεως τοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἢ ἐπ’ ἔλαττον ἀντιπραττοῦσης τῇ τοῦ λόγου ἀντιλήψει· διὰ τί οὐχὶ καὶ ψυχὴ τις ἔσται πάντῃ παραδόξον ἀναλαμβάνουσα σῶμα, ἔχον μὲν τι κοινὸν πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἵνα καὶ συνδιατρίψαι αὐτοῖς δυνηθῇ, ἔχον δὲ τι καὶ ἐξαιρετόν, ἵνα τῆς κακίας ἀγευστος ἡ ψυχὴ διαμείναι δυνηθῇ;

⁴¹⁷ Καὶ οὕτω ψεῦδος ἔσται τὸ μὴδὲν διοίσειν νυκτερίδος ἢ εὐλῆς ἢ βατράχου σῶμα παρὰ τὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (C. *Cels.* 4.58).

⁴¹⁸ C. *Cels.* 4.59

⁴¹⁹ ὕλης ἔκγονον οὐδὲν ἀθάνατον (C. *Cels.* 4.61).

product of matter is immortal. But if, since the world is a product of matter, the world is not immortal, then is the world mortal and destined for destruction or not? For if it is destined for destruction, it will be destroyed although it is God's work. Then let Celsus tell us what the soul, which is God's work, will do at the destruction of the world.⁴²⁰

If “no product of matter is immortal,” Origen argues, then such reasoning must be applied with equal force to the material world; if such reasoning does so apply – *i.e.*, if the material cosmos is mortal – then Celsus must concede the mortality of a God-created thing. Origen throws down his challenge in the expectation that Celsus can abandon *neither* the world's materiality *nor* its eternity, which forces a conclusion that tends to elevate materiality alongside the created rational soul. Origen is, of course, confusing the case here, refusing to distinguish between matter in the abstract and any given “product” of matter. Celsus might readily grant the eternity of underlying matter while denying the eternity of the world's particular *form*; but Origen is clearly more interested in gaining the point that the world is a divinely created immortal thing – a concession that elevates the standing of matter alongside the soul. If the world is found to be God-created but *perishable*, he asks, then what of the soul? Can the God-created soul also die? Origen's game is plainly somewhat devious, but it is an interesting display of appropriating aspects of Platonic tradition to leverage from Celsus the concession that matter, too – and not merely the rational soul – is created by God, and that it may be regarded as in some sense everlasting. Material being is thereby vindicated, and the body is implicitly elevated in its standing alongside the immortal, rational soul, calling into question Celsus' conviction on the soul's unique standing, and his rather severe rejection of embodiment.

⁴²⁰ Εἰ μὲν οὖν ἀθάνατος ὁ κόσμος, ὅπερ ἀρέσκει καὶ τοῖς θεοῦ ἔργον εἰποῦσι μόνην τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ ἀπὸ τινος αὐτὴν κρατήρος γεγονέναι λέγουσι, δεικνύτω ὁ Κέλσος οὐκ ἔξ ὕλης ἀποίου αὐτὸν γεγονέναι, τηρῶν τὸ ὕλης ἔκγονον οὐδὲν ἀθάνατον· εἰ δ' ἐπεὶ ὕλης ἔκγονόν ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος, οὐκ ἐστιν ἀθάνατον ὁ κόσμος· θνητὸν ὁ κόσμος ἄρ' οὖν καὶ φθειρόμενον ἢ μή; Εἰ μὲν γὰρ φθειρόμενον, ὡς θεοῦ ἔργον ἔσται φθειρόμενον· εἴτ' ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ τοῦ κόσμου τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ ψυχὴ τί ποιήσει, λεγέτω ὁ Κέλσος· (C. *Cels.* 4.61).

Thus Origen attempts to combat Celsus' dualist rejection of matter by seizing the Platonic ground upon which the latter founds his objections. If it is granted, in accordance with venerable, traditional outlook, that the stars and the *aether* have material bodies, and that a rational soul makes for a higher grade of embodiment, and furthermore, that the very fact of matter's eternity suggests something of divinity and immortality, then perhaps Celsus' vehement rejection of materiality has been somewhat undermined.

4. *The Incarnation of the Logos: Encountering God in the Body*

As we have already seen in Origen's spiritual anthropology, it is the very decision to conceptualize God as *Logos* that makes God accessible to the rational embodied nature of the human being. It is a point that Origen often emphasizes:

But if, because we have understood that 'in the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God,' we affirm that God is attainable by this Logos, and is comprehended not by him alone, but also by any man to whom he reveals the Father, we would prove that Celsus' words were untrue when he says *Neither is God attainable by reason [λόγω]*.⁴²¹

Origen here transforms the human faculty of reason (λόγος) by resorting to his conceptualization of God *as Logos* as precisely the venue wherein reason subsists: we may "reason" our way to God precisely because we are rational creatures created through the *Logos* (or *in Wisdom*). But *Logos* is no mere abstraction in which intellectually-inclined human beings might find themselves mirrored; it is God moving out into the created order to reach the rational embodied creatures who stand in need:

⁴²¹ εἰ δὲ νοήσαντες τὸ «Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος» ἀποφαινόμεθα ὅτι τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ ἐφικτός ἐστιν ὁ θεός, οὐ μόνῳ αὐτῷ καταλαμβανόμενος ἀλλὰ καὶ ᾧ ἂν αὐτὸς ἀποκαλύψῃ τὸν πατέρα, ψευδοποιήσομεν τὴν Κέλσου λέξιν φάσκοντος· οὐδὲ λόγῳ ἐφικτός ἐστιν ὁ θεός (C.Cels. 6.65). As elsewhere: "Accordingly, if Celsus asks us *how we think we can come to know God, and how we imagine we shall be saved by him*, we reply that the Logos of God is sufficient; for he comes to those who seek him or accept him when he appears to make known and reveal the Father...."

Accordingly, if Celsus asks us *how we think we can come to know God, and how we imagine we shall be saved by him*, we reply that the Logos of God is sufficient; for he comes to those who seek him or accept him when he appears to make known and reveal the Father....⁴²²

The *Logos* is thus an agent as well, coming to those who “seek” and “accept” him, and presumably making up the lack in their innate reasoning capacities by calibrating his activity to the capacities of those open to receiving him. Central to this idea is the affinity between the divine *Logos* and the rational embodied creature, often expressed by Origen in the terms of *image*. The restoration of the soul conceived as “in the image” of God is accomplished by re-inscribing it as the proper image of the *Logos*. Naturally Origen does not mean that the soul crudely replicates God, a point that he makes by adducing the model of the soul as the *image* of the *image*:

Then Celsus failed to see the difference between what is ‘in the image of God’ and his image. He did not realize that the image of God is the firstborn of all creation, the very Logos and truth, and, further, the very wisdom Himself, being ‘the image of his goodness,’ whereas man was made ‘in the image of God’....⁴²³

Celsus has objected that God “*did not make man his image; for God is not like that, nor does he resemble any other form at all.*”⁴²⁴ To this Origen replies that only the *Logos* is the “image of God,” arguing further that Celsus “failed to understand to what characteristic of man the words ‘in the image of God’ apply, and that this exists in the soul.” It is rather the “inner man” – synonymous for Origen with the rational nature – that is in the image of the *Logos*, having being formed through the *Logos* in God’s providential creation:

⁴²² Διόπερ ἐὰν ἔρηται ἡμᾶς Κέλσος, Πῶς οἰόμεθα γνωρίσειν τὸν θεόν, καὶ πῶς πρὸς αὐτὸν σωθήσεσθαι· ἀποκρινούμεθα ὅτι ἰκανός ἐστιν ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος, γενόμενος τοῖς ζητοῦσιν αὐτὸν ἢ τοῖς ἐπιφαινόμενον αὐτὸν παραδεχομένοις, γνωρίσαι καὶ ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν πατέρα (C.Cels. 6.68).

⁴²³ Εἰτά φησιν ὁ Κέλσος, μὴ ἐνιδῶν τῇ διαφορᾷ τοῦ «κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ» καὶ «τῆς εἰκόνος αὐτοῦ», ὅτι «εἰκὼν» μὲν «τοῦ θεοῦ» ὁ «πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεώς» ἐστιν ὁ αὐτολόγος καὶ ἡ αὐτοαλήθεια ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἡ αὐτοσοφία, «εἰκὼν» οὕσα «τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ», «κατ’ εἰκόνα» δὲ τοῦ «θεοῦ» ὁ ἄνθρωπος πεποιῆται.... (C.Cels. 6.63).

⁴²⁴ Οὐδ’ ἄνθρωπον ἐποίησεν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ· οὐ γὰρ τοιόσδε ὁ θεὸς οὐτ’ ἄλλω εἶδει οὐδενὶ ὅμοιος. (C.Cels. 6.63).

The remaining possibility is that that which is made in the image of God is to be understood of the inward man, as we call it, which is renewed and has the power to be formed in the image of the Creator, when a man becomes perfect as his heavenly Father is perfect, and when he hears 'Be holy because I the Lord your God am holy,' and when he learns the saying 'Become imitators of God' and assumes into his own virtuous soul the characteristics of God.⁴²⁵

When a human being is transformed in his rational, "inner" nature, his entire physical being is transformed as well: "the body of the man who has assumed the characteristics of God, in that part which is made in the image of God, is a temple, since he possesses a soul of this character and has God in his soul because of that which is in his image."⁴²⁶ Here is the very open suggestion that that human body may attain to a higher grade whenever the soul, "in that that part which is made in the image," takes up "the characteristics of God" (ἐν τῷ «κατ' εἰκόνα» ... τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ). When we recall the dismissive language employed by Celsus in characterizing the body – that it is a "dead thing," – such biblical language underlines the significance for Origen of the material body as a site of holiness and transformative, divine activity. Where the rational soul (λογικὴ ψυχὴ) is shaped by the divine *Logos*, a process in which a man becomes "holy" and an "imitator of God," it is healed and renewed and brought into a superior state of being, the body such a rational being is also transformed and termed appropriately a "temple" – an image entirely appropriate for a being that is rationally "in the image" (διὰ τὸ «κατ' εἰκόνα»).⁴²⁷

For Origen, it is clear that such sanctifying elevation is made possible only by the

⁴²⁵ Λείπεται δὴ τὸ «κατ' εἰκόνα» τοῦ «θεοῦ» ἐν τῷ καθ' ἡμᾶς λεγομένῳ ἔσω ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ ἀνακαινουμένῳ καὶ πεφυκότι γίνεσθαι «κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος» νοεῖσθαι, ὅτε γίνεταί τις «τέλειος», «ὡς ὁ πατήρ ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστι», καὶ ἀκούει ὅτι «Ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν», καὶ μανθάνων τὸ «Μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ γίνεσθε» ἀναλαμβάνει εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐνάρετον ψυχὴν τοὺς χαρακτήρας τοῦ θεοῦ. (C.Cels. 6.63).

⁴²⁶ καὶ «ναός» ἐστὶ τοῦ ἐν τῷ «κατ' εἰκόνα» ἀνειληφότος τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ «τὸ σῶμα», τοῦ τοιαύτην ἔχοντος ψυχὴν καὶ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ διὰ τὸ «κατ' εἰκόνα» τὸν θεόν (C.Cels. 6.63).

⁴²⁷ The point is more forceful when we note that elsewhere, in discussing physical structures, Origen argues that the veneration that they receive is in proportion to what lies within: temples are valued more highly than brothels; the tomb of Socrates is venerated over the tomb of Anytus.

Logos' assumption of flesh:

...Because of those who had cleaved to the flesh and become as flesh, he became flesh, that he might be received by those incapable of seeing him in his nature as the one who was the Logos, who was with God, who was God. And being spoken of under physical forms, and being proclaimed to be flesh, he calls to himself those who are flesh that he may make them first to be formed like the Logos who became flesh, and after that lead them up to see him as he was before he became flesh; so that they may be helped and may advance from the first stage which is that of the flesh and say: 'Even if we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more.'⁴²⁸

The result of this encounter is that the soul may be then "formed like the Logos," a process that is possible only given the soul's original standing as the image of the *Logos*. The end attained is an ascent from embodiment, in which the soul "sees" the *Logos* "as he was before he became flesh," first having obtained, by virtue of an encounter with the *Logos* in the flesh, an advance "from the first stage which is that of the flesh." Against Celsus' attack on this doctrine – his implication that such teaching merely trivializes the ascent to truth, scathingly made clear in his assertion that "*Because he is hard to perceive he thrust his own Spirit into a body like ours, and sent him down here, that we might be able to hear and learn from him*" – Origen insists that the descent of the *Logos* is not merely a program of blithe simplification. On the contrary, even the incarnate Son must be understood in terms of the providential creative acts of God; he remains the one in whom God has made all things:

Let us grant that *God is hard to perceive*. Yet he is not the only being hard for a person to perceive. For the divine Logos is hard to perceive; and the same is true of the wisdom in which God has made all things. For who can perceive the wisdom in which God has made each individual thing? Therefore, it was not because God is hard to

⁴²⁸ διὰ τοὺς κολληθέντας τῇ σαρκὶ καὶ γενομένους ὅπερ «σὰρξ» «ἐγένετο» «σὰρξ», ἵνα χωρηθῆ ὑπὸ τῶν μὴ δυναμένων αὐτὸν βλέπειν καθὼ «λόγος» ἦν καὶ «πρὸς θεὸν» ἦν «καὶ θεὸς ἦν». Καὶ σωματικῶς γε λαλούμενος καὶ ὡς «σὰρξ» ἀπαγγελλόμενος ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν καλεῖ τοὺς ὄντας σάρκα, ἵν' αὐτοὺς ποιήσῃ πρῶτον μορφωθῆναι κατὰ λόγον τὸν γενόμενον σάρκα, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο αὐτοὺς ἀναβιβάσῃ ἐπὶ τὸ ἰδεῖν αὐτόν, ὅπερ ἦν πρὶν γένηται «σὰρξ». ὥστε αὐτοὺς ὠφεληθέντας καὶ ἀναβάντας ἀπὸ τῆς κατὰ σάρκα εἰσαγωγῆς εἰπεῖν τό· «Εἰ καὶ Χριστὸν ποτε κατὰ σάρκα ἐγνώκαμεν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν» (C.Cels. 6.68).

perceive that he sent a Son who was easy to perceive.... But, as we have observed, the Son also is hard to perceive, seeing that he is the divine Logos through whom all things were made, who tabernacled among us.⁴²⁹

Thus Origen's program is no mere lowering of the bar. Rather, the *Logos* so conceived now *inhabits* that natural world, making possible the first steps of ascent for rational beings bearing its imprint.

Origen predicates the possibility on the embodied *Logos* on the assumptions that we have already seen about the qualitative relationship between bodies and souls, pitting the possibility of a divine body for Jesus against the rather grim case of "a certain soul which ... is not worthy to be in [the body] of a purely rational being," and which therefore "puts on a monstrous body so that reason cannot be fully developed in one born this way, whose head is out of proportion to the rest of the body, and is far too small...."⁴³⁰ If such correspondences are real, as the physiognomists theorize, then we may reasonably posit a "miraculous" body for Jesus, thereby opposing Celsus' repeated slander that Jesus was the product of an adulterous union between Mary and an otherwise unknown legionary named "Panthera."⁴³¹ Such considerations lead Origen

⁴²⁹ Ἐστω δὴ καὶ δυσθεώρητος ὁ θεός· ἀλλ' οὐ μόνος δυσθεώρητός ἐστι τινί, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ μονογενῆς αὐτοῦ. Δυσθεώρητος γὰρ ὁ θεός λόγος, δυσθεώρητος δὲ οὕτως καὶ σοφία ἐστίν, ἐν ἣ τὰ πάντα πεποίηκεν ὁ θεός. Τίς γὰρ δύναται καθ' ἕκαστον τῶν πάντων τὴν σοφίαν, ἐν ἣ ὁ θεός καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν πάντων πεποίηκε, <θεωρησάμενος>; Οὐ διὰ τὸ δυσθεώρητος οὖν ὁ θεός εἶναι ὡς εὐθεώρητον τὸν υἱὸν ἔπεμψεν.... Ἀλλ' ὡς ἀποδεδώκαμεν, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς δυσθεώρητος, ἅτε ὢν λόγος θεός, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο, «καὶ ἐσκῆνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν» (C.Cels. 6.69).

⁴³⁰ ἦδε μὲν ἡ ψυχὴ ... ἀξία γενομένη ... οὐ μὴν καὶ καθαρῶς ἐν λογικοῦ [γενέσθαι σώματι] ἐνδύεται σῶμα τερατώδες, ὡς μηδὲ τὸν λόγον συμπληρωθῆναι δύνασθαι τῷ οὕτως γεγεννημένῳ καὶ ἀσύμμετρον ἔχοντι τὴν κεφαλὴν τῷ λοιπῷ σώματι καὶ πάνυ βραχυτέραν.... (C.Cels. 1.33).

⁴³¹ Suppose that the views of the physiognomists are granted, of Zopyrus, Loxus, or Polemon, or anyone else who wrote about these matters and professed to possess some remarkable knowledge, that all bodies conform to the habits of their souls; then for the soul that was to live a miraculous life on earth and to do great things, a body was necessary, not, as Celsus thinks, produced by the adultery of Panthera and a virgin (for the offspring of such impure intercourse must rather have been some stupid man who would harm men by teaching licentiousness, unrighteousness, and other evils, and not a teacher of self-control, righteousness, and other virtues), but, as the prophets foretold, the offspring of a virgin who according to the promised sign should give birth to a child whose name was significant of his work, showing that at his

into the difficult territory of defining just what it means for the *Logos* to have a body: “If [Jesus] had been born as the Bible says, his body could have been somehow more divine than that of the multitude and in some sense the body of God.”⁴³² The equivocation “in some sense” (κατά τι σημαίνόμενον) marks a certain hesitation that is evident later, when Origen suggests that “not even we suppose that the body of Jesus, which could then be seen and perceived by the senses, was God. And why do I say the body? For not even his soul was God....”⁴³³ Neither the body nor the soul of Jesus was God, and yet his body was “the body of God” in some sense. Origen’s solution to this problem appears to be to assume that the *Logos* adopts a certain body and elevates its standing thereby. By way of analogy Origen suggests a Pythian priestess as a model for the manner in which God acts *through* the body of Jesus: “Similarly in our opinion it was the divine *Logos* and Son of the God of the universe that spoke in Jesus, saying: ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’....”⁴³⁴ The soul and body of Jesus thus appear to be a composite instrument employed by the divine *Logos*, the “Son of the God of the universe.” Interestingly, though, Origen strives to close the conceptual gap that he has just opened between agent and instrument:

When we say this, we do not separate the Son of God from Jesus. For after the incarnation the soul and body of Jesus became very closely united [ἐν] with the *Logos* of God... That which was at one time a

birth God would be with men. Ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν φυσιογνωμονούντων κρατῆ, εἴτε Ζωπύρου εἴτε Λόξου εἴτε Πολέμωνος εἴτε οὐτινός ποτ’ οὖν τοιαῦτα γράψαντος καὶ ἐπαγγελαμένου εἰδέναι τι θαυμαστόν, οἰκεία τοῖς ἡθεσι τῶν ψυχῶν πάντ’ εἶναι τὰ σώματα, τῆ οὖν μελλούσῃ παραδόξως ἐπιδημεῖν τῷ βίῳ καὶ μεγαλοποιεῖν ἔδει γενέσθαι σῶμα οὐχ, ὡς οἶεται Κέλσος, ἀπὸ Πανθήρα μοιχεύσαντος καὶ παρθένου μοιχευθείσης—ἐκ γὰρ τοιούτων ἀνάγκων μίξεω ἔδει μᾶλλον ἀνόητόν τινα καὶ ἐπιβλαβῆ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις διδάσκαλον ἀκολασίας καὶ ἀδικίας καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν κακῶν γενέσθαι οὐχὶ δὲ σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀρετῶν—, ἀλλ’ ὡς καὶ προφητῶν προεῖπον, ἀπὸ παρθένου, κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν σημείου γεννώσης τὸν ἐπώνυμον πράγματος, δηλοῦντος ὅτι ἐπὶ τῇ γενέσει αὐτοῦ μετ’ ἀνθρώπων ἔσται θεός (C.Cels. 1.33).

⁴³² εἰ, ὡς γέγραπται, γεγέννητο, δύναταί πως εἶναι τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ καὶ θεϊότερον παρὰ τοὺς πολλοὺς καὶ κατά τι σημαίνόμενον θεοῦ σῶμα (C.Cels. 1.69).

⁴³³ Πρὸς ταῦτα δὲ φήσομεν ὅτι οὐδ’ ἡμεῖς ὑπολαμβάνομεν τὸ βλεπόμενον τότε καὶ αἰσθητὸν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ σῶμα εἶναι θεόν. Καὶ τί λέγω τὸ σῶμα; Ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τὴν ψυχὴν (C.Cels. 2.9).

⁴³⁴ οὕτω καθ’ ἡμᾶς ὁ λόγος θεὸς καὶ θεοῦ τῶν ὄλων υἱὸς ἔλεγεν ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τό· «Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ» (C.Cels. 2.9).

composite being in relation to the Logos of God is one with him....⁴³⁵

Thus, although the *Logos* and the body are theoretically conceptualized as separate – just as is the case for the rational nature and the body of a human being – the Son of God in his embodied state is nevertheless a unity, which to encounter is never anything less than the divine *Logos*, the eternal Son of God.

The critical difference in the case of Jesus is that the soul has been displaced by the *Logos* as that factor that determines the body's quality, a displacement which in turn sanctifies *both* soul and body:

Let our critics know that he, whom we think and have believed to be God and Son of God from the beginning, is the very Logos and wisdom and truth itself. We affirm that his mortal body and the soul within him received the greatest elevation not only by communion, but by union and intermingling, so that by sharing in his divinity he was transformed into God.⁴³⁶

The *Logos* thus transforms the body and soul of Jesus by becoming one with them, in “communion” (κοινωνία), “union” (ένώσει) and “intermingling” (άνακράσει). Only the pliancy of matter that is axiomatic to Origen's thought that makes such an elevation possible:

If anyone should take offense because we say this even of his body, let him consider what is asserted by the Greeks about matter, that properly speaking it is without qualities, but is clothed with qualities such as the Creator wishes to give it, and that often it puts aside its former qualities and receives better and different ones. If this is right, why is it remarkable that by the providence of God's will the mortal quality of Jesus' body should have been changed into an ethereal and divine quality? ...We would say that if it is possible for the matter underlying all qualities to possess varying qualities, why is it

⁴³⁵ Ταῦτα δέ φαμεν οὐ χωρίζοντες τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ· ἐν γὰρ μάλιστα μετὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν γεγένηται πρὸς τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα Ἰησοῦ ... ἐν ἔστι τό ποτε σύνθετον πρὸς τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ (C.Cels. 2.9).

⁴³⁶ ὅμως δὲ ἴστωσαν οἱ ἐγκαλοῦντες ὅτι, ὃν μὲν νομίζομεν καὶ πεπεύσμεθα ἀρχῆθεν εἶναι θεὸν καὶ υἱὸν θεοῦ, οὗτος ὁ αὐτολόγος ἔστι καὶ ἡ αὐτοσοφία καὶ ἡ αὐτοαλήθεια· τὸ δὲ θνητὸν αὐτοῦ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἐν αὐτῷ ψυχὴν τῇ πρὸς ἐκεῖνον οὐ μόνον κοινωνία ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐνώσει καὶ ἀνακράσει τὰ μέγιστα φαμεν προσειληφέναι καὶ τῆς ἐκεῖνου θειότητος κεκοινωνηκότα εἰς θεὸν μεταβεβληκέναι (C.Cels. 3.41).

impossible for the flesh of Jesus to have changed qualities, and to become of such a character as flesh would need to be, if it is to live in aether and the realms above it, where it no longer has the properties belonging to carnal weakness and those which Celsus calls *abominable*?⁴³⁷

The risk in such a formulation is that it leans toward characterizing Jesus as a sort of ethereal cosmic visitor from Gnostic myths. Origen's risk in granting that flesh in the world is tainted by "carnal weakness," and that it might fairly be characterized as "*abominable*," as well as his assigning to Jesus a body of an "ethereal and divine quality" would lend support to such a view. Such notions can give the impression that Origen does not view the material manifestation of the *Logos* as uniformly divine. The more conventionally physical, the less divine; the less conventionally physical, the more divine.

And yet the incarnation of the *Logos* is a bridge enabling the first steps of ascent for embodied rational beings. The rational being can come to mirror the *Logos*, and the process is abetted by the *Logos'* assumption of flesh. The human ascent that is thus enabled, as will shortly be seen, essentially reverses the trajectory of the *Logos*: as the *Logos* descends into materiality, taking upon itself the "abominable" body that Celsus abhors, so the human soul finally ascends, its body transformed into the "aetherial" body, more suited to transcendent realms, and more characteristic of divinity. Nevertheless, Origen insists that the *Logos* is in no way distorted in the descent. He is likened to the physician who heals our diseases, while immune to them himself.⁴³⁸ He effects changes in the souls that receive him, while remaining himself impassible: "If the

⁴³⁷ Ἐὰν δέ τις προσκόπτη καὶ περὶ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ ταῦθ' ἡμῶν λεγόντων, ἐπιστησάτω τοῖς ὑπὸ Ἑλλήνων λεγομένοις περὶ τῆς τῷ ἰδίῳ λόγῳ ἀποίου ὕλης, ποιότητος ἀμφισκομένης, ὅποιας ὁ δημιουργὸς βούλεται αὐτῇ περιτιθέσθαι, καὶ πολλάκις τὰς μὲν προτέρας ἀποτιθεμένης κρείττονας δὲ καὶ διαφόρους ἀναλαμβάνουσης. Εἰ γὰρ ὑγιῆ τὰ τοιαῦτα, τί θαυμαστὸν τὴν ποιότητα τοῦ θνητοῦ κατὰ τὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ σῶμα προνοία θεοῦ βουλευθέντος μεταβαλεῖν εἰς αἰθέριον καὶ θείαν ποιότητα;... εἶπερ δυνατὸν ἀμείβειν ποιότητος τὴν ὑποκειμένην πάσαις ποιότησιν ὕλην, πῶς οὐ δυνατὸν καὶ τὴν σάρκα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἀμείψασαν ποιότητος γεγενῆσθαι τοιαύτην, ὅποιαν ἔχρην εἶναι τὴν ἐν αἰθέρι καὶ τοῖς ἀνωτέρω αὐτοῦ τόποις πολιτευομένην, οὐκέτι ἔχουσιν τὰ τῆς σαρκικῆς ἀσθενείας ἴδια καὶ ἄτινα *μιαρῶτερα* ὠνόμασεν ὁ Κέλσος; (C.Cels. 3.41).

⁴³⁸ C.Cels. 4.15

immortal divine word assumes both a human body and a human soul, and by so doing appears to Celsus to be subject to change and remoulding, let him learn that the Word remains Word in essence.”⁴³⁹ His manifestation is calibrated to the capacities of those who receive him:

But sometimes he comes down to the level of him who is unable to look upon the radiance and brilliance of the Deity, and becomes as it were flesh, and is spoken of in physical terms, until he who has accepted him in this form is gradually lifted up by the Word and can look even upon, so to speak, his absolute form. There are, as it were, different forms of the Word. For the Word appears to each of those who are led to know him in a form corresponding to the state of the individual, whether he is a beginner, or has made a little progress, or is considerably advanced, or has nearly attained to virtue already, or has in fact attained it.⁴⁴⁰

Again equivocating, Origen asserts that the *Logos* “becomes as it were [οίονεἰ] flesh,” and seems unsure of the stability of the *Logos* within such an unstable mode of existence. The *Logos* becomes flesh *as it were*, until the believer is transformed and elevated (μετεωριζόμενος) to behold (θεάσασθαι) the divinity of the *Logos* in its “absolute form” (προηγούμενην μορφήν), unconstrained by grosser bodies. As often, Origen’s struggles with these questions appear to stem from devising an adequate similitude between embodied rational beings and the incarnate *Logos* that reaches them.⁴⁴¹ It is

⁴³⁹ Εἰ δὲ καὶ σῶμα θνητὸν καὶ ψυχὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀναλαβὼν ὁ ἀθάνατος θεὸς λόγος δοκεῖ τῷ Κέλσῳ ἀλλάττεσθαι καὶ μεταπλάττεσθαι, μανθανέτω ὅτι «ὁ λόγος» τῆ οὐσίᾳ μένων λόγος.... (C.Cels. 4.15).

⁴⁴⁰ συγκαταβαίνων δ’ ἔσθ’ ὅτε τῷ μὴ δυναμένῳ αὐτοῦ τὰς μαρμαρυγὰς καὶ τὴν λαμπρότητα τῆς θεϊότητος βλέπειν οἶονεἰ «σὰρξ» γίνεται, σωματικῶς λαλούμενος, ἕως ὁ τοιοῦτον αὐτὸν παραδεξάμενος κατὰ βραχὺ ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου μετεωριζόμενος δυνηθῆ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν, ἴν’ οὕτως ὀνομάσω, προηγούμενην μορφήν θεάσασθαι. Εἰσὶ γὰρ διάφοροι οἶονεἰ τοῦ λόγου μορφαί, καθὼς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰς ἐπιστήμην ἀγομένων φαίνεται ὁ λόγος, ἀνάλογον τῇ ἕξει τοῦ εἰσαγομένου ἢ ἐπ’ ὀλίγον προκόπτοντος ἢ ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἢ καὶ ἐγγὺς ἤδη γινομένου τῆς ἀρετῆς ἢ καὶ ἐν ἀρετῇ γεγενημένου (C.Cels. 4.15-16).

⁴⁴¹ This is a point to which Origen frequently returns. In book 6, we see the same constellation of elements: the incapacity of most people to confront the *Logos* except in a fairly low, embodied state; the qualitative pliancy of matter that enables the calibration of the *Logos* to the receptive faculties of both the exalted and the debased; the Transfiguration as an example of vision available to the more advanced: “How did he fail to notice that his body differed in accordance with the capacity of those who saw it, and on this account appeared in such form as was

important to bear in mind, even throughout this vindication of higher materiality, that the earthly body is nevertheless a site at which one encounters dangers:

The pure soul, which is not weighed down by the leaden weights of evil, is carried on high to the regions of the purer and ethereal bodies, forsaking the gross bodies on earth and the pollutions attaching to them; whereas the bad soul, which is dragged down to earth by its sins and has not even the power to make a recovery, is carried here and roams about....⁴⁴²

Material reality can seriously hinder the rational being's ascent, as Origen would readily grant. It *can* become the site of divine activity, thereby benefiting from elevation to "the regions of the purer and ethereal bodies" (τοὺς τόπους τῶν καθαρωτέρων καὶ αἰθεριῶν σωμάτων) but only when the rational nature is properly responsive to the therapy of the *Logos*. The bad soul, on the other hand, is ever dragged down to earth and mired in a grosser, more destructive materiality. Such declining creatures, as we shall see, Origen aligns closely with *daemons*. In the next section we shall see how his rejection of the *daemons*, and their alignment with debased souls, will be central to Origen's formulation of acceptable cult, a Christian rite that in his view can actually facilitate the ascent of rational beings.

beneficial for the needs of each individual's vision? It is not remarkable that matter, which is by nature subject to change, alteration, and transformation into anything which the Creator desires, and is capable of possessing any quality which the Artificer wishes, at one time possesses a quality of which it is said 'He had not form or beauty,' and at another time a quality so glorious and striking and wonderful that the three apostles who went up with Jesus and saw the exquisite beauty fell on their faces." (πῶς οὐχ ἔώρα τὸ παραλλάττον τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸ τοῖς ὁρῶσι δυνατόν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο χρήσιμον τοιοῦτο φαινόμενον, ὅποῖον ἔδει ἐκάστῳ βλέπεσθαι; Καὶ οὐ θαυμαστὸν τὴν φύσει τρεπτὴν καὶ ἀλλοιωτὴν καὶ εἰς πάντα ἄβούλεται ὁ δημιουργὸς ὕλην μεταβλητὴν καὶ πάσης ποιότητος, ἣν ὁ τεχνίτης βούλεται, δεκτικὴν, ὅτε μὲν ἔχειν ποιότητα, καθ' ἣν λέγεται τό· «Οὐκ εἶχεν εἶδος οὐδὲ κάλλος», ὅτε δὲ οὕτως ἔνδοξον καὶ καταπληκτικὴν καὶ θαυμαστήν, ὡς «ἐπὶ πρόσωπον» πεσεῖν τοὺς θεατὰς τοῦ τηλικούτου κάλλους συνανελθόντας τῷ Ἰησοῦ τρεῖς ἀποστόλους.) (C.Cels. 6.77).

⁴⁴² ἡ μὲν καθαρὰ καὶ μὴ βαρομένη ὑπὸ τῶν τῆς κακίας μολιβδίδων μετέωρος φέρεται ἐπὶ τοὺς τόπους τῶν καθαρωτέρων καὶ αἰθεριῶν σωμάτων, καταλιποῦσα τὰ τῆδε παχέα σώματα καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς μιάσματα, ἡ δὲ φαύλη καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀμαρτάδων καθελκομένη ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ μηδ' ἀναπνεῦσαι δυναμένη τῆδε φέρεται καὶ καλινδεῖται (C.Cels. 7.5).

5. Exorcising the Daemons: Christianizing Pagan Cult

Here I shall argue that Origen puts forward in *Contra Celsum* what might be loosely termed a “theory” of eucharist derived mainly from an immediate need to assimilate Christian ritual to a pagan religious template, while retaining the vigorous rhetoric of difference characteristic of *Contra Celsum*. In this context, the fact that some of his most arresting statements on behalf of Christian eucharist emerge from arguments rejecting *daemoniac* rites favored by Celsus at once suggests that he is engaged in a game of rhetorical one-upmanship, in which he will offer a superior Christian alternative that will nevertheless make sense within the same complex of ideas implicitly approved by Celsus. By no means should this be taken to suggest that Origen’s view of eucharist was simply and uniformly “pagan”; still less that it can be straightforwardly reduced to the an emphasis on the power of material objects as bearers of *symbola* that is characteristic of Iamblichus; rather, this is merely to suggest that Origen’s momentary adoption of these categories is exactly the kind of experiment in thought that we should expect from an intellectual participant of his time and place.

Origen for the most part shies away from overt discussion of eucharist,⁴⁴³ in much the same way that he avoids the fall of rational beings in excessive detail. As a result, we lack an explicit account of the metaphysics underpinning eucharistic rites. What is more, modern research, perhaps deterred by Origen’s reticence, has tended to be more liturgiological in nature, and has generated an enormous scholarly output aimed at discerning the shapes of various rites.⁴⁴⁴ Here I shall argue that such

⁴⁴³ The initiated already know, and the uninitiated cannot understand, suggests Origen in *HomLev* 9.10. Text quoted in Buchinger (2007) 210.

⁴⁴⁴ Note particularly the conclusions of Buchinger, that “the connection of the liturgy of the word and the Eucharistic celebration [can] probably be assumed,” and that “a Eucharistic prayer, which contains ... an *epiclesis* as well, and perhaps also an explicit statement of offering, is anything but obvious in the first half of the third century, though it was to become standard in the following century” (2007) 223. Such concerns over form also shape the major studies like that of Bradshaw (2004).

approaches may tend to obscure passages⁴⁴⁵ that invite a more probing investigation of intellectual content, and especially of the context of traditional pagan cult praxis.

Admittedly, such an approach supplies us with no ground to make universal assumptions about eucharistic theology in the third century, but nor should we expect to be able to do so, given the scholarly consensus on the lack of uniformity characteristic of eucharistic rites in that age.⁴⁴⁶

Another matter that complicates our consideration of Origen's reflections on eucharist is the interplay between Origen's *Logos*-theology and his biblical hermeneutic. He employs the term "Word of God" broadly to designate the "word" of scripture, the divine hypostasis and "Word" of God that lies behind scripture and indeed authored it, *and* the incarnate Christ himself, the "Word" of God made flesh. Such usage generates ambiguity, in that he may refer to the words of scripture as if they were food to be consumed, or refer to the incarnate Christ as "word," a state of affairs that renders difficult any clear reading of just how eucharistic consumption is to be understood. This latter problem is derived from Philonic models,⁴⁴⁷ which feature a figurative reading of the *manna* that feeds Israel in the desert as the scriptural word that nourishes when properly interpreted.⁴⁴⁸ Likewise Origen, commenting on the transformative effect of the eucharist, understands the consumption of bread as equivalent to the consumption of the wisdom of scripture, the Word of God.⁴⁴⁹ Where Jesus indicates that the "bread" he gives "for the life of the world" is his flesh, and insists that "he who eats my flesh and

⁴⁴⁵ Such as *C.Cels.* 8.57 – to be considered shortly – where Origen applies the term *symbolon* to the eucharist in a context that is already suggestive of theurgic rites or magic.

⁴⁴⁶ Buchinger notes even that despite the warranted conclusion that the Eucharistic mysteries were "celebrated as a liturgy in the strict sense of the word" by Origen's community in Palestine, there is nevertheless "no single text which expressly proves the *emerging as independent of the sacramental action* out of the context of a meal-celebration" (2007) 212.

⁴⁴⁷ See especially LaPorte (1986) 71-73.

⁴⁴⁸ See *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim* IV, 102; *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit* 79; *Legum Allegoriarum* III, 167-176. Texts cited in LaPorte (1986) 74.

⁴⁴⁹ "All the texts on the eucharistic bread suggest the same conclusion: the bread is the word of God. The soul cannot receive another food but the word, *i.e.*, the bread coming down from the mouth of the divine word." LaPorte (1986) 75. Similar sentiments are expressed in Lies (1978) 228-240.

drinks my blood has eternal life," Origen immediately integrates such passages into his scriptural interpretation.⁴⁵⁰ Within this complex of images in which "Word" becomes flesh that is offered for consumption as "bread" – which is to say, generically, "food" – to nourish believers, Origen emphasizes that the flesh-bread in question is precisely the substance of scriptural *word*, which may be rightly or wrongly consumed depending on the appropriateness of one's hermeneutic. It is "irrational and quite savage" to consume the flesh raw; rational men consume it properly prepared "through their desire to understand the spiritual aspects of the word."⁴⁵¹

All of this is surely in keeping with Origen's exegetical strategies, whose proper employment provides for the avoidance of excessive literalism (here undercooking) and excessive dilution of meaning (here overcooking); but when it is argued that Origen reads "bread of heaven" as the "word of God made the food of our soul in scripture ... while supporting the presence of the real flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist,"⁴⁵² we may surely be permitted to ask whether we are begging the question of what is "real." For Philo, surely, *manna* is a figure signifying the nourishment that is to be obtained from scripture, and Origen, too, means to suggest ways in which the Word is rendered incarnate as *both* the "word" of scriptural texts and the flesh of a physical body. Nevertheless, to suggest that Origen means the eucharistic bread as a figure (true), and then that he regards it as the "real flesh and blood" of Christ surely prompts the question of how precisely this might be so. We must explain, that is, why Origen insists indefatigably on the extraordinary reverence to be accorded eucharistic bread in the communion rite, "lest any small part fall from it."⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ *commJohn* 10.99-102. Text quoted in LaPorte (1986) 76.

⁴⁵¹ Likewise, over-boiling is to be avoided, where scriptures is transformed into something "flaccid, watery and limp," as occurs in exegesis by those who "have itching ears" and "transform the anagogical meanings so far as they are concerned to the carelessness and wateriness of their manner of life" (*ibid.* 10.103-104).

⁴⁵² LaPorte (1986) 75.

⁴⁵³ "You, who are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries know, when you receive the body of the Lord, how you protect it with all caution and veneration lest any small part fall from it, lest anything of the consecrated gift be lost. For you believe, and correctly, that you are

The problem with leaving this “reality” unexplained, as I mean to suggest, is that it tends toward reading Origen’s occasional comments on eucharist purely in terms of a “spiritualizing” exegesis, wherein the believer is progressively initiated into ever more etherealized realms, a process which subtly privileges a conception of Word as “words” (scripture) over the Word as flesh, whether in the person of the incarnate Christ or the eucharistic bread. But this reading, while open to Origen’s complex understanding of the “Word,” seems to account inadequately for Origen’s metaphysics, just as it seems likewise predicated upon the prejudice toward reading Origen as a generic “Platonist” who devalues the corporeal relative to the incorporeal in an uncomplicated way, such that one is able to make the curious claim that “believers are now able to communicate with the word of God as did the prophets ... without Christ incarnate ... but directly with Christ the divine word.”⁴⁵⁴ The trouble here is that Christ incarnate is *no less* the divine word, and little could suggest more a forgetfulness that the Word is given as flesh *and bread* for the life of the world, as the careful correlations of the *Commentary on John* make clear.

In a broad sense then, a reading of Origen that focuses on the bread as “scriptural” often risks insufficiently regarding the extraordinary lengths to which Origen goes in developing the possibility of incarnation within a framework of divine materiality – a framework which itself depends on endowing matter with great pliancy in terms of the qualities that it may take on. A reading of the *Contra Celsum*, where Origen is adapting himself to some traditional, non-Christian ways of conceiving mediation, and experimenting with the idea of the *symbolon* as a category that might capture the eucharist’s nature as an actual, material divine presence, is useful as a counterweight to interpretations preoccupied with reconstructing particular rites, or given to seeing the question in exegetical rather than philosophical terms.

As I suggest at the outset, Origen’s attempt to express a certain understanding of

answerable if anything falls from there by neglect” (*homEx* 13.3, trans. Heine, *FaCh* 71, 380f. Text quoted in Buchinger [2007] 214).

⁴⁵⁴ LaPorte (1986) 75.

eucharist in the *Contra Celsum* is situated within a struggle with pagan constructions of cult. Mainly, Origen's thinking unfolds around his rejection of rites directed toward *daemons*. Naturally he benefits from the intellectual resistance to pagan sacrifice already elaborated in the philosophical tradition, as would Augustine after him. The existence of such prejudices even among pagans supplies convenient support for his rejection of pagan cult's machinery. The question, however, is whether asserting an approach *within* the framework of the long-acknowledged system of mediations offered by *daemonic* and other traditional rites does not actually compromise the rather fervid rhetoric of rejection. More simply put, the very placement of Origen's argument can give rise to the insight that the theoretical raw material of cult available for Origen's deployment was limited, and very much the common property of pagan and Christian thinkers, suggesting that his thinking on the eucharist here may be to some extent a reconfiguration of pagan rites.

It is almost as if Origen, feeling an acute sense of absence at the removal of *daemons* and the important roles they play within Platonic cosmology to ensure the proper sustenance of the material world. He presents this traditional view, presented as Celsus' opinion that every natural and human process must be understood as falling within the providence of some *daemon*, often conceived in terms of a local divinity. Celsus is appalled that Christians – still more a Christian like Origen, claiming philosophical credentials – should alienate themselves from these mediating presences in all of their variety:

Reason demands one of two alternatives. If they refuse to worship in the proper way the lords in charge of the following activities, then they ought neither to come to the estate of a free man, nor to marry a wife, nor to beget children, nor to do anything else in life. But they should depart from this world leaving no descendants at all behind them, so that such a race would entirely cease to exist in earth. But if they are going to marry wives, and beget children, and taste of the fruits, and partake of the joys of this life, and endure the appointed evils (by nature's law all men must have experience of evils; evil is necessary and has nowhere else to exist), then they ought to render the due honors to the beings who have been entrusted with these things. And they ought to offer the due rites of worship on this life until they are set free from their bonds, lest they even

*appear ungrateful to them. It is wrong for people who partake of what is their property to offer them nothing in return.*⁴⁵⁵

In contrast, Origen argues that bad souls, with their excessive attachment to matter, are weighed down to earth, where they wander aimlessly, often attaching themselves to specific places – such as tombs and other such buildings and locales. They are bound to such places “by some magical incantations or even because of their own wickedness.”⁴⁵⁶

Linking such souls explicitly to *daemons*, he goes on to argue that

Reason demands that we should think such spirits to be wicked, for they use their power to know the future ... to deceive men and to distract them from God and pure piety towards Him. That this is the character of the daemons is also made clear by the fact that their bodies, nourished by the smoke from sacrifices, and by the portions take from the blood and burnt offerings in which they delight, find in this, as it were, their heart's desire, like vicious men who do not welcome the prospect of living a pure life without their bodies, but only enjoy life in the earthly body because of its physical pleasures.⁴⁵⁷

Perhaps because argumentative advantage requires it, Origen here takes on the dualist outlook characteristic of *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. Under the terms of such a view, since *daemons* are equated to the most degraded souls, immured in “the gross bodies on earth

⁴⁵⁵ Δυοῖν θάτερον αἰρεῖ λόγος. Εἰ μὲν ἀπαξιούσι θεραπεύειν τὰ εἰκότα τοὺς τῶνδε ἐπιστάτας, μήτ' εἰς ἀνδρὸς ἰέναι μήτ' ἄγεσθαι γυναῖκα μήτ' ἀναιρεῖσθαι τέκνα μήτ' ἄλλο πράττειν μηδὲν ἐν τῷ βίῳ, χωρεῖν δ' ἔνθεν πασσυδι μηδὲν σπέρμα ἐλλειπομένους, ὡς ἂν ἐρημωθεῖη πάμπαν ἐπὶ γῆς τὸ τοιοῦτον γένος· εἰ δὲ καὶ γυναῖκας ἄξονται καὶ παῖδας ποιήσονται καὶ καρπῶν γεύσονται καὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ μεθέξουσι καὶ κακῶν τῶν ἐπιτεταγμένων ἀνέξονται— φύσις μὲν γὰρ αὕτη πάντα ἀνθρώπους πειρᾶσθαι κακῶν· εἶναι μὲν γὰρ ἀνάγκη κακά, χώραν δ' ἄλλην οὐκ ἔχει—, ἀποδοτέον δὴ τὰς προσηκούσας τοῖς ταῦτ' ἐπιτετραμμένοις τιμὰς καὶ τῷ βίῳ λειτουργητέον τὰ πρόποντα, μέχρι ἂν τῶν δεσμῶν ἀπολυθῶσι, μὴ καὶ ἀχάριστοι πρὸς τούσδε εἶναι δοκῶσι. Καὶ γὰρ ἄδικον μετέχοντας ὧν οἶδε ἔχουσι μηδὲν αὐτοῖς συντελεῖν (C.Cels. 8.55).

⁴⁵⁶ εἴτε μαγγανείαις τισὶν εἴτε καὶ διὰ τὴν σφετέραν κακίαν (C.Cels. 7.5)

⁴⁵⁷ Ὁ λόγος δὴ αἰρεῖ φαῦλ' ἄττα νομίζειν εἶναι τὰ τοιαῦτα, τῇ προγνωστικῇ δυνάμει εἰς ἀπάτην ἀνθρώπων χρώμενα καὶ πρὸς τὸ περισπάσαι αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῆς καθαρᾶς εἰς αὐτὸν εὐσεβείας. Δηλοῖ δὲ τὸ τοιοῦτους αὐτοὺς τυγχάνειν καὶ τὸ ταῖς ἀπὸ τῶν θυσῶν ἀναθυμιάσεσι καὶ ταῖς ἀπὸ τῶν αἱμάτων καὶ ὀλοκαυτωμάτων ἀποφοραῖς τρεφόμενα αὐτῶν τὰ σώματα, φιληδονούντων τοῖς τοιοῦτοις, ἐπ' αὐτὸ τυγχάνειν τοῦ ὡσπερὶ φιλοζωεῖν, ἀνάλογον φαύλοισι ἀνθρώποις, οὐκ ἀσπαζομένοις μὲν τὸ καθαρώτερον ἔξω σωματῶν ζῆν, περιέπουσι δὲ διὰ τὰς σωματικὰς ἡδονὰς τὴν ἐν τῷ γέῳδαι σωματι ζωὴν (C.Cels. 7.5).

and [their] pollutions,” Origen may reject them out of hand, likewise rejecting as absurd Celsus’ view that human beings should be “handed over” the government of such beings:

Men are born bound to the body, whether because of the administration of the world, or because they are paying the penalty for their sin, or because the soul is weighed down by certain passions until it has been purified through the appointed periods. For according to Empedocles it must

*Wander about for thirty thousand ages away from the blessed,
Becoming every possible shape of mortal being in the time.*

We must believe, then, that they are handed over to certain officers in charge of this prison.⁴⁵⁸

Origen simply cannot accept *daemons* as prison wardens, nor the notion that rational beings should assent to such “imprisonment.” The context of the argument – Celsus’ rejection of Judaism – is itself informative. Origen is exasperated that Celsus, despite holding such an exalted view of the soul’s destiny, would nevertheless *reject* the more rarefied religion of the Jews while *endorsing* the sordid religions of Egypt, whose elaborate pagan claptrap serves only to imprison souls under such *daemoniac* governance. Origen’s assumption of a dualist rhetoric, which implies that creatures of such a low grade and of such gross embodiment can hardly “govern,” enables an outright rejection of such a position, and takes it as obvious that *daemoniac* rites must be replaced by rites of a more elevated sort.

These more elevated rites must represent an approach that differs from Celsus’

⁴⁵⁸ Ἐπειδὴ δὲ σῶματι συνδεθέντες ἄνθρωποι γεγονάσιν, εἴτ’ οἰκονομίας τῶν ὅλων ἔνεκεν εἴτε ποινὰς ἀμαρτίας ἀποτίνοντες, εἴθ’ ὑπὸ παθημάτων τινῶν τῆς ψυχῆς βαρυνθείσης, μέχρι ἂν <ἐν> ταῖς τεταγμέναις περιόδοις ἐκκαθαρθῇ· δεῖ γὰρ κατὰ τὸν Ἐμπεδοκλέα

τρῖς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
γινομένην παντοίαν διὰ χρόνου ἰδέαν θνητῶν·

πειστέον οὖν ὅτι παραδέδονταί τισιν ἐπιμεληταῖς τοῦδε τοῦ δεσμωτηρίου (C.Cels. 8.53).

conventional outlook on religious rites and their efficacy. Celsus' thought in his *On the True Doctrine*, reflects the traditional view that to offer worship or acknowledgement to any divinity, no matter how low in the hierarchy of divine being, is effectively to offer worship to the highest god. Origen, given his commitment to bridging the material and the incorporeal, likewise reveals shades of his commitment to this overall divine unity, sustained by the philosophical ideas of *sympatheia* or cosmic *philia*, such as when he argues for the role of material reality as the first rung on the ascent to God, or when he asserts a similar vision of the entire world as the "temple of God."⁴⁵⁹ Obviously, though, he cannot embrace the full panoply of pagan rites associated with such an outlook.

Celsus may argue that:

*the man who worships several gods, because he worships some one of those which belong to the great God, even by this very action does that which is loved by him.... It is not lawful to give honor to any to whom this right has not been granted by him. Therefore ... anyone who honors and worships all those who belong to God does not hurt him, since they all are his.*⁴⁶⁰

To underline the absurdity of according worship to mere deputies, Origen adduces the deliberately absurd example of the emperor Hadrian's deified lover, Antinous:

At all events, Hadrian's favourite is honored, as you, Celsus, remarked a short while ago. And you would not, I presume, say that the right to receive honour as a god has been granted to Antinous by the God of the universe? We could say the same of the rest also, demanding proof of the assertion that the right to receive honour has been granted to them by the supreme God.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ "Even an uneducated Christian is convinced that every place in the world is a part of the whole, since the whole world is a temple of God; and he prays in any place, and by shutting the eyes of sense and raising those of the soul he ascends beyond the entire world." Χριστιανός δὲ καὶ ὁ ἰδιώτης πάντα μὲν τόπον τοῦ κόσμου πέπεισται εἶναι μέρος τοῦ ὅλου, ναοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ὄντος τοῦ παντός κόσμου. «ἐν παντί» δὲ «τόπῳ» εὐχόμενος, μύσας τοὺς τῆς αἰσθήσεως ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἐγείρας τοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς, ὑπεραναβαίνει τὸν ὅλον κόσμον. (C.Cels. 7.44).

⁴⁶⁰ ... τὸν θεραπεύοντα θεοὺς πλείονας τῷ ἓν τι τῶν τοῦ μεγάλου θεραπεύειν φίλον καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἐκείνῳ ποιεῖν ... οὐδ' ἔξεστι τιμᾶσθαί τινα ᾧ μὴ ἐξ ἐκείνου τούτο δέδοται. Διότι τιμῶν τις καὶ σέβων ... τοὺς ἐκείνου πάντας οὐ λυπεῖ τὸν θεόν, οὐ πάντες εἰσίν.

⁴⁶¹ Τιμᾶται γοῦν, ὡς πρὸ βραχέος ἔλεγες, ὧ Κέλσε, τὰ Ἀδριανοῦ παιδικά, καὶ οὐ δὴ πού ἐρεῖς ὅτι ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν ὄλων δέδοται τὸ τιμᾶσθαι ὡς θεῶ τῷ Ἀντινῳ. Τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐροῦμεν, ἀπαιτοῦντες ἀπόδειξιν περὶ τοῦ δεδόσθαι αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεοῦ τὸ

The one example imperils all. The world may be a temple, but in Origen's view it is a temple in which the range of practices is about to be significantly narrowed. At times Origen seems to have *no* rites in mind for his temple, as when he displaces the "image" and "votive" associated with pagan idolatry with interior ethical transformation, where "images" are internalized as particular virtues:

Images and votive offerings appropriate for God, which have not been made by vulgar workmen, but which are made clear and formed in us by the divine Logos, are the virtues which are copies of the firstborn of all creation. For in him there are patterns of righteousness, prudence, courage, wisdom, piety, and the other virtues. Accordingly, there are images in all who, according to the divine word, have made for themselves prudence, righteousness, courage, wisdom, piety, and the products of the other virtues.⁴⁶²

As often in Origen's thought, the *Logos* is presented as a bottomless repository of principles and relations, with the emphasis here on the virtues that may be patterned in the soul after their types in the life of the *Logos*. The rational being's true ascent, Origen believes, is to be measured precisely in terms of its assimilation of these qualities, in which it comes increasingly to mirror the *Logos*, becoming more perfectly the *image* of the *image* of God. But despite such flights into disembodied virtue, Origen plainly does not intend to eliminate cult *per se*, only cult in its pagan variety.

His rather blunt approach to this end involves simply stripping *daemons* of their offices and replacing them with angels. *Daemons*, he avers, are always and everywhere evil, while angels belong to a more complex order:

Similarly, not all angels are said to be angels of God, but only the blessed angels, while those who have turned aside to evil are

τιμᾶσθαι (*C.Cels.* 8.9).

⁴⁶² Ἀγάλματα δὲ καὶ πρόποντα θεῶ ἀναθήματα, οὐχ ὑπὸ βαναύσων τεχνιτῶν κατεσκευασμένα ἀλλ' ὑπὸ λόγου θεοῦ τρανούμενα καὶ μορφούμενα ἐν ἡμῖν, αἱ ἀρεταί, μιμήματα τυγχάνουσαι τοῦ πρωτοτόκου «πάσης κτίσεως», ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ σοφίας καὶ εὐσεβείας καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀρετῶν παραδείγματα. Ἐν πᾶσιν οὖν ἐστὶ, τοῖς κατὰ τὸν θεῖον λόγον σωφροσύνην ἑαυτοῖς κατασκευάσασι καὶ δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἀνδρείαν καὶ σοφίαν καὶ εὐσέβειαν καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀρετῶν τὰ κατασκευάσματα, ἀγάλματα (*C.Cels.* 8.17).

named the devil's angels, just as bad men are called men of sin, or pestilent sons, or sons of iniquity. Since then there are both good and bad men, for this reason some are said to be men of God and some of the devil; so also there are some angels of God and some of the devil. But the twofold division no longer holds good in the case of daemons; for they are all proved to be bad. On this account we would say that Celsus' words are false when he says: *And if they are daemons of some sort, obviously these too belong to God.* Let anyone who likes show either that the distinction in the case of men and angels is not a sound one, or that a similar distinction could be proved to hold good of daemons also. If, however, that is impossible, it is obvious that the daemons do not belong to God; for their ruler is not God but, as the divine scriptures say, Beelzebul.⁴⁶³

It is by no means clear why there should be a taxonomical distinction between wicked angels and *daemons*, but Origen offers no defense of his position beyond his urging that the bible and consensus support it. Celsus' view he finds straightforwardly intolerable:

Celsus thinks that a man is feasting with daemons even when he partakes of food and drinks some wine, and when he tastes fruits, and, moreover, if he only drinks some water; even here, he says, the man who drinks is associating with daemons. He adds to this that even the man who breathes in the common air gets this from certain daemons, since the daemons who have been given charge of the air grant it to living beings for breathing.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶³ Οὕτως δὲ καὶ οὐ πάντες ἄγγελοι «ἄγγελοι» λέγονται εἶναι «τοῦ θεοῦ» ἀλλὰ μόνοι οἱ μακάριοι, οἱ δ' ἐκτραπέντες ἐπὶ τὴν κακίαν ἄγγελοι τοῦ διαβόλου ὀνομάζονται, ὥσπερ οἱ φαῦλοι ἄνθρωποι ἄνθρωποι ἀμαρτίας ἢ υἱοὶ λοιμοῦ ἢ υἱοὶ ἀδικίας. Ἐπεὶ οὖν καὶ ἄνθρωποι οἱ μὲν εἰσι σπουδαῖοι οἱ δὲ φαῦλοι, διὸ καὶ οἱ μὲν «τοῦ θεοῦ» οἱ δὲ τοῦ διαβόλου εἶναι λέγονται, ἀλλὰ καὶ «ἄγγελοι» οἱ μὲν «τοῦ θεοῦ» οἱ δὲ τοῦ πονηροῦ, δαίμονες δὲ οὐκέτι διχῶς, πάντες γὰρ ἀποδείκνυνται εἶναι φαῦλοι· διὰ τοῦτο φήσομεν ψευδῆ εἶναι τὸν Κέλσου λόγον εἰπόντος τό· Εἰ δ' εἰσὶ τινες δαίμονες, δηλονότι καὶ οὗτοι τοῦ θεοῦ· ἢ δεικνύτω ὁ βουλόμενος μὴ λόγον ὑγιῆ εἶναι τὴν περὶ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀγγέλων διαίρεσιν, ἢ λόγον ἔχοντα παραπλήσιον δύνασθαι ἀποδείκνυσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ δαιμόνων. Εἰ δὲ τοῦτ' ἀμήχανον, δηλον ὅτι οὔτε τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν οἱ δαίμονες· οὐ γὰρ ἄρχων αὐτῶν ὁ θεὸς ἀλλ' ὡς φασιν οἱ θεῖοι λόγοι, ὁ «Βεελζεβούλ»· (C.Cels. 8.25-26).

⁴⁶⁴ ὁ ... Κέλσος οἶεται συνεστιᾶσθαι δαίμοσι καὶ τὸν σίτου μεταλαμβάνοντα καὶ ὅπως ποτ' οὖν οἴνου πίνοντα καὶ ἀκροδρῶν γεύομενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰ μόνου ὕδατός τις μεταλαμβάνει, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ φησὶ συνεστιᾶσθαι δαίμοσι τὸν πίνοντα. Προστίθησι δὲ τούτοις ὅτι καὶ ὁ τὸν ἀέρα τοῦτον ἀναπνέων παρὰ δαιμόνων τινῶν καὶ τοῦτον λαμβάνει, χαριζομένων δαιμόνων τῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀέρος προστεταγμένων τὸν τῆς ἀναπνοῆς τοῖς ζώοις ἀέρα (C.Cels. 8.31).

Origen's introduction of angels into the discussion enables him to retain the idea that governance of the world by lower divinities is necessary while rejecting the offices of *daemons* within such a system. He rejects the *particular* doctrine, but accepts its framework, preferring merely to supplant *daemonic* agency with his angelic alternative:

I challenge anyone to defend Celsus' doctrine. Let him show how those appointed to administer all the things just mentioned are not certain divine angels of God, but are daemons, the entire race of whom is evil. For we say that the earth bears the things which are said to be under the control of nature because of the appointment of individual husbandmen, so to speak, and other governors who control not only the produce of the earth but also all flowing water and air. For this reason also the water in the wells and in the natural springs becomes rain and circulates, and the air is kept free from pollution, and becomes capable of giving life to those who breathe it. We certainly do not maintain that these invisible beings are daemons.⁴⁶⁵

Origen's world thus seems a very traditional cosmic temple, the critical difference being that the "husbandmen" and "governors" typical of such a theology have been advantageously replaced by angels, the true "satraps, subordinate governors, officers and procurators of God."⁴⁶⁶ The *daemonic* role is no longer cosmic governance, but rather the instigation of plague, drought, pollution, and death in its various forms; they are even termed "public executioners" and assigned a role within a theodicy that tests the faith of believers by subjecting them to the torments and afflictions that only *daemons* can supply, "[harming] those who are under their power and have submitted themselves to them as masters."⁴⁶⁷ The true believer, as Origen conceives the matter, "the real

⁴⁶⁵ Ὁ βουλόμενος τοίνυν παραστησάτω τῷ Κέλσου λόγῳ καὶ δεικνύτω, πῶς οὐ θεῖοι τινες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ ἀλλὰ δαίμονες, ὧν ὅλον τὸ γένος ἐστὶ φαῦλον, προστεταγμένοι εἰσὶ πάντα τὰ προειρημένα οἰκονομεῖν. Καὶ ἡμεῖς μὲν γάρ φαμεν οὐ χωρὶς προστασίας ἀοράτων, ἴν' οὕτως ὀνομάσω, γεωργῶν καὶ ἄλλων οἰκονόμων οὐ μόνον τῶν ἀπὸ γῆς φυομένων ἀλλὰ καὶ παντὸς ναματιαίου ὕδατος καὶ ἀέρος τὴν γῆν φέρειν τὰ ὑπὸ φύσεως λεγόμενα διοικεῖσθαι, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ ἐν ταῖς πηγαῖς καὶ τοῖς αὐθιγενέσι ποταμοῖς ὄμβρειν καὶ φέρεσθαι, καὶ τὸν ἀέρα ἀδιάφθορον τηρεῖσθαι καὶ ζωτικὸν τοῖς ἀναπνεύουσιν αὐτὸν γίνεσθαι. Οὐ μὴν τοὺς ἀοράτους φημὲν εἶναι δαίμονας. (C.Cels. 8.31).

⁴⁶⁶ οἱ ἀληθῶς σατράπαι καὶ ὑπαρχοὶ καὶ στρατηγοὶ καὶ ἐπίτροποι τοῦ θεοῦ (C.Cels. 8.36).

⁴⁶⁷ καὶ βλάπτουσι τοὺς ὑποκειμένους αὐτοῖς αἱ ὑποτάξαντας ἑαυτοὺς ὡς δεσπότηαις ἐκείνοις C.Cels. 8.36).

Christian, who has submitted himself to God alone and his Logos, would not suffer anything at the hands of *daemons*, since he is superior to them.”⁴⁶⁸ The angel of the Lord “will encamp round about those who fear him and deliver them.”⁴⁶⁹ But even the failure of such protection can be an occasion for rejoicing, since *daemoniac* attack can be construed as an occasion for virtuous resistance and even martyrdom. When *daemons* attack, “we [Christians] do not *offer our bodies to be tortured and crucified to no purpose*. It is not to no purpose that the body is offered to these sufferings by the man who, because he does not call the *daemons* in the earthly regions gods, is subject to attack at their hands and at the hands of their worshippers.”⁴⁷⁰ Indeed, such a turn of events can actually be good, and “a matter dear to God” when a person has occasion “to be tortured for piety and to die for holiness.”⁴⁷¹

The crucial point, though, is that Origen has expelled the *daemons* while retaining the vestiges of a traditional cosmic architecture; nevertheless, it should not be surprising, that the angels who replace the *daemons* are denied important mediating functions. We have already witnessed Origen’s unease at the propitiation of mere deputies. Rather, Christians re-assign presidency over the world’s fruitfulness directly to God, who is the true source of fecundity. Celsus,

wants us to dedicate first fruits to *daemons*. But we do this to Him who said: ‘Let the earth bring forth a plant of grass, a seed that sows after its kind and likeness, and a fruitful tree that produces fruit, of which its seed is in it after its kind upon the earth.’ He to whom we render the first fruits is also the one to whom we send up our prayers, since we ‘have a great high priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, and we hold fast the confession *as long as we live*, as we obtain the goodwill of God and of His only-begotten Son who is manifested

⁴⁶⁸ ὁ ἀληθῶς Χριστιανὸς καὶ ὑποτάξας ἑαυτὸν μόνῳ τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ αὐτοῦ, πάθει τι ἂν ὑπὸ τῶν δαιμονίων, ἅτε κρείττων δαιμόνων τυγχάνων (C.Cels. 8.36).

⁴⁶⁹ «παρεμβλεῖ ... κύκλῳ τῶν φοβουμένων αὐτὸν καὶ ῥύσεται αὐτούς» (C.Cels. 8.36).

⁴⁷⁰ Ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ εἰκὴ παρέχομεν τὸ σῶμα στρεβλοῦν καὶ ἀποτυμπανίζειν· οὐ γὰρ εἰκὴ παρέχει τούτοις τὸ σῶμα <ὁ> ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ τοὺς περιγεῖους δαίμονας ἀναγορεύεσθαι θεοὺς ἐπιβουλεύομενος ὑπ’ αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν σεβόντων αὐτούς (C.Cels. 8.54).

⁴⁷¹ Θεοφιλές ... δι’ εὐσέβειαν στρεβλοῦσθαι καὶ δι’ ὀσιότητα ἀποθνήσκειν (C.Cels. 8.54)

to us in Jesus.”⁴⁷²

Daemonic presidency over nature is here ended, with responsibility for fecundity located rather in the God of Israel himself, as depicted in the opening chapters of *Genesis*, summoning into being the fruitful world in its profusion. Origen’s own spiritual anthropology, in which the *Logos* reconceived as incarnate draws into closer relation the embodied rational human being and the *Logos* of God, here empowers his new conception of mediation, in which Jesus becomes a figure near enough to function as priest, while retaining the transcendence of the “only-begotten Son” – the Word and Wisdom of God in whom all of created reality comes into being. Offerings of first fruits made through the priesthood of Christ are thus made – in some sense – *through, in, and to* the *Logos* of God. The God who receives supplies his own mediation.

As I suggest, none of this should be particularly surprising, given the preparation for it that much of Origen’s thought on incarnation constitutes. What surprises about this re-formulation is Origen’s decision simply to intrude Christian eucharistic language into pre-existing categories, directly imposing the eucharist as a displacement of the “offerings of thanksgiving” traditionally made in a pagan context, and explicitly placing the eucharist in the same genus as those offerings of “first fruits.” Within this new regime, Celsus, for his part, “as one who is ignorant of God, may render the offerings of thanksgiving to daemons; “but we,” argues Origen,

give thanks to the creator of the universe and eat the loaves that are presented with thanksgiving and prayer over the gifts, so that by the prayer they become a certain holy body which sanctifies those who

⁴⁷² ὡς ἀγνοῶν θεὸν τὰ χαριστήρια δαίμοσιν ἀποδίδωτω, ἡμεῖς δὲ τῷ τοῦ παντὸς δημιουργῷ εὐχαριστοῦντες καὶ τοὺς μετ’ εὐχαριστίας καὶ εὐχῆς τῆς ἐπὶ τοῖς δοθεῖσι προσαγομένους ἄρτους ἐσθίωμεν, σῶμα γενομένους διὰ τὴν εὐχὴν ἅγιόν τι καὶ ἀγιάζον τοὺς μετὰ ὑγιῶς προθέσεως αὐτῷ χρωμένους. Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπαρχὰς Κέλσος μὲν δαιμονίοις ἀνατιθέναι βούλεται, ἡμεῖς δὲ τῷ εἰπόντι· «Βλαστησάτω ἡ γῆ βοτάνην χόρτου, σπείρον σπέρμα κατὰ γένος καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίότητα, καὶ ξύλον κάρπιμον ποιοῦν καρπὸν, οὗ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ κατὰ γένος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.» Ὡς δὲ τὰς ἀπαρχὰς ἀποδίδομεν, τούτῳ καὶ τὰς εὐχὰς ἀναπέμπομεν, «ἔχοντες ἀρχιερέα μέγαν, διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ», καὶ κρατοῦμεν «τῆς ὁμολογίας», ἕως ἄν ζῶμεν, φιλανθρώπου τυγχάνοντες τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ μονογενοῦς αὐτοῦ, ἐν Ἰησοῦ ἡμῖν φανερούμενου (C. *Cels.* 8.34).

partake of it with a pure intention.⁴⁷³

Strikingly Origen here decides to leave indefinite the identification of Jesus with the bread-turned-body. That the eternal Son is both the one who receives and mediates, in priestly manner, is not in doubt; but the question of whether Jesus should be read also as *offering* is left ambiguous, couched in terms of loaves that become “a *certain* holy body” (σῶμα ... ἅγιόν τι). Rather than focusing on this question of how “body” stands in relation to an incarnate or eternal Christ, Origen chooses rather to focus on how this rite displaces traditional *daemonic* mediation. Thus, despite the rhetorical assurance that relegates Celsus to a primitive, benighted category, Origen can scarcely disguise what is essentially a reconfiguration of old religion rather than the introduction of new. He deflects attention from the bread or body in question, forfeiting the occasion to explain the possible meanings of the rite in question, preferring rather to frame it as a shifting of the understanding of thank-offerings – a rite now mediated by an eternal high priest who is the image of the invisible God, and *not* by *daemons* who have been replaced by benign angels as the governors of the world’s fruitfulness. Although we grant that angels rather than *daemons* “have been appointed in charge of the fruits of the earth and the birth of animals,” and although we “speak well of them and call them blessed,”⁴⁷⁴ nevertheless,

we certainly do not assign to them the honour we owe to God. This is desired neither by God nor by the beings themselves who have been entrusted with these matters. In fact they approve of us more when we take care not to sacrifice to them than if we were to offer them sacrifices. They are in no need of exhalations from the earth.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ ὡς ἀγνοῶν θεὸν τὰ χαριστήρια δαίμοσιν ἀποδιδότω, ἡμεῖς δὲ τῷ τοῦ παντός δημιουργῷ εὐχαριστοῦντες καὶ τοὺς μετ’ εὐχαριστίας καὶ εὐχῆς τῆς ἐπὶ τοῖς δοθεῖσι προσαγομένους ἄρτους ἐσθίωμεν, σῶμα γενομένους διὰ τὴν εὐχὴν ἅγιόν τι καὶ ἀγιάζον τοὺς μετὰ ὑγιῶς προθέσεως αὐτῷ χρωμένους (C. *Cels.* 8.33).

⁴⁷⁴ Κἂν ἴδωμεν δὲ μὴ δαίμονας τινὰς ἀγγέλους δὲ τεταγμένους ἐπὶ τῶν τῆς γῆς καρπῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς τῶν ζώων γενέσεως, εὐφημοῦμεν αὐτοὺς καὶ μακαρίζομεν.... (C. *Cels.* 8.57).

⁴⁷⁵ οὐ μὴν τὴν ὀφειλομένην πρὸς θεὸν τιμὴν τούτοις ἀπονέμομεν, οὔτε γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοῦτο βούλεται οὔτ’ αὐτοὶ οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐγκεχειρισμένοι. Καὶ ἀποδέχονται γὰρ ἡμᾶς φυλασσομένους αὐτοῖς θύειν ἢ θύοντας· οὐδὲ γὰρ χρῆζουσιν ἐκεῖνοι τῶν ἀπὸ γῆς ἀναθυμιωμένων (C. *Cels.* 8.57).

They are merely placeholders, not the least exigent of cult maintenance, implanted in the traditional religious hierarchy as an anodyne Christian alternative. The singular Christian God, within the framework of Origen’s incarnational theology, both mediates and receives thank-offerings.

That Origen intends a displacement of meanings rather than the introduction of revolutionary new concepts is most importantly evident on the lexical level. Against Celsus, who insists on thank offerings (χαριστήρια) directed to *daemons*, and who thinks that those who fail in this obligation are “thankless” (ἀχαρίστους), Origen asserts that

we, who have a clear idea of the meaning of thanksgiving [εὐχαριστία], say to the beings who do no good whatever but are on the opposite side, that we behave without any ingratitude [μηδὲν ἀχαρίστον ἡμᾶς ποιεῖν] when we do not sacrifice to them or worship them. But we avoid being guilty of ingratitude [ἀχάριστοι] to God who loads us with his benefits. We are his creatures and are cared for by His providence. Our condition is subject to His judgment, and we entertain hopes of him beyond this life.⁴⁷⁶

Here Origen’s diligent re-working of religious cult even allows Celsus to set the terms. Quite openly, eucharist (εὐχαριστία) has begun to assume all of the resonance of Celsus’ “thank offerings” (χαριστήρια). Christians practicing their rite are no less imbued with a proper religious sense – that is, they are not ἀχάριστοι – than their pagan counterparts offering these conventional thanks (χαριστήρια). Underlying this gesture is the obvious hope Christian cult may hold its value even in pagan currency, a point made even more lucid by what immediately follows, as the argument pivots to a more direct consideration of the Christian rite itself: “Moreover, we have a symbol of our

⁴⁷⁶ The passage quoted in full: Καὶ πάλιν Κέλσος μὲν οὐ θέλει ἡμᾶς ἀχαρίστους εἶναι πρὸς τοὺς τῆδε δαίμονας, οἰόμενος ἡμᾶς ὀφείλειν αὐτοῖς χαριστήρια· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ τρανοῦντες τὸν περὶ εὐχαριστίας λόγον φαμέν πρὸς τοὺς μηδὲν εὐεργετοῦντας ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου ἰσταμένους μηδὲν ἀχαρίστον ἡμᾶς ποιεῖν, ὅταν αὐτοῖς μὴ θύωμεν ἀλλὰ μηδὲ θεραπεύωμεν αὐτούς. Ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀχάριστοι εἶναι πρὸς τὸν θεὸν περιϊστάμεθα, οὗ τῶν εὐεργεσιῶν πλήρεις ἐσμέν, καὶ δημιουργήματα ὄντες αὐτοῦ καὶ προνοοούμενοι ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ κριθέντες ὅπως ποτὲ <ἄξιοι> εἶναι καὶ ἔξω τοῦ βίου τὰς παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐλπίδας ἐκδεχόμενοι.

thanksgiving to God in the bread which is called ‘eucharist’ [εὐχαριστία].”⁴⁷⁷ Going quite beyond the suggestiveness of the χαριστήρια / εὐχαριστία juxtaposition, Origen here labels the eucharistic bread as a “symbol” (σύμβολον) of thanksgiving (εὐχαριστία) to God. The ease with which this point is introduced strongly suggests that the Christian “symbol” is meant to replace other “symbols” familiar from traditional practice, as if Origen were asserting, “we too have a ‘symbol’,” thereby flagging his intention to construct the Christian rite within a familiar category of religious thought. He co-opts the cultural legitimacy of a pre-existing template of religious thought and practice, while simultaneously deploying a rhetoric of *difference* that yields nothing to traditional cult, since all *daemonic* mediation is voided and replaced with the eternal priesthood of Christ, which mediates thanksgiving rendered only to the one God.

By invoking the category of *symbolon*, Origen is by no means straightforwardly asserting a magical or theurgic eucharist; in fact, in the interest of affirming the superiority of his own approach he attempts to assimilate Celsus’ own thought to more deluding, destructive forms of magic. As we shall see, though, he has difficulty dissociating his own thought from these same conceptual categories. Uncomfortable at the ritual exploitation of certain Egyptian *daemons*, each of whom holds sway over the healing of particular parts of the human body, Celsus argues:

*We must however be careful about this, lest by association with these beings anyone should become absorbed in the healing with which they are concerned, and by becoming a lover of the body and turning away from higher things should be held down without realizing it. For perhaps we ought not disbelieve wise men who say that most of the earthly daemons are absorbed with created things, and are riveted to blood and burnt offering and magical enchantments, and are bound to other things of this sort, and can do nothing better than healing the body and predicting the coming fortune of men and cities, and that all their knowledge and power concerns merely mortal activities.*⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁷ Ἔστι δὲ καὶ σύμβολον ἡμῖν τῆς πρὸς θεὸν εὐχαριστίας ἄρτος «εὐχαριστία» καλούμενος (C.Cels. 8.57).

⁴⁷⁸ Ἐκεῖνο μέντοι φυλακτέον, ὅπως μὴ τις συνῶν τούτοις τῇ θεραπείᾳ τῇ περὶ αὐτὰ συντακῆ, φιλοσωματήσας τε καὶ τῶν κρειπτόνων ἀποστραφείς λήθη κατασχεθῆ. Χρῆ γὰρ ἴσως οὐκ

Origen exploits such hesitation, arguing that even Celsus must concede that such *daemons*, bound to material reality and “induced by outlandish magical enchantments,”⁴⁷⁹ at best work to heal only the body; and even then, one ought first to seek a conventional course of medical treatment. But the argument pivots interestingly as Origen derides the very terminology that he elsewhere appropriates. God, he argues, prefers the more single-minded devotee, not one “who interests himself in the names of daemons, powers, practices, charms, plants related to daemons, stones and the emblems on them which correspond to the traditional shapes of daemons, whether these are symbolical or have some other significance.”⁴⁸⁰ Here we are obviously in the territory of the magical and the theurgic. For Origen’s present argument, to know the names of *daemons*; to know their powers; to know their associated plants and incantations; and still more tellingly, to know inscribed “emblems” (γλυφάς) that correspond to daemonic shapes “symbolically” (συμβολικῶς) is to submit oneself to ignorance and delusion. Celsus’ unease yields Origen an extraordinary windfall, enabling an extended diatribe on *daemons*, whose debased, material orientation, whose enchainment “to blood and burnt offering and magical enchantments” – whose equivalence, essentially, to the most degraded of embodied creatures, underlines the danger to those who strive to appease them. Such people effectively assimilate themselves to the *daemonic* state, making themselves *daemonic* – an equation that brings us full circle to Origen’s original claim that *daemons* are akin to the most debased embodied creatures. When a worshipper engages the *daemonic*, God will thus rightly abandon him to the *daemons* he has elected to manipulate, “as a wicked and impious fellow more daemonic than human, that he may

ἀπιστεῖν ἀνδράσι σοφοῖς, οἱ δὴ φασὶ διότι τῶν μὲν περιγεῖων δαιμόνων τὸ πλεῖστον γενέσει συντετηκὸς καὶ προσηλωμένον αἵματι καὶ κνίσσῃ καὶ μελωδίαις καὶ ἄλλοις τισὶ τοιούτοις προσδεδεμένον κρεῖττον οὐδὲν δύναται ἂν τοῦ θεραπεῦσαι σῶμα καὶ μέλλουσιν τύχην ἀνθρώπων καὶ πόλει προειπεῖν, καὶ ὅσα περὶ τὰς θνητὰς πράξεις ταῦτα ἴσασί τε καὶ δύνανται (C.Cels. 8.60).

⁴⁷⁹ ἀλλοκότοις μελωδίαις ἀγομένων (C.Cels. 8.60).

⁴⁸⁰ περιεργαζόμενον δαιμόνων ὀνόματα καὶ δυνάμεις καὶ πράξεις καὶ ἐπωδὰς καὶ βοτάνας οἰκείας δαίμοσι καὶ λίθους καὶ τὰς ἐν αὐτοῖς γλυφάς, καταλλήλους ταῖς παραδιδόμεναις εἴτε συμβολικῶς εἴτε ὅπως ποτὲ μορφαῖς δαιμόνων (C.Cels. 8.61).

be torn asunder by the thoughts put into his mind by each *daemon* or by other evils as well.”⁴⁸¹

That Celsus may appear to assent to something “sensible” is rhetorically helpful for Origen, but there is a lingering doubt as to whether this effect is achieved without remainder. When he explicitly outlines the elements of practice to be rejected, specifying “the names of daemons, powers, practices, charms, plants related to daemons, stones and the emblems on them which correspond to the traditional shapes of daemons, whether these are symbolical or have some other significance” – he reveals the tensions that are built into his own formulation of the eucharist: the “symbolic” function of the object in material cult. Pagan *symbola* are rejected; the Christian *symbolon* is approved, and all in a manner that appears finally rather arbitrary, a sort of willful assertion of a more restricted monotheism over the more diffuse accessibility of the divine in the pagan world. “Symbolically” functioning magical-religious acts are out, and are replaced with another, singular cult act, complete with its own “symbol,” cagily characterized as a “certain holy body.” The introduction of a new “symbol” is thus ultimately a gesture akin to the replacement of *daemons* by angels as benign presiding divinities in nature, who negate their own claims to cult, so that a *true* divine symbolon may be configured with the God of Israel at the center.

In keeping with his typical reticence on questions of sacramental mystery, Origen does not spell out the possible justifications of this alignment of ancient *symbolon* and a

⁴⁸¹ ὡς μοχθηρὸν καὶ ἀσεβὲς καὶ δαιμονικὸν μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρωπικὸν καταλείψει ὁ θεὸς οἷς εἶλετο ὁ τὰ τοιάδε λέγων δαίμοσι, διασπαραχθησόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ὑφ’ ἐκάστου ὑποβαλλομένων λογισμῶν ἢ καὶ ἄλλων κακῶν (C.Cels. 8.61). Origen further argues that even as a practical matter, daemoniac devotions are not reliable. If we conceive of sacrifices to *daemons* as manipulation or even as a species of bribery, then it follows that other petitioners might come along with a more appealing offer: “If other people were to invoke them and buy their service at the price of more blood and sacrifices and the worship that they require, then they would conspire against one who had worshipped them the previous day and who used to give them a share of the feast which they love.” Ἄλλων γὰρ αὐτοὺς καλοῦντων κατὰ τῶν θεραπευσάντων καὶ πλείονος αἵματος καὶ κνίσσης καὶ ἧς δέονται θεραπείας ὠνουμένων αὐτῶν τὴν δουλείαν, ἐπιβουλεύσαιεν ἂν τῷ χθὲς αὐτοὺς θεραπεύσαντι καὶ τῆς φίλης αὐτοῖς θοίνης μεταδίδοντι (C.Cels. 8.61).

new Christian *symbolon*. The incarnation of the *Logos* is itself the material manifestation of God's perfect *image*, and therefore in some sense conceptually akin to theurgic conceptions of *symbol / image*. The invisible *Logos* of God, in this formulation, is thus the formal principle that constitutes a Christian *symbolon*, imprinted upon the material manifestation of the incarnate Christ as a perfect *image*. Origen may thus be seen as experimenting with the idea of the eucharistic bread as a parallel incarnation, reconceptualized in terms of a theurgic *symbol-image* – a deployment of a theurgic or magical idea that makes conceivable the continued presence in the material life of the Church of a *Logos* turned *flesh* turned *bread*.

In this way, the conspicuous lack of theological elaboration in Origen's account of the eucharist in *Contra Celsum* works to his advantage, making possible his easy assimilation of eucharist into ready-made theological categories – precisely as a *superior* conception of the cult "symbol." Likewise, the *Logos* that is conceived as a material image reality available for sanctifying consumption by embodied participants – so that the eucharist becomes, in effect, a second incarnation, an *image* of the *image* of God – a phenomenon that parallels the embodied rational creature, which by virtue of its rational relation to God is conceived as the *image of the image*. Participation in the rite, and consumption of the bread, may thus be understood as the most intimate possible assimilation to the *Logos* for embodied creatures, wherein the fallen, imperfect embodied rational creature draws its sustenance from the perfect *Logos*, condescending to an embodiment that is without taint of fallenness.

Perhaps since *daemons* are easily characterized as exerting a downward pull – bound excessively to materiality as they are – any narrative of *daemonic* mediation may be revealed as a gross caricature of the mediation offered by a divine *hypostasis* that assumes a material body. While the crude ends of magic can be attained through the mediation of *daemons* invoked through their corresponding "symbols" manifest as images or glyphs upon stone, or through the invocation of other "symbolic" objects or names, true ascent to Origen's God can be attained through the mediation of his *Logos*, whose incarnation makes possible reconceptualization of eucharistic bread as *both* a

“certain holy body” and a “symbol” materially manifest – as *sacred matter* that is parallel to the body of the *Logos*, facilitating an encounter between the embodied rational creature and the very source of the principles and relations that make up its very being.

Chapter V: Theurgy and Eucharistic Mediation in Augustine

1. Introduction: Augustine and the Theurgic Inheritance

A central claim thus far has been that Origen's thought on the rational being's ascent to God, and the role of the Church and of Christian sacrament in mediating that ascent, can be understood as related to the claims of theurgy. As ever, this by no means entails the assumption that Origen was a "crypto-theurgist," a disguised "pagan" concealing his insinuations of traditional rites into an otherwise pure Christian context. To the contrary, it is his governing *Logos* theology, wherein the transcendent God, materially manifest to humanity, makes participation in divine life accessible to a degree not previously conceived, that invites a conceptual assimilation of theurgic thought. It is what compels Christian thinkers to draw upon assumptions about the capacity of material reality to mediate the divine.

It is Christianity's very conceptualization of the *Logos*, the "Word" of God, stemming from a sense that God has become accessible to rational beings, that makes possible this kind of adaptation. In the previous chapter we have alluded to some of the forms that an encounter with the *Logos* might take: Old Testament theophanies, exegetical engagement with Jewish scripture, the flesh of the person of Christ, and of course the eucharistic bread. Exegetical engagement and sacramental participation are for Origen the practices of Christian formation, where the believer is fed by the Word of God both under the form of scripturally grounded exegesis and homiletics, as well as the form of eucharistic bread, where the bread is grasped as an extension of incarnation, "the living bread that came down from heaven." The "Word" is thus manifest both under the form of "words" of scripture that express it, and under the form of the flesh of

Christ which clothes it, standing in continuity with the bread that feeds. Within this complex of ideas, it is not difficult to see how this “food for the soul,” the bread of life, conceived along the lines of material body, is reasonably conceptualized as a *symbolon*, which – as a parallel to sound teaching – mediates an encounter with the *Logos*, in which the soul of the believer is re-constituted according to its proper template, and comes to participate in the life of the eternal and risen Christ, attaining an ascent to God reconceived along Christian lines. In Iamblichean theurgy, ritual engagement with the cult *symbolon* expresses the soul’s inner participation in the *logoi* disseminated through reality by the creative Demiurge; in Christian sacrament, ritual participation in the eucharistic *symbolon* is invoked as expressive of an inner encounter with the *Logos* itself, which purifies and re-constitutes the rational being in accord with the template set by Christ, the embodiment of the *Logos*. This vision, driven by the incarnation of the *Logos*, naturally requires that Christian thinkers reconfigure material embodiment as a site of sanctification, and likewise that eliminate other forms of transcendent mediation, such as the Platonic *daemons* who are now seen as obstacles to the soul’s proper ascent.

In this final chapter I hope to suggest that Augustine’s direct engagement with theurgy in his *On the City of God* can supply an interesting coda to a discussion of theurgic tendencies in earlier Christian thought. As a Latin speaker in the West, removed culturally and temporally from Origen’s and Iamblichus’ Greek and Semitic East, he is an interesting case for a number of reasons. Obviously, his work provides the occasion to witness how a Christian thinker grappled with theurgy directly, since by Augustine’s time it had developed into a system of thought, or at least a recognizable set of questions contentious even to pagan intellectuals, while Origen’s thought precedes the “theurgic turn” in Platonism by a number of years. Augustine can thus be read as a participant in the disputes spawned by the work of Iamblichus, especially given that his arguments in *On the City of God* are leveled directly at Porphyry, whose objections prompted Iamblichus’ defense of theurgy in *De Mysteriis*. Primarily, though, our interest should lie in the fact that Augustine justifies Christian eucharist within parameters that are strikingly parallel to what we see in Origen’s *Contra Celsum*. In

parallel to Origen's re-thinking of theurgy in light of *Logos* theology, and his assimilation of the *symbolon* to a sacramental discourse, Augustine deploys the language of *signum* ("sign") to mark the point of sacramental encounter with transcendent reality.

Indispensable to this approach is Augustine's own sign theory of language, which he adduces to show that the eucharistic bread, conceived as a *signum*, may be understood as conceptually parallel to a vocalized word, *verbum*, which is understood to transmit a substantive incorporeal reality. This inner substance borne by a word's material utterance, explained by Augustine in terms of his theory of the "inner word," creates conceptual space for a *ritual* sign, positioned within both this theory of language and his *Logos* theology, and thus roughly analogous to Origen's *symbolon*, which is also an essential linguistic term re-deployed in a ritual context. Thus both *signum* and *symbolon* are re-configured as designators of a "real" manifestation of an invisible, substantive reality, as outward "signs" [*signa*] that "signify" [*significare*] the transcendent reality of the *Verbum*, the *Logos* to which the believer is assimilated in a healing gesture. Thus eucharist becomes, for Augustine as for Origen, a rite similar in kind to the rites of ancient tradition, but one that has been linked exclusively to a singular mediator, which is supplied by Christian theology as a more immediate encounter with God.

In developing his theory, Augustine employs his own dualist rhetoric to his advantage, masking his necessary endorsements of material reality (which is modest, in any case) behind an often strident anti-material rhetoric as he proceeds to divest cult ritual of all but ethical content, and to displace embodied *daemons* as cult mediators⁴⁸²

⁴⁸² The central purpose of books 6-10 of *De Civitate Dei* is to advance the claim that sacrificing to *daemons* or to other lower divinities is meaningless and ineffectual with respect to a human afterlife. Indeed, despite the praise that he otherwise reserves for them, Augustine condemns Plato and his heirs for their singular flaw of permitting *daemon* worship. Plotinus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Apuleius were all distinguished, but even they, and "the others who were of the same school, and indeed, Plato himself, held that sacred rites should be performed in honour of many gods" *sed hi omnes et ceteri eius modi et ipse Plato diis plurimis esse sacra facienda putauerunt* (*De civ. D.* 8.12). Augustine for his part asserts that to be "ensnared and deceived by the cunning of malign spirits [*daemons*]," is to "wander far from the true God, with Whom alone, and in Whom alone, and by Whom alone the human – that is, the rational and intellectual – soul is blessed" *inretitus malignorum spirituum deceptusque fallacia longe aberret a uero deo, cum quo solo et in quo solo et de quo solo anima humana, id est rationalis et intellectualis, beata est* (*ibid.* 9.2).

with the mediation of the *Logos* embodied. He then furtively introduces Christian eucharist as the perfect replacement for defective pagan rites erroneously tied to *daemons*, offering Christianity as the alternative to ancient traditions that offer no genuine ascent from the materiality in which they are inescapably grounded. Like Origen, then, Augustine screens his ultimate intentions behind a rhetoric emphasizing difference, thereby dissembling his adoption of principles similar in kind to those that underpin traditional pagan rites.

This issues to be considered in this chapter are, in summary: (2) Augustine's dismissal of *daemons* from the divine hierarchy, a gesture that involves a searching critique of Apuleius' thought on the *daemoniac*, and a strained effort to justify their displacement despite their superior (because aerial) material bodies. In this formulation, *daemons* turn out to be uniformly *worse* than mortals, by virtue of their eternal confinement to an embodied state that is completely subject to passions. (3) His assimilation of these now degraded *daemons* into the categories of magic, witchcraft, and theurgy, among which he makes no distinction, and which enable no meaningful purification of the soul, consisting rather of encosmic manipulations that only entrap the soul in a shifting, illusory material world. (4) His displacement of theurgic / *daemoniac* models of mediation, regarded as a degraded derivative of Platonic philosophy, with a Christian model that is adapted to the categories derived from Apuleius, and predicated on the mediating function of the incarnate Christ, who is unlike *daemons* in his blessedness, and also provisionally *mortal*, making him akin to humans. The miserable immortal *daemons* are thus replaced by the *blessed* and (transiently) *mortal* Christ – a move that makes of Christ a precise remedy for the defects identified in the Apuleian system. Augustine's argument may initially appear metaphysically dualist, since he is urgent to deny *any* advantage accruing to *daemoniac* aerial embodiment, but the dualism softens as the focus of the argument shifts from *daemoniac* bodies to Christ, and as Augustine clarifies his view of matter as a neutral substrate for the mediation of contact with a divine *principium* (the incarnate *Logos*). (5) Augustine's application of his own sign-theory of language as a model for explaining cult mediation. Working from his

notion of the “inner word” – the conviction that tangible utterance bears a genuine incorporeal substance from one mind to another – Augustine develops the idea that the tangible sacramental sign can likewise mediate a substantive participation by believers in the sacrifice of Christ. This argument is initially obscured by Augustine’s rhetorical distancing of Christian rites from their pagan counterparts, which he accomplishes by allegorically reading biblical texts on sacrifice as “signs” [*signa*] of an “inner sacrifice” [*sacrificium*] defined purely as an inner disposition toward God, or in terms of ethical transformation. Such a move is a sleight of hand by which Augustine sanitizes the language of “sign” as it applies to cult, employing allegorical reading (the “sign” of an inner ethical state; then later the “sign” of a forthcoming “sign,” the eucharist) in a way that privileges a discussion of the *ends* of Christian cult (purification of the soul) over a discussion of its *mechanisms*. The effect of this strategy is to distance the Christian rite from any association with magic, theurgy, or pagan cult by emphasizing primarily the ethical content of a proper sacrificial disposition; however, when Augustine links inner disposition to the mystical idea of a self-oblation of all believers united in Christ, he must begin to endow the tangible, visible “sign” [*signum* / *sacramentum*] of the eucharist with ritual force in order to draw believers into meaningful unity with Christ, who is the inner, invisible “sacrifice” [*sacrificium*] of the Church, and who is conveyed to believers in the *signum*. That is to say, the eucharist as a sign must actually *mediate* something, and not simply *stand* allegorically for something.

Augustine’s engagement with Apuleius and Porphyry, then, commences from a pretended dualist rejection of matter and the *daemonic* worship that is presumed to be confined to the material realm, and proceeds to an embrace of material mediation in which pagan rites are furtively displaced by Christian practice whose defining difference is the agent of mediation, the incarnate *Logos*, whose healing efficacy is described in terms of a theory of sign.⁴⁸³ Augustine’s approach thus preserves an idea of

⁴⁸³ It should be said that Augustine is somewhat more subtle than Origen in his appropriations, never quite naming eucharist outright, and less inclined to play word games with his interlocutor. Where Origen lunges quickly to embrace the language and categories of magic and theurgy, even proceeding to a defense of the eucharist a bit too quickly on the heels of a rejection

material reality as mediating, which leaves space for an incarnate Word and material rituals whose “signification” is coterminous with their effects.

2. Augustine’s Taxonomy of Daemons

Since Augustine approaches the problem of pagan rites through the question of *daemonic* mediation, we must first consider his dismissal of the *daemons* from the legitimate transcendent hierarchy.⁴⁸⁴ His approach is somewhat indebted to a Euhemeristic account of the gods,⁴⁸⁵ and derives its particular shape from exploiting the ambivalence on the *daemonic* that characterizes Apuleius’ own *On the God of Socrates*.⁴⁸⁶ Recognizing that the “reason and great necessity” that *daemons* should “[carry] the petitions of men and [bring] back the answers of the gods,” is that for Platonists, “no god has dealings with men,”⁴⁸⁷ Augustine works within a tradition that regarded the mutual isolation of humanity and divinity as bridgeable by intervening entities.

of magic, Augustine’s rhetoric suggests an acute awareness of the importance of maintaining the appearance of distinctive identity.

⁴⁸⁴ On *daemons* in *De civ. D.* see Evans (1982) 98-111, especially the Augustinian view that they are fallen angels and “the very originators of evil” (102).

⁴⁸⁵ On Euhemerus’ 4th century BCE text *Sacred History*, which advanced the theory that the gods are in fact former mortals who have been posthumously elevated, and which was translated by Ennius and widely used by Christian apologists, see Ogilvie (1978) 55-57. Augustine’s demonology here is shaded with this idea, proceeding gradually to align *daemons* with the worst aspects of the human. The approach is similar to his critique of Marcus Varro’s *Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum* (in *De Civ. D.* 6-7), which exploits Varro’s somewhat inconsistent reconciliation of anthropomorphically driven “civic” and “mythic” theology (within an account of religion’s public utility) with the speculative theology of philosophers, including his own view of the gods as manifestations of a cosmic soul. Augustine’s critique, by driving a wedge between civic / mythic and metaphysical theology, attempts to sunder the pagan gods of Rome from divine transcendence. See *De civ. D.* 6.7-8, 7.18 (O’Daly [1999] 105-106). On the three *genera* of theology – *mythicon*, *civile*, and *physicon* – see Lieberg (1973); Pépin (1958) 276-314.

⁴⁸⁶ On Apuleius, see Dillon (1977) 306-38, especially 317-320 on *De Deo Socratico*. O’Daly (1999) 115-23 summarizes.

⁴⁸⁷ at enim urgens causa et artissima cogit daemones medios inter deos et homines agere, ut ab hominibus adferant desiderata, et a diis referant inpetrata. quaenam tandem ista causa est et quanta necessitas? quia nullus, inquit, deus miscetur homini. *De civ. D.* 8.20. Cf. *Symposium* 203a. See Dillon (1977) 317-18, on Apuleius’ core conviction that “the world does not tolerate a gap” between men and God; also the notion that every element must have its proper inhabitants.

Consistent with Apuleius, he presents this hierarchy as tripartite, with gods at the top, humankind at the bottom, and *daemons* between. Specifically, the gods occupy the aether; humankind occupies the earth; and the *daemons* occupy the intervening air.⁴⁸⁸ Their intermediate position is affirmed by the fact that they possess “immortality of the body in common with gods, but ... passions of the mind in common with men.” But this very subjection to the passions, argues Augustine, is the factor that make *daemons* take pleasure in theatrical performances and the debased work of the poets, and is the reason that Plato himself, “in detesting poetry and prohibiting works of fiction,” would have banished such from his ideal state.⁴⁸⁹ There is no question that these are the *daemons* of Apuleius, who are said take pleasure in theatrical performances and to enjoin vile magical practices upon mortals,⁴⁹⁰ and who in turn provide Augustine the occasion to challenge whether such beings, who require what pagans themselves many cases prohibit,⁴⁹¹ ought to be regarded as mediators between gods and men. He further exploits Apuleius’ own ambivalence on the *daemonic*, accusing him of evasion in terming the Socratic *daimonion* a “god” in the title of his work. If there is no shame in the *daemonic*, why alter the terminology? In Augustine’s view, Apuleius prefers *deus* simply out of the embarrassment.

One way or the other, Augustine works to derive doubts from what he perceives as inconsistency in the handling of *daemons*.⁴⁹² His treatment concludes by leaving *daemons* to their intermediate position, though deprived of any standing as mediators.

⁴⁸⁸ See O’Daly (1999) 115.

⁴⁸⁹ *habent enim cum diis communem immortalitatem corporum, animorum autem cum hominibus passiones.... poetica detestando et prohibendo figmenta.... De civ. D. 8.14.*

⁴⁹⁰ See Dillon (1977) 318, who notes that Apuleius works within a Xenocratean tradition in characterizing the delight taken by *daemons* in the extraordinary range of religious observances and activities directed at them.

⁴⁹¹ *De civ. D. 8.18-19*, where Augustine notes widespread prohibitions against magic, and the charges of magical practice from which Apuleius had to free himself, as evidenced by his own surviving *Apologia*. See O’Daly (1999) 116.

⁴⁹² It is a strategy similar to that employed against Varro’s *Antiquitates* in Books 6-7, where Augustine exploits weaknesses, but also exaggerates perceived inconsistencies in Varro’s treatment of religious matters in order to make the larger case for the irrelevance of traditional cults.

Augustine first attacks the belief that *daemons* are necessarily better than men by virtue of their superior position. Granting their superiority of place and body (aerial), he denies that such factors constitute a necessary basis of superiority, citing the many animals who can claim superior bodies, the “many beasts which surpass us in the acuteness of their senses, in the ease and rapidity of their movement, in their strength, and in the greatly prolonged vigor of their bodies.”⁴⁹³ Even birds have loftier dwellings. This concession of physical superiority marks the dualist phase of Augustine’s argument, expressed as an assertion of the primacy of the soul, and particularly of the intellectual soul, over any kind of body. *Daemonic* aerial bodies may be superior, he argues, but that is no matter:

Divine providence has indeed given to these *daemons* certain superior bodily gifts, even though we are clearly their moral superiors. But this has been done in order that the things in which we excel them may thereby be commended to us as far more worthy to be desired than the body.⁴⁹⁴

Augustine grants that “we, too, are to have immortality of body,” but he still prefers to sunder ultimate goodness from any attachment to the body, arguing that we should “learn to despise the bodily excellence which we know that the *daemons* have, in comparison with the goodness of life in respect of which we surpass them.”⁴⁹⁵ Their superiority of body and position are in any case not the result of an ascent, but rather of a *fall*:

They do indeed dwell in the air; but they do so only because the were cast out from the sublimity of the higher heaven, and justly

⁴⁹³ alioquin multas sibi et bestias praelaturus est, quae nos et acrimonia sensuum et motu facillimo atque celerrimo et ualentia uirium et annosissima firmitate corporum uincunt. (*De civ. D.* 8.15). See Evans (1982) 102-103.

⁴⁹⁴ ob hoc enim et prouidentia diuina eis, quibus nos constat esse potiores, data sunt quaedam potiora corporum munera, ut illud, quo eis praeponimur, etiam isto modo nobis commendaretur multo maiore cura excolendum esse quam corpus (*De civ. D.* 8.15).

⁴⁹⁵ habituri et nos immortalitatem corporum.... excellentiam corporalem, quam daemones habere nossemus, prae bonitate uitae, qua illis anteponimur, contemnere disceremus... (*ibid.* 8.15).

condemned for their irreparable transgression to dwell in this region as in a prison appropriate to them.⁴⁹⁶

Augustine struggles with the problem of *daemonic* bodies, finally conceding, as he must, their superiority, though not ungrudgingly:

...Even though Plato's classification of bodies seems to be the correct one, the same order is not to be observed when assigning merits to souls; for it may well be that a superior soul will inhabit an inferior body, and an inferior soul a superior body.⁴⁹⁷

Augustine thus flatly rejects any assertion of qualitative correspondence between bodies and souls, but plainly he prefers to stake out a position that simply severs body from soul: "As to their [the *daemons*'] being aerial in body, what is that worth, when a soul of any kind whatsoever is to be preferred to any kind of body."⁴⁹⁸ Augustine can be unremitting on this point, as he later shows:

For a living creature – that is, an animal – consists of soul and body; and, of these two elements, the soul is certainly better than the body. Even when flawed and weak, it is certainly better than even the most healthy and sound body. For the greater excellence of its nature is not brought down to the level of the body even by the taint of vice, just as gold, even when impure, is valued more highly than even the purest silver or lead.⁴⁹⁹

Given his commitment to an eventual Christian "immortality of body ... to which our purity of soul now leads us."⁵⁰⁰ Augustine may not be entirely consistent on this point,

⁴⁹⁶ qui in hoc quidem aere habitant, quia de caeli superioris sublimitate deiecto merito in regressibilis transgressionis in hoc sibi congruo uelut carcere praedammati sunt (*ibid.* 8.22).

⁴⁹⁷ ut intellegamus non eundem ordinem tenendum, cum agitur de meritis animarum, qui uidetur esse ordo in gradibus corporum; sed fieri posse, ut inferius corpus anima melior inhabitet deteriorque superius (*ibid.* 8.15).

⁴⁹⁸ quod corpore aera, quanti aestimandum est, cum omni corpori praeferatur animae qualiscumque natura (*ibid.* 8.16).

⁴⁹⁹ cum enim animans, id est animal, ex anima constet et corpore, quorum duorum anima est utique corpore melior, etsi uitiosa et infirma, melior certe corpore etiam sanissimo atque firmissimo, quoniam natura eius excellentior nec labe uitiorum postponitur corpori, sicut aurum etiam sordidum argento seu plumbo, licet purissimo, carius aestimatur (*ibid.* 9.9).

⁵⁰⁰ ... immortalitatem corporum ... quam puritas praecedat animorum (*ibid.* 8.15).

but for purposes of the present case he prefers to make the body's quality altogether independent of that of the soul.

This move makes it possible for Augustine to assail the *daemons* despite their superior bodies and higher position. With superior bodies declared inconsequential, and with subjection to all the vices of humankind and worse, *daemons* can hardly be said to mediate between men and gods. Apuleius, emphasizing the proximity of their ways to those of men, grants that they are "agitated by the same perturbations of mind as men: vexed by injuries; placated by obsequies and gifts; gratified by honours; delighted by the diversity of sacred rites; and provoked if any such rites are neglected." What is more, their activity also lies behind "the divinations of augurs, soothsayers, prophecies and dreams ... and the miracles of sorcerers."⁵⁰¹ Such associations, along with their passion for the theater, constitute the raw material of Augustine's critique, but he is also concerned to justify their displacement by means of a more refined argument.

To this end, Augustine attempts to exploit Apuleius' own complex of five qualities used to distinguish gods, *daemons*, and mortals. Within this taxonomy, Apuleius defines *daemons* as "animal in genus, passive in soul, rational in mind, aerial in body, and eternal in time,"⁵⁰² going on to assert that of all these categories, the *daemons* have the first three in common with humans (animal, passive, rational), the fourth as a characteristic unique to themselves (aerial), and the fifth in common with the gods. Deploying these categories to attack them, Augustine argues that if they are *animal* in genus, *passive* in soul, and *rational* in mind, then they can claim no superiority to humankind, since when those characteristics are combined with immortality, the state of *daemons* becomes a form of entrapment. As Augustine's analysis proceeds they become increasingly like humans, but for their eternal entrapment in aerial bodies, which are of no benefit to them by virtue of the principle that "a soul of any kind whatsoever is to be

⁵⁰¹ ...eisdem quibus homines animi perturbationibus agitari, inritari iniuriis, obsequiis donisque placari, gaudere honoribus, diuersis sacrorum ritibus oblectari et in eis si quid neglectum fuerit commoueri.... diuinationes augurum, aruspicum, uatum atque somniorum ... quoque ... miracula magorum. (*ibid.* 8.16).

⁵⁰² ...genere animalia, animo passiuia, mente rationalia, corpore aeria, tempore aeterna (*De Deo Socrat.* 6, *apud De civ. D.* 8.16).

preferred to any kind of body."⁵⁰³ This combination of qualities enables Augustine to conclude that such "aerial animals" can hardly be worthy of cult, since they are "rational only so that they may be miserable ... passive only so that they may suffer .. and eternal only so that their misery may have no end!"⁵⁰⁴ In this re-classification of *daemons* as essentially human-like, with the caveat that they are trapped in this deficient stasis, Augustine's thought reveals its Euhemeristic influences, and perhaps edges closer to that of Origen, who parodies *daemons* as malevolent souls. Augustine concludes from Apuleius' account that *daemons*, in the passionate affliction of their rational souls, are thus "like foolish and unrighteous mortals ... not in their bodies, but in their characters."⁵⁰⁵ Absent any capacity to resist the passions assailing their souls, *daemons* may be accounted not merely *like* mortals, but actually *worse*, lacking all spiritual fortitude:

He [Apuleius] cannot remain silent as to that which shows that they are miserable. For he confesses that their minds in respect of which he has asserted that they are rational, are not imbued and fortified even with sufficient virtue to resist to any degree the irrational passions of the soul. Rather, they are themselves agitated by storms and tempests ... as is usually the case with stupid minds.⁵⁰⁶

Such beings are like the most debased instances of humankind, and can share no likeness with "wise men, who, when they are assailed in this life by such disturbances of

⁵⁰³ ...quod corpore aëria, quanti aestimandum est, cum omni corpori praeferatur animae qualiscumque natura (*De civ. D.* 8.16).

⁵⁰⁴ ...ad hoc rationalia ut misera esse possint, ad hoc passiva ut misera sint, ad hoc aeterna ut miseriam finire non possint (*ibid.* 8.16).

⁵⁰⁵ ...sed stultis mortalibus et iniustus non corporibus, sed moribus similes (*ibid.* 9.3). Augustine is exploiting what is in fact a softer characterization of *daemons* as susceptible to emotion, and deriving from it the assertion of a total *daemonic* susceptibility to passions that marks them as *more* degraded than human beings (*De Deo Socrat.* 12, p.20 Thomas, cited in O'Daly [1999] 119, with comments). See also Evans (1982) 103.

⁵⁰⁶ confitens eorum mentem, qua rationales esse perhibuit, non saltem inbutam munitamque uirtute passionibus animi inrationabilibus nequaquam cedere, sed ipsam quoque, sicut stultarum mentium mos est, procellosis quodam modo perturbationibus agitari (*De civ. D.* 9.3).

soul ... resist them with untroubled mind."⁵⁰⁷ That certain human beings have capacities for virtue that exceed those of *daemons* is a point that Augustine exploits. In Apuleius' careful distinctions between gods, *daemons*, and mortals, he fails to find "[anything] at all which the *daemons* seem to have in common specifically with good men, and which is not found in bad."⁵⁰⁸ Augustine concedes that such limited wisdom as humanity might possess is "slow," but he insists that such wisdom does at least occur, and that any account of the human would be deficient without noting those few cases in which such wisdom was brightly manifest. The cultivation of wisdom is the path by which mortals can aspire to some of the qualities displayed by gods, and as bare and limited as human prospects appear to be, Apuleius has left a certain narrow path open for human aspiration. Augustine is emphatic that no such path is open for *daemons*, for whom Apuleius has omitted even the barest prospect for the cultivation of wisdom:

If, therefore, he wishes us to believe that some of the *daemons* are good, he would have included in his description of them something by which we might see that they have some measure of blessedness in common with the gods, or some kind of wisdom in common with men. As it is, however, he has mentioned no good quality of theirs whereby the good may be distinguished from the bad.⁵⁰⁹

As in Origen's account, all *daemons* are straightforwardly bad; lacking furthermore any capacity for wisdom, the share with human beings only a susceptibility to passions.

⁵⁰⁷ ut ne hominibus quidem sapientibus comparandi sint, qui huius modi perturbationibus animorum ... etiam cum eas huius uitae condicione patiuntur, mente inperturbata resistunt (*ibid.* 9.3). See O'Daly (1999) 119 for Augustine's reflections on Stoic and Platonic-Peripatetic theories on resistance to the passions, particularly his view that the differences are finally semantic.

⁵⁰⁸ ...nihil ... omnino, quo daemones cum bonis saltem hominibus id uiderentur habere commune, quod non esset in malis (*De civ. D.* 9.8). The key points of weakness that Augustine seems to find are *daemonic* susceptibility to passions, as noted above, and the present idea that *daemons* lack wisdom, and hence any means by which they might resist the attacks of passions. See O'Daly (1999) 120.

⁵⁰⁹ proinde si aliquos daemones bonos uellet intellegi, aliquid etiam in ipsorum descriptione poneret, unde uel cum diis aliquam beatitudinis partem, uel cum hominibus qualemcumque sapientiam putarentur habere communem. nunc uero nullum bonum eorum commemorauit, quo boni discernuntur a malis. (*De civ. D.* 9.8).

[Apuleius] asserts most clearly that, as to the soul, the *daemons* resemble men, not gods, and that this resemblance does not lie in the *daemons'* possessing the good of wisdom, in which men can also share. Rather, it lies in the fact that they too are subject to the storms of passion which dominate stupid and wicked men but which are mastered by wise and good men, who would, indeed, prefer not to experience them at all rather than to overcome them.⁵¹⁰

Such being the state of *daemons*, it follows that they should be neither emulated, nor regarded as mediators in any sense:

What reason is there, then, apart from folly and miserable error, for you to humble yourself to worship a being whom you do not wish to resemble in your life? And why should you pay religious homage to one whom you do not wish to imitate, when the highest duty of religion is to imitate him whom you worship?⁵¹¹

Augustine further refines *daemoniac* deficiency in soul by identifying the flawed *soul* as the singular inadmissible factor in any process whose end is the return of the human soul to its proper state of contemplating the divine. Since the passive soul is the element held in common by both *daemons* and *mortals*, and the immortal body is the element held in common between *daemons* and *gods*, Augustine argues that *daemons* could mediate only by virtue of the body, a ridiculous scenario in which *daemons* are “inverted” – afflicted with a degraded soul and an unduly elevated body:

What wickedness or punishment, then, has suspended these false and deceitful mediators head downwards, so to speak, so that they share the inferior part of a living creature – that is, the body – with superior beings, but the superior part – that is, the soul – with inferior beings? They are united with the celestial gods by

⁵¹⁰ ... animo autem non diis, sed hominibus similes daemones apertissime inculcans; et hoc non sapientiae bono, cuius et homines possunt esse participes, sed perturbatione passionum, quae stultis malisque dominatur, a sapientibus uero et bonis ita regitur, ut malint eam non habere quam uincere. (*ibid.* 9.8).

⁵¹¹ quae igitur causa est nisi stultitia errorque miserabilis, ut ei te facias uenerando humilem, cui te cupias uiuendo dissimilem; et religione colas, quem imitari nolis, cum religionis summa sit imitari quem colis? (*ibid.* 8.17).

the part that serves, but they are united in misery with earthly men by the part that rules.⁵¹²

Deriving the language of “serving” and “ruling” from Sallust’s *War with Catiline*,⁵¹³ where the body that serves is associated with “beasts” and the soul that rules with gods, Augustine argues that *daemons* are bestial because their uppermost attribute is the body, while their governing faculty drawn downward into closer proximity to mortals. The faculty that should rule is instead ruled. Such an orientation, given its eternity, is a wretched stasis, a terminal consignment to torment:

Hence, if anyone observes that the *daemons* share eternity with the gods because, unlike living creatures on earth, their souls and bodies are not separated by death, we must nonetheless think of those bodies not as the vehicles of eternal triumph, but as the bonds of eternal damnation.⁵¹⁴

The *daemons*, insofar as their superior bodies are a “perpetual prison,”⁵¹⁵ are finally worse off than mortals.

Augustine further supports his case by appealing to the argument from “three opposites,” intending particularly to explain how it is that *daemons* can occupy an intermediate position despite their degraded quality. He works from three qualities, conceived as opposites, by which Apuleius distinguishes the relative condition of gods and men – “sublimity of location, everlastingness, and blessedness” for gods, “lowliness of station, mortality, and misery”⁵¹⁶ for men. In terms of the first set of opposites (location), the position of *daemons* in the middle cannot be denied. In terms of the second set (duration), Augustine continues to grant their immortality, which places

⁵¹² quanam tandem istos mediatores falsos atque fallaces quasi capite deorsum nequitia uel poena suspendit, ut inferiorem animalis partem, id est corpus, cum superioribus, superiorem uero, id est animum, cum inferioribus habeant, et cum diis caelestibus in parte seruiente coniuncti, cum hominibus autem terrestribus in parte dominante sint miseri? (*ibid.* 9.9).

⁵¹³ *Cat.* 1

⁵¹⁴ unde etiamsi quisquam propter hoc eos putauerit aeternitatem habere cum diis, quia nulla morte, sicut animalium terrestrium, animi eorum soluuntur a corpore: nec sic existimandum est eorum corpus tamquam honoratorum aeternum uehiculum, sed aeternum uinculum damnatorum. (*De civ. D.* 9.9).

⁵¹⁵ perpetuo ... vinculo (*ibid.* 9.10).

⁵¹⁶ locus sublimis, aeternitas, beatitudo ... locus infimus, mortalitas, miseria. (*ibid.* 9.12).

them at the divine end of the spectrum. In terms of the third set (psychic state), Augustine insists on *daemonic* misery by again appealing to Apuleius' failure to posit any *daemonic* capacity for resisting passions:

What remains, therefore, but the conclusion that these intermediate beings possess the highest extreme of one of the two remaining attributes [everlastingness - mortality] and the lowest extreme of the other [blessedness - misery]? For if they possessed the highest extreme of both, or the lowest of both, they would not then be intermediate; rather, they would rise upwards or fall downwards, as the case might be.⁵¹⁷

The argument pivots entirely on Augustine's exploitation of Apuleius' willingness to endow mortals with at least some capacity for wisdom, and his omission of such qualities from the *daemonic* life. Working from the assumption that these qualities, conceived in terms of opposite extremes, dictate position within a cosmic topography, Augustine can now explain how it is that *daemons* occupy a middle position *despite* the seeming implausibility of such an arrangement. He has managed to argue that ascending position does not entail ascending blessedness.

Despite his success in explaining the intermediate position of *daemons* in terms of the "three opposites," Augustine still must establish this neatly calibrated balance in terms of the "five qualities." With their intermediate position a property particular to themselves, it initially appears that they hold three of the remaining four qualities in common with mortals (*animal* in genus, *rational* in mind, and *passive* in soul) and only one in common with gods (*immortality* in body). If this is so, Augustine asks, "how are they intermediate, then, when they have one of their attributes in common with the highest, but three with the lowest?"⁵¹⁸ But this is merely an effort politely to correct Apuleius, refining what he regards as imperfectly explained. All three species, argues Augustine, are unique with respect to one of the five attributes, namely the types of bodies they possess – earthly, aerial, and aetherial – a fact that implies perfect spatial

⁵¹⁷ quid igitur restat, nisi ut hi medii de duobus summis unum habeant et de duobus infimis alterum? nam si utraque de imis habebunt aut utraque de summis, medii non erunt, sed in alterutram partem uel resiliunt uel recumbent (9.13).

⁵¹⁸ quo modo ergo medii, quando unum habent cum summis, tria cum infimis? (*ibid.* 9.13).

distribution and therefore enables the cancellation of that quality from the equation. With respect to two of the remaining four qualities, all three species are alike in being *animal* in genus and *rational* in mind: “for Apuleius himself, when he spoke of gods and men, said, ‘You have here two animal natures’; and the Platonists never maintain that the gods are anything other than rational in mind.”⁵¹⁹ For three of the five attributes then, either symmetrical distribution or perfect likeness is maintained, thus allowing for their cancellation. Of the two remaining attributes, “that of being passive in soul, and that of being eternal in time,” the former is shared with mortals and the latter with gods, so that of these two remaining attributes, the latter exerts an upward pull in the scale toward divine realms, and the former exerts a downward pull toward mortal realms, and a precisely calibrated balance is maintained. The *daemons* are maintained in their position by an “exact balance,”⁵²⁰ a stasis consistent with the conclusion of the argument from three opposites, with *daemons* eternally suspended in a state of passion-induced misery – an “eternal misery or miserable eternity”⁵²¹ – a conviction that Augustine believes Apuleius would have held had he not feared offending the worshippers of *daemons*.⁵²²

It follows that no “*eudaimones*” may be properly said to exist,⁵²³ since ascribing goodness or blessedness to them would upset the balance, aligning them too closely with the gods and thus disrupting their intermediate position. At precisely this point in the argument Augustine begins to hint at the possibility of constructing a superior kind of mediation facilitated by the capacity for wisdom that is granted to the *human*. Given

⁵¹⁹ nam et ipse cum de diis et hominibus loqueretur: “habetis, inquit, bina animalia”, et non solent isti deos nisi rationales mente perhibere. (*ibid.* 9.13).

⁵²⁰ proportionali ratione (*ibid.* 9.13).

⁵²¹ misera aeternitas vel aeterna miseria (*ibid.* 9.13).

⁵²² “For he who said that they are ‘passive in soul’ would have called them ‘miserable’ had he not feared to offend their worshippers”; qui enim ait “animo passiva”, etiam “misera” dixisset, nisi eorum cultoribus erubisset. (*ibid.* 9.13).

⁵²³ An important point for Augustine, since Apuleius shows a willingness to class the embodied human soul as a type of *daemon*, as well as souls that have left the body to perform their several beneficial or pernicious roles (suggesting perhaps a Euhemeristic influence on Apuleius), and of course *daemons* that have never known a body, with which he classes the Socratic *daemonion* and the guardian *daemons* of Plato (Dillon [1977] 319-320).

the human potential for wisdom, Augustine asks “why [it is] not these same wise men who are appointed as mediators between miserable mortals and the blessed immortals, since they have blessedness in common with the immortals and mortality in common with miserable mortals?”⁵²⁴ This is a straightforward correction of the *daemonic* “inversion” that Augustine finds in Apuleius’ thought, with a *mortal* body and a *blessed* soul displacing the *daemons’ immortal* body and *wretched* soul. Augustine describes such men merely as “counselors” who could advise “miserable mortals in the pursuit of blessedness, so that, after death, men may achieve immortality also, and so be united with the blessed and immortal angels,” but clearly he is already hinting at the Christology he will later develop.⁵²⁵ For the moment, though, the Augustinian “wise man” is philosophy’s sage⁵²⁶ who will be *mortal* and *blessed* – subject to death but nevertheless happy and wise – where the *daemons* are just the opposite, *immortal* and *wretched* – subject only to passions and forever unable to escape their power.

3. Theurgy as Daemonic Cult

The confinement of *daemons* to an intermediate position stripped of any mediating role supplies the basis for Augustine’s attack on all cult rites directed at such lesser divinities. As was his method in dismantling any credible theory of *daemonic* mediation, Augustine will attempt to exploit the ambivalence and unease of his philosophical interlocutors in his effort to undermine magic and theurgy. He suggests that Porphyry’s assumed inquisitiveness in the *Letter to Anebo* is merely an imposture to mask what was really his resistance to theurgy, asserting that he “overturns these

⁵²⁴ cur non ipsi potius medii constituuntur inter mortales miseros et immortales beatos, beatitudinem habentes cum immortalibus beatis, mortalitatem cum mortalibus miseris? (*De civ. D.* 9.14).

⁵²⁵ To be addressed in section 4 of the present chapter.

⁵²⁶ See O’Connell (1968) 269f., for Augustine’s theorizing of a “great and divine man,” and its kinship to a Photinian, *logos-anthropos* Christology.

sacrilegious arts” by “acting the part of an inquirer seeking guidance.”⁵²⁷ His very hesitations and inquiries reveal that he “chose ... to avoid giving offense to the Egyptian who was devoted to such errors and who believed himself to have some great knowledge.”⁵²⁸ He opines that Porphyry may have “blushed for his friends the theurgists,” further speculating that he already knew the truth, but that he “still did not feel free to speak out against the worship of many gods.”⁵²⁹ This pose is akin to that adopted toward Apuleius, who is likewise accused of blunting his opinions on *daemons* for fear of offending their partisans.

Such a posture, bolstered by what is in fact an obvious skepticism on Porphyry’s part, opens up argumentative possibilities for Augustine. In keeping with the tone and argument of the *Letter to Anebo*, Augustine lumps together magic and theurgy. In the course of vindicating biblical miracles over the tricks of conjurers, he asserts that the miracles

were performed through simple faith and pious trust, and not by means of incantations and charms composed by practitioners of the art of wicked curiosity: the art which the call either magic, or by the more detestable name of witchcraft, or by the more honourable one of theurgy.⁵³⁰

Under Augustine’s indictment both magicians and theurgists are “equally bound by the false rites of the *daemons* whom they worship under the name of angels.”⁵³¹ Porphyry himself was extremely doubtful as to whether “this art can furnish anyone with a means of returning to God.”⁵³² Suspicious of theurgy, Porphyry can recommend it only for the

⁵²⁷ ... ubi consulenti similis et quaerenti et prodit artes sacrilegas et euertit. (*De civ. D.* 10.11).

⁵²⁸ ... uoluit hominem aegyptium talibus erroribus deditum et aliqua magna se scire opinantem non ... offendere (*ibid.* 10.11).

⁵²⁹ ... contra multorum deorum cultum non libere defendebat (*ibid.* 10.26). Cf. 10.27, where he accuses Porphyry of recommending theurgy to the uneducated masses, thereby establishing them in the belief that he himself, as a philosopher, regards as empty and useless, merely because he wants “to reward his teachers” (ut ... mercedem reddas magistris tuis).

⁵³⁰ ... fiebant autem simplici fide atque fiducia pietatis, non incantationibus et carminibus nefariae curiositatis arte compositis, quam uel magian uel detestabiliore nomine goetian uel honorabiliore theurgian uocant ... (*ibid.* 10.9).

⁵³¹ ... utrique ritibus fallacibus daemonum obstricti sub nominibus angelorum (*ibid.* 10.9).

⁵³² Porphyrius ... reuersionem uero ad deum hanc artem praestare cuiquam negat (*ibid.* 10.9).

purification of the *spiritual* soul, arguing that it can only affect “the spiritual part, whereby we receive the images of corporeal things.”⁵³³ By means of theurgic rites (*teletae*) this lower part of the soul can become better adapted for receiving impressions of “spirits and angels, and for seeing the gods;”⁵³⁴ however, the intellectual soul “receives no such purification from these theurgic mysteries as would make it fit to behold its God and to perceive the things that truly exist.”⁵³⁵ The purification of the spiritual soul is thus only a partial achievement that accomplishes nothing toward attaining “immortality and eternity.”⁵³⁶ Furthermore, according to Porphyry, the higher soul – the intellectual or rational soul – categorically does not require theurgic mysteries in order to “escape into its own realm.” Theurgy is thus superfluous by Porphyry’s own admission, in terms of philosophy’s final aims. Even at its best it appears morally neutral, as Augustine argues by referring to Porphyry’s story of a certain Chaldean, whose efforts at theurgic purification were thwarted by the interference of a rival theurgist who enviously invoked other beings to constrain the benevolent, purifying divinities of the first.⁵³⁷ Such a case reveals that theurgy may be employed either for good or evil, and that it is comprised merely of techniques for enlisting the services of potentially rival powers. Reading theurgy in light of his *daemonic* taxonomy, Augustine concludes that such rites are nothing more than manipulation of just such malevolent beings, who are beset with passions and tormented by envy. He again invokes Porphyry’s own skepticism, founded on the assumption that the good gods invoked by the first Chaldean should hardly have been intimidated or coerced by the evil deities invoked by the other. Even Porphyry thinks that the flaws in such a system are obvious. If practitioners of such arts do in fact see “visions of miraculous beauty, of angels or gods,” argues Augustine, “this is what the Apostle means when he speaks of Satan

⁵³³ ... sed spiritali, qua corporalium rerum capiuntur imagines (*ibid.* 10.9).

⁵³⁴ ...spirituum et angelorum et ad videndos deos (*ibid.* 10.9).

⁵³⁵ [fatetur intellectuali animae] nihil purgationis accedere, quod eam faciat idoneam ad uidendum deum suum et perspicienda ea, quae uere sunt (*ibid.* 10.9)

⁵³⁶ immortalitatem aeternitatemque (*ibid.* 10.9).

⁵³⁷ *ibid.* 10.9.

transforming himself into an angel of light.”⁵³⁸ And such things do occur, as Augustine makes clear: “It is, however, true that things are done by means of theurgic arts which in every way surpass human ability.”⁵³⁹ Manipulations and visions within the perceptible world thus *do* occur, but Augustine views such visions, produced by theurgy’s conditioning of the spiritual soul, as superfluous if not outright dangerous, and vacuous when compared to the purification of the intellectual soul that is required for the soul’s real ascent, and that cannot be supplied by theurgy; in fact, viewed in light of Augustine’s developed taxonomy of *daemons*, such rites must *always* be seen as a hindrance to the soul’s ascent, since *daemons* are enslaved by a psychic condition that propels them only to the delusion and destruction of mortals.⁵⁴⁰ Even the very way in which Porphyry writes on the subject, argues Augustine, “brings to mind things of a kind that no sober consideration could attribute to any but malign and deceitful powers.”⁵⁴¹ Augustine notes that Porphyry posits additional beings – beyond angels and *daemons*, capable of “imitating gods and *daemons* and the souls of the dead” – presumably because Porphyry himself prefers some other agency than angels and *daemons* in order to explain how it is “by using stones and herbs that they cast spells on certain persons, or open closed doors, or perform some other marvel of this sort.” But for Augustine it is all the same:

As to Porphyry’s view that by means of herbs and stones and animals, and certain kinds of sounds and words and figures and drawings, and even by observing certain movements of the

⁵³⁸ quasdam mirabiliter pulchras ... vel angelorum imagines vel deorum illud est, quod apostolus dicit: quoniam satanas transfiguratur se uelut angelum lucis. (*ibid.* 10.10). Cf. 2 Cor. 11.14.

⁵³⁹ uerum quia tanta et talia geruntur his artibus, ut uniuersum modum humanae facultatis excedant ... (*De civ. D.* 10.12).

⁵⁴⁰ For an unsettling account on the fundamentally physiological mechanism by which *daemons* bring about pernicious dreams and visions, particularly Augustine’s conviction that every “movement of the soul” produces corporeal responses, which persists as physiological dispositions (*habitus*) whose faintest traces (*vestigia*) may be exploited by keen-scented *daemonic* agencies as media for insinuating *daemonic* thought, thus enabling *daemons* to intrude upon the imagination, see O’Daly (1987) 122-123.

⁵⁴¹ sequitur tamen et ea ... quae sobrie considerata tribui non possunt nisi malignis et fallacibus potestatibus. (*De civ. D.* 10.11).

heavenly bodies in the turning heavens, man may create on earth powers capable of bringing about various effects: all such beliefs arise from the tricks which those same *daemons* play on the souls of those who are subject to them, creating delicious entertainment for themselves from the errors of mankind.⁵⁴²

Augustine simply brushes aside Porphyry's attempt to clear *daemonic* hierarchies from involvement in theurgy. Since theurgy can purify only the spiritual part of the soul, which is the site of perception, it follows that *any* divinities stimulated by theurgic rites to bring about certain phantasms, events, or alterations in the world are actually creating only alterations in human perception that are illusory by definition. The manipulation of objects or verbal formulae are thus little more than hallucinogenic, tending to confine the soul in a distracting material world. The theurgist believes that his perception-altering acts are actually producing a meaningful outcome, when actually, given the nature of *daemons*, he merely confines himself in an endless cycle of material delusion. The very gesture of believing in such deceptive rites is itself an illusion foisted upon the practitioner by the deities presiding over the rites. The whole process is a closed system within which the *lowest* part of the soul is entrapped by the *lowest* deities who can in no sense further the intellectual soul's ascent to God.

4. Christ as Perfect Embodied Mediation

Theurgy is thus merely a seductive, competing form a purification, lacking the substance that Augustine is willing to grant the philosophical schools,⁵⁴³ and making false promises for mediation of the soul's ascent:

⁵⁴² et quod ei uidetur herbis et lapidibus et animantibus et sonis certis quibusdam ac uocibus et figurationibus atque figmentis, quibusdam etiam obseruatis in caeli conuersione motibus siderum fabricari in terra ab hominibus potestates idoneas uariis effectibus exsequendis, totum hoc ad eosdem ipsos daemones pertinet ludificatores animarum sibimet subditarum et uoluptaria sibi ludibria de hominum erroribus exhibentes (*ibid.* 10.11).

⁵⁴³ Philosophy is "too arduous for all save a few," and since those who lack talent or access are so many, "more may be compelled to resort to these secret and illicit teachers of yours than to the

These most impure *daemons*, pretending to be etherial gods, whose heralds and messenger you have become, have promised that those who are cleansed by the art of theurgy in the spiritual part of their soul shall not, indeed, return to the Father, but shall dwell above the aerial regions among the ethereal gods.⁵⁴⁴

Theurgy's capacity for mediation is ultimately an exotic lie, only a parody of a Platonic vision, and it is grounded in a superstitious devotion to a system of demonstrably false mediators. In Christianity Augustine hopes to assert a form of mediation that is superior to both philosophy and theurgy, while retaining the demotic appeal that he senses in the latter.

Concluding that humankind lacks capacity for wisdom adequate to produce a sage such as his proposed system of human mediation would require, Augustine resorts naturally to the Christian solution of the perfect god who assumes the burden of an earthly body, a Christology that works from the premise of perfect unity of divine *Logos* and fully human being, and which can be made to conform to the system of attributes taken from Apuleius.⁵⁴⁵ Since all men are miserable, "as is argued ... more credibly and

Platonic schools." [philosophia] ardua nimis atque paucorum est ... plures ad secretos et inlicitos magistros tuos, quam ad scholas platonicas uenire cogantur. (*ibid.* 10.11).

⁵⁴⁴ hoc enim tibi inmundissimi daemones, deos aetherios se esse fingentes, quorum praedicator et angelus factus es, promiserunt, quod in anima spiritali theurgica arte purgati ad patrem quidem non redeunt, sed super aerias plagas inter deos aetherios habitabunt (*ibid.* 10.27).

⁵⁴⁵ Augustinian Christology is akin to Origen's account of the union of Christ's soul with the Word in *Princ.*, 2.6, where the mind / soul of Christ "is the medium of union between the Word and the flesh ... inseparably united to the Word with such an intensity of affection and immediacy of intuition that becomes like the Word in every respect..." (TeSelle [1970] 148). This approach had lost credibility after the condemnation of Paul of Samosata in 268, due to its adoptionist appearance, but rebounded after the condemnation of the Apollinarian heresy around 380, which had diminished the mediating, human aspects of the person of Christ (*ibid.* 148). To think in terms of moving from the idea of "sage" to the idea of *Logos* incarnate is in part to follow the trajectory of Augustine's Christology, which departs from the idea of a "wise man participating in the Word," and arrives at a Word incarnate (*ibid.* 147). No doubt TeSelle is correct in recognizing, given the emphasis in this Christology on a human soul / mind that mediates the union between *Logos* and body, that "the kind of union Augustine envisaged, a unity mediated by a human mind, could involve, given his strongly Platonist psychology and epistemology, a perfect responsiveness of the human understanding and affections to the ideal plans contained in – indeed, equivalent with – the Word, and consequently a perfect coincidence between the 'Word' and the 'man'" (154). Miles (1979), pp. 88-97, follows the trajectory of Augustine's thought, emphasizing his development of a more sophisticated category of *persona*,

probably,” then the mediator in his system must be god as well as man, one who, “by the intervention of his blessed mortality, may lead men out of their mortal misery to a blessed immortality.” In terms of Apuleius’ five qualities, what distinguishes this type of mediation from that offered by a hypothetical sage is that the mediator is characterized by

transient mortality and everlasting blessedness, so that, in His transient condition, he might resemble those destined to die, and might translate them from their mortality into his everlasting condition.⁵⁴⁶

A key difference in this Christian mediation is this provisional assumption of mortality. Angels cannot serve as mediators because their *immortal* blessedness removes them from the world of men; therefore a deliberately assumed, transient mortality is the essential disruption introduced into the carefully balanced system of qualities touching gods, *daemons* / angels, and mortals, supplying a bridge for wretched mortals that no sage or angel can provide.

It is important to note that this modification of divine hierarchies is understood by Augustine to be *effective* precisely in inverse relation to the *ineffectiveness* of the same model when populated with *daemonic* mediators; that is to say, it remedies the key defects of the old system, construed in terms of the (five) attributes on loan from Apuleius. The system is thus slightly altered, so that the retention of blessedness and the passage through mortality can be transferred to those who participate in his mediation:

The immortal and miserable mediator interposes himself in order to prevent us from passing to a blessed immortality; for that

which enables a union of divine and human nature without confusion (*unio inconfusa*); she, too, acknowledges the pivotal role of the human soul of Christ in effecting mediation: “The human soul of Christ is the locus of cohesion of the two natures and is the *sine qua non* of their unity” (96). See also O’Connell (1968) for an account more emphatic of Augustine’s accommodation of the Plotinian narrative of the soul’s fall and repatriation in his Christology.

⁵⁴⁶ ... quod ... credibilis et probabilis disputatur.... ut homines ex mortali miseria ad beatam immortalitatem huius medii beata mortalitas interueniendo perducatur.... habere oportuit transeuntem et beatitudinem permanentem, ut per id, quod transit, congrueret morituris, et ad id, quod permanet, transferretur ex mortuis. (*De civ. D.* 9.15).

which impedes our passage, namely misery itself, persists in him. But the mortal and blessed Mediator interposed himself, so that, having passed through mortality, He might make the dead immortal by the power that He showed in his own resurrection, and bestow upon the miserable the blessedness which He Himself had never relinquished.⁵⁴⁷

Augustine thus leaves the theoretical structure of mediation intact, asserting the superiority of a new, Christian mediation to a defective, Platonist and polytheist approach. Not surprisingly, he also frames the issue comfortably in terms of philosophy's normative aspiration for the soul, acknowledging Plotinus as the thinker who best defines the issue: "We must fly, therefore, to our beloved fatherland, where dwells both our father and all else. What is the ship, then, and how are we to fly? We must become like God."⁵⁴⁸ Becoming like God is a challenging prospect for mortals since "the soul of man is unlike that incorporeal and immutable and eternal Being in proportion as it longs for temporal and mutable things." Augustine's approach to mediation is intended to solve this problem, namely that "things below, which are mortal and impure, cannot approach the immortal purity which is above." Since diseased *daemons* counter-productively long in their eternal wretchedness for "temporal and mutable things," only Christ's inversion of their bodily and psychic characteristics – his purity in soul and voluntary mortality in body – "can afford us aid which is truly divine in cleansing and redeeming us." Only Christ can bridge the incorporeal immutable and the corporeal perishable.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ ad hoc se quippe interponit medius immortalis et miser, ut ad immortalitatem beatam transire non sinat, quoniam persistit quod inpedit, id est ipsa miseria; ad hoc se autem interposuit mortalis et beatus, ut mortalitate transacta et ex mortuis faceret immortales, quod in se resurgendo monstravit, et ex miseris beatos, unde numquam ipse discessit (*ibid.* 9.15).

⁵⁴⁸ "fugiendum est igitur ad carissimam patriam, et ibi pater, et ibi omnia. quae igitur, inquit, classis aut fuga? similem deo fieri" (*ibid.* 9.17, paraphrasing Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.6.8 and 1.2.3.)

⁵⁴⁹ incorporali uero illi aeterno et incommutabili tanto est anima hominis dissimilior, quanto rerum temporalium mutabiliumque cupidior.... immortalis puritati, quae in summo est, ea quae in imo sunt mortalia et inmunda conuenire non possunt.... mundandis liberandisque nobis uere diuinum praebeat adiutorium (*De civ. D.* 9.17). Augustine's concern in the present context to assimilate his thought to an Apuleian template may tend to obscure his Christology's embrace of a mediation that happens *not simply* because a particular man, a "sage," has been assimilated to

Naturally the nature of the divine embodiment resists any taint that contact with matter might impart: “Far be it from the God Who is certainly immune from contamination to fear contamination from the humanity with which he clothed Himself, or from the men among whom He dwelt in human form!” Since the incarnation is the uniting of full humanity to the *Logos*, it is immune to any ill effects potentially imparted by matter,⁵⁵⁰ while *daemons*, as lower creatures, remain vulnerable – an insight that vindicates two principles: that “true divinity cannot be contaminated by the flesh;” and that “*daemons* are not to be thought better than ourselves because they have flesh.”⁵⁵¹ Christ’s perfectly assimilated soul enables the insulation of the *Logos* from taint, while the *daemonic* soul, given its characteristics, is drawn into the pollution and entrapment of materiality. This assumption of full humanity enables Augustine to sidestep the issue of qualitatively graded materiality: mortals ascend to God through the mediation of a humanity fully assimilated to God, not through a series of ascending grades:

This path [to God] is viewed as a corporeal only by the friends of the *daemons*, who arrange the elements like steps between the aetherial gods and earthly men, with the aerial *daemons* in the middle. This is a view which is entirely false and full of error, for righteousness does not progress in this way; for we must rise up

the Word (the *logos-anthropos* theology in which a man has been simply subsumed into the Word), nor because the Word has assumed soulless matter (the *logos-sarx* theology that de-emphasizes Christ the man), but because the human mind of Jesus has been “joined to and mixed with (*copulatus, commixtus*) the Word in a unity of person (*div.qu.*, q. 73, 2; *c.Faust.* XXII, 40; *trin.*, IV, 13, 16 and 20, 30)” (TeSelle [1970] 149, with texts cited). In the case of Christ, a singular human being “[bears] the person’ of the Wisdom of God (*agon.*, 20, 22)” and does so *naturaliter* rather than *participazione* (TeSelle [1970] 149, with texts cited). See also Miles (1979) 90f. The authentically mediating element is the mind or the soul of Christ, at one with the Word, where his fully human mind mediates *participation* in the Word for other human souls, when their minds are re-cast in the image of his.

⁵⁵⁰ In a larger sense, it is Augustine’s view of the mind of Christ as the mediating link between Word and flesh, that makes possible the claim that the Word is insulated from travails of embodiment, while nevertheless assuming embodiment for the salvation of humanity (TeSelle [1970] 149, noting *f.et sym.*, 4, 10; *div.qu.*, q. 73 and q. 80; *agon.*, 18, 20).

⁵⁵¹ qui profecto incontaminabilis deus absit ut contaminationem timeret ex homine quo indutus est, aut ex hominibus inter quos in homine conuersatus est.... nec carne posse contaminari ueram diuinitatem, nec ideo putandos daemones nobis esse meliores, quia non habent carnem (*De civ. D.* 9.17).

to God not by ascending in body, but by coming to resemble him spiritually, that is incorporeally.⁵⁵²

For a Christian to assert that we do not rise to God by “ascending in body” may seem a rather ill-fitting claim, but it becomes clear that Augustine’s program for eliminating the *daemonic* requires his rejection of the one quality in which they stand superior to humans: the body. Taken as a general principle, this can make Augustine appear extremely dualist and almost Gnostic, party to a view that sorts poorly with a full endorsement of human corporeality in the incarnation and resurrection; but his need to drive out the embodied *daemons* forces him to embrace a view of the body as, at best, a kind of value-neutral substrate that can become the provisionally shared ground of God and man by virtue of the incarnation.

Thus *daemonic* embodiment appears to drive Augustine toward a certain kind of dualism, whose logic appears to be that if *daemons* have bodies, then embodiment should be de-emphasized in the economy of salvation. This lingering anxiety is surely evident in Augustine’s apparent yearning to be altogether shed of the flesh as soon as possible. “We might indeed,” he argues, “attribute too much merit to ourselves while in the flesh, were it not for the fact that we live subject to His pardon until we lay flesh aside.” The incarnation itself thus becomes a divine *kenosis* wherein the flesh assumed by the *Logos* is a medium for the conduction or transmission of the cleansing due the soul: “This is the reason why grace has been bestowed upon us through a Mediator, so that those who are defiled by sinful flesh might be cleansed ‘by the likeness of sinful flesh.’”⁵⁵³ Material flesh thus seems to be *strictly* a neutral medium endowed with a quality of conductivity, so that although human embodiment is a hindrance, *through* flesh the human soul may encounter the God who cleanses.

⁵⁵² quando quidem et in ipsa uia corporali (quae falsissima est et plenissima erroris, qua non iter agit iustitia; quoniam non per corporalem altitudinem, sed per spiritalem, hoc est incorporalem, similitudinem ad deum debemus ascendere) - in ipsa tamen uia corporali, quam daemonum amici per elementorum gradus ordinant inter aetherios deos et terrenos homines aeriis daemonibus mediis constitutis.... (*ibid.* 9.18).

⁵⁵³ propterea ergo nobis per mediatorem praestita est gratia, ut polluti carne peccati carnis peccati similitudine mundaremur. (*ibid.* 10.22). Cf. Rom. 8.3.

This tendency is evident in Augustine's attempt to align the Trinity with the Platonic *principia* acknowledged by Porphyry. He chastens Porphyry for his failure to recognize that the "Lord Christ is the *principium* by Whose incarnation we are cleansed," arguing that Porphyry wrongly holds Christ in contempt because of his assumption of flesh.⁵⁵⁴ In the ensuing dispute over the plausibility of incarnation,⁵⁵⁵ Augustine explains the possibility of fleshly embodiment as mediating rather than hindering. Christ the "good and true Mediator" has shown that

it is sin which is evil, and not the substance or nature of flesh. He showed that a body of flesh and a human soul could be assumed and retained without sin, and laid aside at death, and changed into something better by resurrection.⁵⁵⁶

As ever, there are hints here of qualitatively superior bodies in resurrection, but Augustine endorses primarily a *negative* position: bodies do not *necessarily* have to do harm – a minimum position that he must maintain if Christ's earthly body is to be asserted as a medium for the divine *principium*, which is the divine element that purifies and redeems, and which Augustine identifies with the Word:

For it is not the flesh which is the *principium*, and not the human soul, but the Word, through Whom all things were made. Thus, it is not the flesh as such which cleanses us. What cleanses us is the Word that clothed itself in flesh when 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.'⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁴ ... dominum christum esse principium, cuius incarnatione purgamur (*De civ. D.* 10.24). Cf. 10.26, where Augustine chastens Porphyry for not recognizing in Christ the *patrikos nous*: "But you do not believe that this mind [*nous*] is Christ; for you despise Him because of the body that He received from a woman, and because of the shame of the Cross." Porphyry acknowledges three principles: God the Father; God the Son, conceived as the *patrikos nous*; and a "soul-faculty." Augustine suggests that Porphyry's principles shadow a Trinitarian outlook, but that he fell short of conceding the full implications of his own thought. See O'Daly (1999) 129-30.

⁵⁵⁵ such as at 10.29, where Augustine argues from the shared premise that the intellectual soul "can become one in substance with the Mind of the Father" that it should be equally plausible that "the Son of God should assume one intellectual soul for the salvation of many."

⁵⁵⁶ ... peccatum esse malum, non carnis substantiam uel naturam, quae cum anima hominis et suscipi sine peccato potuit et haberi, et morte deponi et in melius resurrectione mutari (*De civ. D.* 10.24).

⁵⁵⁷ neque enim caro principium est aut anima humana, sed uerbum per quod facta sunt omnia. non ergo caro per se ipsa mundat, sed per uerbum a quo suscepta est, cum uerbum caro factum est et habitauit in nobis (*ibid.* 10.24). Cf. John 1.3; 1.14.

It would appear then that Augustine is pressed to endorse embodiment by the urgent need to supply the *principium-Logos* with appropriate housing. That housing supplied, the Word is then positioned to cleanse its votaries: “The *principium*, then, having assumed soul and flesh, purifies both the soul and flesh of those who believe in Him.” The ensuing “purified” flesh would presumably be “pure” in terms of its transparency to the work of the *Logos*, its capacity to “conduct” divine grace. *Daemons*, though theoretically superior in body, are thus circumvented by the incarnate *principium*, who, unlike humanity – “carnal, infirm, guilty of sin, and wrapped in the darkness of ignorance” – is characterized rather by a human nature that was “righteous and not sinful.”⁵⁵⁸

The important concession in Augustine’s thinking here is that embodied material reality can mediate divinity, a point that he is at pains to reject in the case of the *daemons*, despite their unfortunately superior bodies. This principle enables a cleansing based on humanity’s proximity to something that would otherwise be far removed: we “would be wholly unable to perceive this *Principium* unless we were cleansed and healed by him.”⁵⁵⁹ The incarnation of a *principium* thus concedes the possibility that a *higher* principle, mediated by embodiment, can potentially purify rather than merely distract the human soul, as the embodied *daemons* associated by Augustine with theurgy tend to do. The implications of this for cult are considerable, as Augustine suggests by his insertion into the discussion of the *principium* of a comment on the eucharistic discourse in John’s gospel:

For when, speaking in parables, Christ spoke of eating his flesh, and those who did not understand Him were offended, and went away saying, ‘This is a hard saying, who can hear it?’, He

⁵⁵⁸ *carnales, infirmi, peccatis obnoxii et ignorantiae tenebris obuoluti ... [natura humana] iusta, non peccatrix (De civ. D. 10.24).*

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. 10.29, where Augustine argues that by the incarnation “it was made possible for us to come to Him, Who was so far from us: to the immortal from the mortal; to the immutable from the mutable; to the righteous from the ungodly; to the blessed from the wretched.”

answered those who remained: 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.'⁵⁶⁰

In interpreting this passage, Augustine, noting that Christ is "speaking in parables," explains that those who depart lack the deeper insight that the consumption of the flesh is actually about mediated, corporeal *access* to the incorporeal "Spirit." The latter is of the essence, and the flesh important only insofar as it supplies an avenue of approach to the *principium* that has made itself accessible by assuming embodiment.

We shall return to this passage shortly, when aspects of Augustine's understanding of Christian eucharistic cult will be under closer scrutiny; but central to his view of the eucharist is his evident intention here to frame the passage from John's gospel as a conceptual parallel to the incarnation : just as the flesh incarnating the *Logos* is not an end to be vindicated in itself, but rather a neutral, purified mediating element, eliminating the interval between the human soul and the divine mind, likewise his reading of the eucharistic passage discloses the view that sacrament is no end in itself – "the flesh profiteth nothing" – but rather a purified, mediating element providing contact with the purifying *principium-Logos*. In the context, Augustine merely means to adduce an exemplum that replicates the reasoning that he has just applied to the incarnation itself.

The suggestion of a parallel between incarnation and eucharist, in the context of a theory that vindicates corporeality as a conductor of divine principle, makes of the eucharist a mediating rite that would exceed every theurgic practice on offer. The very prospect that the principle of the *Logos* might be a continuous healing presence somehow mystically attained through the sacred rite of the eucharist, prompts Augustine to upbraid Porphyry's disciples, who along with their master foolishly believe that "the soul must leave behind all union with a body in order that the soul may dwell in blessedness with God."⁵⁶¹ In fact, argues Augustine, the pupils should correct the master, and remind him that

⁵⁶⁰ *ibid.* 10.24.

⁵⁶¹ ... omne corpus esse fugiendum, ut anima possit beata permanere cum deo (*ibid.* 10.29).

following Plato, you [Platonists] say that the world is an animal, and a most blessed animal; and you wish also to say that it is everlasting. How, therefore, is it never to be released from a body, and yet never to lack blessedness, if, in order for the soul to be blessed, the body must be left behind?⁵⁶²

A similar argument is advanced concerning the sun and the other stars, in a manner immediately reminiscent of Origen. If the sun and stars are both embodied and blessed, and if they are eternally so, how must separation from a body be required for blessedness?⁵⁶³ Augustine is also fully aware that the incarnation and resurrection force this position upon him, noting that the *Logos* was not only blessedly incarnate, but that after Christ's death he was raised up, "changed by the resurrection into something better, because now no longer mortal but incorruptible...."⁵⁶⁴; and furthermore, that believers may come to participate in resurrection in just such an embodied state:

We do not in the least doubt that those [resurrection] bodies will be everlasting, and that they will be of the kind demonstrated in the example of Christ's resurrection ... We preach that they will be entirely incorruptible and immortal, and that they will in no way hinder the contemplation by which the soul is fixed upon God.⁵⁶⁵

Augustine thus may pretend not to endorse a graded scale of material embodiment – as his rejection of *daemons* requires – but he plainly must endorse the idea that material embodiment may become transparent to the effects of spiritual purification. With embodiment thus established, it remains for Augustine to delineate a cult option that may replace the cult of embodied *daemons* whose intermediate state is only a barrier to mediation. His reference to the eucharistic discourse in *John*, with its emphasis on

⁵⁶² platone quippe auctore animal esse dicitis mundum et animal beatissimum, quod uultis esse etiam sempiternum. quo modo ergo nec umquam soluetur a corpore, nec umquam carebit beatitudine, si, ut beata sit anima, corpus est omne fugiendum? (*ibid.* 10.29).

⁵⁶³ *ibid.* 10.29.

⁵⁶⁴ ... in melius resurrectione mutatum iam incorruptibile neque mortale... (*ibid.* 10.29).

⁵⁶⁵ [corpora] futura tamen sempiterna minime dubitamus, et talia futura, quale sua resurrectione christus demonsttrauit exemplum. sed qualiacumque sint, cum incorruptibilia prorsus et immortalia nihiloque animae contemplationem, qua in deo figitur, inpedientia praedicentur... (*ibid.* 10.29).

consumed “flesh” that opens access to Spirit, already hints at how this new scheme of cult mediation might appear.

5. *Eucharist as Sign: A Sign Theory of Language Applied to Cult*

Before proceeding to the argument that Augustine is deploying the term *signum* in a sacrificial or ritual context in a manner suggestive of theurgy, it should first be noted that, as is the case with a term like *symbolon*, in *signum* we are dealing with a term that for Augustine derives primarily from a theory of language.⁵⁶⁶ Just as the *symbolon* has a history as an exegetical term, before thinkers like Origen or Iamblichus could apply it to material realities as “texts,” so *signum* finds its primary use as a term of the sign-theory that grounds Augustine’s theory of language. For the present argument, it is critical to understand how, for Augustine, the spoken “word” (*verbum*) functions as a “sign” (*signum*) of “things” (*res*) by transmitting thoughts and mental states (*motus animi, cogitationes, notiones*) from one mind to another. To understand the spoken “word” as bearing this inner content, and to recognize Augustine applying this concept as an analog to eucharist, is to begin to grasp how, for Augustine, the sacramental sign (*sacramentum / signum*), in “signifying” (*significare*) “sacrifice” (*sacrificium*), actually mediates the substantive content of the latter to ritual participants, rather than merely allegorically marking ethical abstractions. To this end, two important points can be drawn from Augustine’s earlier writings: first, Augustine’s believe that words signify “things” (*res*), and second, that each word in any verbal formulation bears from the mind of the speaker to the mind of the recipient its own distinct inner content, which is the idea or concept of the “thing” signified – ultimately the “inner word” of Augustine’s theory.

⁵⁶⁶ The scholarship on Augustinian sign theory is extensive. See Kirwan (2001); Stock (1996); Markus (1996, 1957); Pollmann (1996); Rist (1994); Mayer (1974, 1969).

The works in which Augustine can be seen working out his sign-theory are the early *De Dialecta*,⁵⁶⁷ *De Magistro* (389), and *De Doctrina Christiana*.⁵⁶⁸ *De Magistro* and *De Doctrina Christiana* are both concerned to map the ways in which one mind's contents may be transmitted to another, consistent with Augustine's fundamental understanding that words have been instituted among men precisely to enable the transmission of thoughts (*cogitationes*) between them.⁵⁶⁹ In *De Doctrina Christiana* he asserts that words are signs of things (*res*), and furthermore, that their only role is to signify.⁵⁷⁰ Distinguishing between "natural" signs (*naturalia*) and "given" signs (*data*), he classes words as the primary, though not the only instance of latter category.⁵⁷¹ Augustine characterizes that which is transmitted in terms of state of mind: "thoughts"; whatever may be "conceived in the mind that anyone may wish to communicate"; the "will"; the "impulses of our mind."⁵⁷² Signs thus convey states of mind, though Augustine believes that they signify "things" (*res*), where a "thing is whatever is sensed or understood or hidden." The sign in such a case – "one that can be comprised of letters" – reveals both *itself* and "something beyond itself" to its recipient.⁵⁷³ This treatment is from the early, unfinished textbook *De dialectica*, but we recognize it in the later *De magistro*, in the assertion that "a word is a sign of any kind of thing," the continuation of the same idea of a one-one correspondence between individual words and "things," the concepts of

⁵⁶⁷ Of uncertain authorship, though consensus leans toward Augustine, who identifies himself at 7.13, and who lists in his *Retractationes* (1.6) a work on dialectic among the *disciplinarum libri* begun in Milan, and that he claims left unfinished prior to his return to Africa [388]. Texts cited in Kirwan (2001) 190-91.

⁵⁶⁸ The latter was begun late in the fourth century and not likely completed for over a quarter century.

⁵⁶⁹ *ench.* 22.7. Text quoted in Kirwan (2001) 190.

⁵⁷⁰ 1.2.2. Text quoted in *ibid.* 191.

⁵⁷¹ 2.1.2-2.2.3. Text quoted in *ibid.*

⁵⁷² *ench.* 22.7; *doc.chr.* 2.3.4; *mag.* 1.2; *doc.chr.* 2.1.2. Texts cited in Kirwan, who notes, "According to Augustine ... speech is a means of mind exposure, and speakers expose their minds by giving signs of their minds contents" (192).

⁵⁷³ *De dialectica* 5.7. Text quoted in Kirwan (2001) 193.

which can be conveyed from one mind to another by the signing word – as the insistence on parsing the inner conceptual content of each word in a line of the *Aeneid* shows.⁵⁷⁴

Augustine's theory is not Stoic, though it does show evidence of Stoic influence. The manner in which he adapts Stoic terms is important insofar as it shapes his idea of the "inner word," which in turn makes his theory sufficiently pliant to be brought to bear on a theory of sacramental signing. His incomplete *De dialectica* appears to have been composed to some degree as a response to Stoic thought,⁵⁷⁵ whose sign-theory is perhaps most famously expressed by Sextus Empiricus. In it, three items are said to be linked: "the thing signified, the thing that signifies, and the thing come upon [*to tunchanon*]." In a given case, the thing signified is "the very state of affairs [*pragma*] revealed by an utterance," which is apprehended "as it subsists in accordance with our thought"; the thing that signifies is "an utterance [*phone*]"; and the thing come upon is the "external subject [*ektos hupokeimenon*]." ⁵⁷⁶ In the example given, the uttered name "Dio" does *not* signify the person Dio – who would be the "external subject" [*ektos hupokeimenon*]; nor does it signify a "thought" of Dio in the mind of a hearer; rather, it signifies a "state of affairs" that accords with the thought of whosoever comprehends the sign. The Stoic term for such "states of affairs [*pragamata*]" is *lekta*, "sayables," which are regarded as incorporeal and external to the mind. Interestingly, the term is not translated into Latin except perhaps as *dicibile* in the *De Dialectica* of Augustine,⁵⁷⁷ where he lays out what initially appear to be loosely analogous terms: *verbum*, *dicibile*, *res* – adding the additional term of *dictio*. In Augustine's account, a *verbum* is classed as a *dictio* when it refers to an external *res* (rather than to itself, as it might when under a grammarian's scrutiny); as a *dictio*, it is understood to convey to the hearer the *dicibile* that reposes in the speaker's mind, and that is conveyed to the hearer's upon utterance. *Dicibilia* are this the "mental counterpart of words," which "become *dictiones* on

⁵⁷⁴ *ibid.* 193-194

⁵⁷⁵ See *ibid.* 196. It is surely of further interest that Diogenes Laertius notes Chrysippus' definition of "dialectic" as the science of "what signifies and what is signed" (*Lives of the Philosophers* 7.62. Text cited in Kirwan [2001] 196).

⁵⁷⁶ *Adversos mathematicos* 8.12. Text quoted in Kirwan (2001) 196.

⁵⁷⁷ 5.7-8. Text quoted in *ibid.* 197-98.

utterance."⁵⁷⁸ The *dicibile*, however, although Augustine may have derived it from the Stoic *lekton*, is not its equivalent, since Augustine insists on identifying it with mental conceptions and thoughts – the mental counterparts of the *verbum*. For Stoics, they are incorporeal and external to the mind. What is more, since Augustine expressly declares that *verba* are signs and *res* are signified, the *dicibilia* do not play a functional role in the process of signification as they do for the Stoics, in Augustine's theory seeming rather to substantiate the signifying *verbum* (= *dictio*) as its intellectual content.⁵⁷⁹

Augustine's outlook thus appears not precisely Stoic, but it does bear this interesting notion of the *dicibile* as idea or conception that seems to haunt the articulated word as its intellectual content. The term would not recur in Augustine's later writings, but the concept would, as in the dialogue *De Quantitate Animae* (387 / 388), where he suggests that the articulated word is "made up" (*constet*) of "sound and signification" in such a way that "the sound reaches the ears but the signification reaches the mind," and where the "signification" is understood to stand in relation to the sounded word as the *soul* of a living thing stands in relation to its *body*.⁵⁸⁰ This account retains many of the attributes of Augustine's treatment in the *De Dialectica*, though it prefers terms like *notio* and *cogitatio* to *dicibile* as designators of the pre-articulate thought-content of the *verbum*. The new element is the conception of words as composites of sound and signification, where the latter is understood as the incorporeal thought inhabiting the mind prior to utterance, and animating the verbal utterance, almost as its incorporeal soul. It is not unreasonable to speculate that Augustine developed this notion of "inner words" from contemplating the word of God, conceived as incorporeal and therefore soundless, and that such reflection prompted him to devise a notion of pre-articulate "inner" word that may be articulated in any of a range of languages, depending on the target audience – that is, the inner word that is not even a particular word.⁵⁸¹ It is certainly an enticing

⁵⁷⁸ *ibid.* 199.

⁵⁷⁹ *ibid.* 199.

⁵⁸⁰ *quant.* 32.65-66. Text quoted by Kirwan (2001) 200.

⁵⁸¹ Kirwan (2001) 200-201.

idea that word of God might inhabit outer forms – whether conceived in terms of spoken words or otherwise.

My point here is not to criticize Augustine’s theory – whether as an instance of speech-thought isomorphism or otherwise⁵⁸² – requiring “a one-one correspondence between the elements of a sentence ... and the elements of thought signified by that sentence”; rather, I mean to suggest that Augustine’s apparently high level of confidence in the capacity of the *verbum-signum* both to signify “things” (*res*), and to mediate cleanly the substantive, incorporeal concepts of those things from one mind to another by the tenuous mechanism of the spoken word, can illuminate how it is that eucharistic sacrament may convey a reality by “signifying” it, a process to which Augustine deliberately applies the spoken word as a parallel.

When he first approaches the question, though, Augustine evinces little interest in asserting the viability of materiality in conveying such substance; rather, keeping the argument within the parameters of the assertion that Christ affords his votaries aid that is “cleansing and redeeming,” he prefers to assert that Christian worship may be conceived in terms of two options, conceived as equally potent ways of offering the worship that his due to God: “To Him, we owe the service [*servitus*] which in Greek is called *latreia*, whether this be expressed through certain sacraments [*sacramentis*] or performed within our own selves.”⁵⁸³ His instinctive preference is for the latter of the two, since *latreia* offered up from the bottomless subjectivity of the self removes the prospect of tainting Christianity with pagan associations. He prefers rather to make of the faithful a metaphorical temple housing internal spiritual transformation: “For we are his temple, each of us and every one of us together, since He deigns to dwell both in the whole harmonious body and in each of us singly.”⁵⁸⁴ No cult ritual is required where the faithful *are* the temple, and the other tangles of religion likewise may be

⁵⁸² as Kirwan does, presumably rightly.

⁵⁸³ huic nos servitutem, quae λατρεία graece dicitur, siue in quibusque sacramentis siue in nobis ipsis debemus (*De civ. D.* 10.3).

⁵⁸⁴ huius enim templum simul omnes et singuli templa sumus, quia et omnium concordiam et singulos inhabitare dignatur (*ibid.* 10.3).

systematically rendered superfluous or figurative: “Our heart is His altar when we lift it up to Him.... We sacrifice bleeding victims to him when we strive for His truth even unto blood.”⁵⁸⁵ Other appurtenances are similarly transformed into figurations of spiritual ascent. The faithful become “sweetest incense” when they “burn in His sight with godly and holy love.”⁵⁸⁶ Holidays and sacred festivals, to the extent that they have any meaning at all, are kept merely as memorials to divine benefaction. “Upon the altar of our hearts” we offer “the sacrifice of humility and praise,” as we “re-choose” – [*religentes*] a speculative etymology for *religio* – the God we had lost through the fall.⁵⁸⁷ Indeed, the term *sacrificium* itself designates a “divine thing,” even if in a trivial sense it is an act “performed or offered by man.”⁵⁸⁸ In all such instances the stuff of religious cult is neutralized, a move that Augustine justifies by privileging the soul’s final incorporeal good, which is “nothing other than to cling to Him, by Whose incorporeal embrace alone the intellectual soul is, if one may so put it, filled up and impregnated with true virtues” – a formulation that emphasizes the sought after *end* over the mechanism of its attainment.⁵⁸⁹

Given such a tendency, it should occasion no surprise that Augustine seems deliberately to deploy the language of *sign* [*signum*] in an almost excessively figurative manner. For him, such terms initially appear to operate in the category of allegory, the grounds for such use being that in requiring sacrifices, God never truly intended the tangible acts described, but rather the spiritual dispositions that such acts can be said to represent. At bottom, the basis for this claim is the Platonic argument that God gains nothing from sacrifices, which supply no divine need or deficiency. “Who could be so foolish,” Augustine asks, “as to suppose that the things offered to God in sacrifice are

⁵⁸⁵ cum ad illum sursum est, eius est altare cor nostrum ... ei cruentas uictimas caedimus, quando usque ad sanguinem pro eius ueritate certamus (*ibid.* 10.3).

⁵⁸⁶ [eum] suauissimo [adolemus] incenso, cum in eius conspectu pio sanctoque amore flagramus (*ibid.* 10.3).

⁵⁸⁷ [ei sacrificamus] hostiam humilitatis et laudis in ara cordis....

⁵⁸⁸ etsi enim ab homine fit uel offertur, tamen sacrificium res diuina est (*ibid.* 10.6).

⁵⁸⁹ nullum est aliud quam illi cohaerere, cuius unius anima intellectualis incorporeo, si dici potest, amplexu ueris impletur fecundaturque uirtutibus. (*ibid.* 10.3).

necessary to Him for some purposes of His own?" The philosophical argument is also scriptural: "I have said to the Lord, Thou art my God: for Thou needest not my goodness."⁵⁹⁰ Whether one's claims are based on Greek philosophy or biblical wisdom, the conclusion remains the same: God "has no need of cattle, or of any other corruptible and earthly thing, or even of man's goodness." The corollary, as Augustine puts it, is that "everything which is done in rightly worshipping God is of profit not to God, but to man."⁵⁹¹

The fact that the sacrifices prescribed by ancient Jewish law had long been jettisoned makes such an approach convenient for Augustine. The absence of such sacrifices had long pressed exegetes to apply alternative interpretive paradigms to the scriptural texts that initially imposed them, making it thus a straightforward project to supply figurative meanings on the acts prescribed in the Old Testament. Augustine clarifies the manner in which such ancient sacrifices are to be understood by figuratively deploying the term *signum* – the "sacred sign" [*sacrum signum*]:

The people of God now read of these [sacrifices], but they do not perform them. We are to understand these things simply as symbols of what we are to do now for the purpose of drawing near to God... A sacrifice as commonly understood therefore, is the visible sacrament [*sacramentum*] of an invisible sacrifice; that is, it is a sacred symbol [*sacrum signum*].⁵⁹²

He further supports this narrow focus on inner disposition rather than sacrificial act with reference to the psalmist, who cries out, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else I would give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a

⁵⁹⁰ dixi domino, dominus meus es tu, quoniam bonorum meorum non eges (Psalm 1.2, *apud De civ. D.* 10.5).

⁵⁹¹ non solum igitur pecore uel qualibet alia re corruptibili atque terrena, sed ne ipsa quidem iustitia hominis deus egere credendus est, totumque quod recte colitur deus homini prodesse, non deo. (*De civ. D.* 10.5).

⁵⁹² ... quae nunc dei populus legit, non facit, aliud intellegendum est, nisi rebus illis eas res fuisse significatas, quae aguntur in nobis, ad hoc ut inhaereamus deo... sacrificium ergo uisibile inuisibilis sacrificii sacramentum, id est sacrum signum est. (*ibid.* 10.5).

broken and contrite heart the Lord will not despise.”⁵⁹³ Despite the fact that a Christian biblical hermeneutic conveniently requires this shift to figurative meanings, it is not difficult to discern why Augustine might resort here to such traditions of exegesis, since such a move enables him to exploit Christianity’s rejection of ancient Jewish practices as a wedge to drive between Christian and pagan practice. The ritual sacrifice, in this view, is merely a metaphor for an attitude of obeisance toward God; the ritual acts described are a “visible sacrament” [*visibile sacramentum*] – an outward sign [*signum*] – of an “invisible sacrifice” [*invisibile sacrificium*] which turns out to be rather as vaporous as an intention or an attitude. At its most illuminating, such an approach to “sacrifice” only reveals the degree to which devotees should give themselves over to God, with martyrdom as the extreme instance, as the blood of sacrifice in such narratives is meant to suggest: “We sacrifice bleeding victims to him when we strive for His truth even unto blood.” But even then, the sacrifice remains ritually insignificant, and serves only as an instructive indicator of how a believer is to surrender even his life blood unto God. Once an attitude, or disposition of faith is attained – once the believer attains a “broken spirit” as his own orientation – then the narrative or description of sacrifice is exhausted of meaning, since the acts described are finally empty of any meaningful ritual substance.

Such allegorical reading of biblical texts seems natural enough for a Christian thinker; more devious, though, is this seemingly deliberate sanitizing of the *signum*. Here we are far from the lexicon of theurgy, where the term *symbolon* expands from exegetical contexts and comes to denote inner formal principles made manifest, linked to divine activity, and given perfect, outward, material expression. Outer manifestation is thus linked closely to inner, ultimate reality. This sense of *symbolon* is also a shade of meaning that Origen is happy to embrace, declaring that far from being outdone by traditionalist pagans, Christians too can lay claim to a *symbolon* in their eucharistic bread. Augustine, on the other hand, rather than *linking* outer expression and inner

⁵⁹³ si uoluisses, inquit, sacrificium, dedissem utique; holocaustis non delectaberis. sacrificium deo spiritus contritus; cor contritum et humiliatum deus non spernet. (*ibid.* 10.5).

reality in any substantive way, proceeds with the intention of sundering the two. Ritual act as mere metaphor – sacrifice that effects or mediates nothing in itself – is now a “sacred sign.” Furthermore, the sacrificial act with which God is not particularly concerned is now “a symbol [*signum*] of the one that He does desire.”⁵⁹⁴ Indeed, “all the divine commandments ... which we read concerning the many kinds of sacrifice offered in the ministry of the tabernacle or the temple, are to be interpreted *symbolically* [*significando*], as referring to love of God and neighbor.”⁵⁹⁵ Charity and contrite hearts replace ritual act, and for Augustine, eager to escape any cultic association of Christianity and paganism, the terminology of the “sign” now handily designates ritual acts emptied of substantial content and read simply in metaphorical, didactic terms.

Ever engaged with scripture, Augustine finds his idea conveniently vindicated everywhere. *Doing good* is the sacrifice required by God, according to the Apostle: “To do good and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” When the prophet Hosea gives God to declare, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice,” Augustine is content to infer that “nothing else is meant than that one kind of sacrifice is preferred to another; for that which men call a sacrifice is only a *symbol* [*signum*] of the true sacrifice.”⁵⁹⁶ So powerful in fact does Augustine find this idea that he even transforms it into the original divine motive for demanding sacrifice in the first instance, asserting that the texts in the Law were never actually meant to refer to the acts that they describe:

For if He did not want the sacrifice that He does require ... to be *symbolised* [*significari*] by those sacrifices which He was thought to desire for His own pleasure, then surely He would not have commanded in the old Law that the latter were to be offered.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁴ illo igitur quod eum nolle dixit, hoc significatur, quod eum uelle subiecit (*ibid.* 10.5).

⁵⁹⁵ quaecumque ... in ministerio tabernaculi siue templi multis modis de sacrificiis leguntur diuinitus esse praecepta, ad dilectionem dei et proximi significando referuntur (*ibid.* 10.5).

⁵⁹⁶ “bene facere,” inquit, “et communicatores esse nolite obliuisci; talibus enim sacrificiis placetur deo”; “misericordiam uolo quam sacrificium.” nihil aliud quam sacrificium sacrificio praelatum oportet intellegi; quoniam illud, quod ab omnibus appellatur sacrificium, signum est ueri sacrificii. Heb. 13.16, Hos. 6,6 *apud De civ. D.* 10.5, with emphasis added.

⁵⁹⁷ nam si ea sacrificia quae uult ... nollet eis sacrificiis significari, quae uelut sibi delectabilia desiderare putatus est: non utique de his offerendis in lege uetere praecepisset (*De civ. D.* 10.5).

If God had not originally required mercy, he'd never have required the killing of calves! Put more charitably, God's original or ultimate intentions already embrace the need for figurative interpretation. Furthermore, Augustine can assume such a unanimity in the serious intellectual community on the question of divine impassibility and the sheer emptiness of tangible sacrifice, that surely the *only* conceivable explanation for the presence of injunction to ritual sacrifice in Old Testament Law is an original intent that already embraces allegorical or figurative reading.

From Augustine's re-casting of sacrifice in terms of a virtuous inner state, and deliberate sundering of the idea of *signum* – *symbolon* from any inner content, it is but a short step to viewing the individual human being as a figurative sacrifice – or perhaps a literal martyr, as hinted above – who offers himself to God. The Apostle himself, as Augustine notes, endorses the theory that the body can be seen in figurative sacrificial terms,⁵⁹⁸ and when yoked to with the familiar Pauline notion that the community of believers is in some sense Christ's body, with Christ himself as head, it further makes sense to conceptualize this self-offering as somehow mirroring or bringing to full fruition the sacrifice of Christ himself:

The redeemed city – the whole congregation and fellowship of the saints – is offered to God as a universal sacrifice for us through the Great High Priest Who, in His Passion, offered even Himself for us in the form of a servant, so that we might be the body of so great a head.⁵⁹⁹

As often, a Christ who is both priest and offering embraces the faithful in their self-sacrifice by virtue of the fact that, in the view of Pauline thought, they *constitute* his body. It is precisely here, though, where the question arises as to just how that collective, mystical participation in Christ is effected, that Augustine's sundering of *signum* and *sacrificium* may begin to break down. Augustine suggests that this conjoined

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. Rom. 6.11 *apud De civ. D. 10.6.*

⁵⁹⁹ ...[ut] tota ipsa redempta ciuitas, hoc est congregatio societasque sanctorum, uniuersale sacrificium offeratur deo per sacerdotem magnum, qui etiam se ipsum obtulit in passione pro nobis, ut tanti capitis corpus essemus, secundum formam serui (*De civ. D. 10.6.*)

self-offering, predicated on the possibility of being “one body in Christ”⁶⁰⁰ and thereby participant in the mediation that the High Priest offers, “is the sacrifice [*sacrificium*] which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, by which she demonstrates that she herself is offered in the offering that she makes to God.”⁶⁰¹ The self-oblation of believers, mediated through Christ’s high priesthood, is the church’s daily offering, an alignment that re-unites *sacrificium* to the tangible work of the altar, and implies that the *signum* is something more concrete, and that substance of *sacrificium* is not to be so easily separated from its outward *signum*.

Paul’s assertion that “the sacrifice of Christians” consists precisely in this being somehow “one body” at first satisfies Augustine’s inclination to read sacrifice in primarily spiritual, rather than ritual terms, but his insistence on seeing this “unified body” in the eucharist forces a reconfiguration of his terms. It is simply by no means clear that a eucharistic *sacrificium* may be read in the same allegorical manner that he brings to bear on Old Testament *sacrificium*. When the altar is re-introduced, the allegorizing disposition must to some degree be banished, and the terms *signum* and *sacrificium* re-thought in their tangible, ritual dimension, eager though Augustine has been to downplay that aspect of his terminology earlier. We do see him lean toward this more tangible aspect when, in rejecting sacrifice to angelic beings, he asserts that “in sacrificing, we offer visible sacrifice only to Him to Whom, in our hearts, we ought to present ourselves as an invisible sacrifice,” a statement that at least does not *exclude* tangible offering.⁶⁰² Such a formulation grants an explicit distinction, while likewise implying a link between invisible and visible sacrifice, such that the latter is not reduced to a metaphor for the former; and this “visible sacrifice” is certainly the sacrifice “which the Church continually celebrates” and by which she is united to Christ’s self-oblation, namely, the Church’s eucharistic ritual. Augustine confirms this identification as he

⁶⁰⁰ “This is the sacrifice of Christians: ‘We, being many, are one body in Christ.’”; hoc est sacrificium christianorum: multi unum corpus in christo (*ibid.* 10.6; cf. Rom. 12.3f.).

⁶⁰¹ quod etiam sacramento altaris fidelibus noto frequentat ecclesia, ubi ei demonstratur, quod in ea re, quam offert, ipsa offeratur. (*De civ. D.* 10.6).

⁶⁰² ... ita sacrificantes non alteri uisibile sacrificium offerendum esse nouerimus quam illi, cuius in cordibus nostris inuisibile sacrificium nos ipsi esse debemus. (*ibid.* 10.19).

returns to the theme of Christ's mediation, noting the latter's intention "that there should be a daily sign [*sacramentum cotidianum*] of this in the sacrament of the Church's sacrifice [*sacrificium*],"⁶⁰³ on the grounds that the Church is instructed to regard herself as offered through Christ. The introduction of such a precise formulation, makes it clear that that Augustine has discarded or at least substantially modified his previous use of terms such as "sign" and "sacrament" to designate the metaphorical, pedagogical function of sacrificial acts, shaping them in accordance with a new approach, in which the sign / sacrament [*signum / sacramentum*] actually *signify* the sacrifice [*sacrificium*] of the Church in a manner which *makes real* the unity of all believers in the death of Christ. If Christ incarnate enables an embodied encounter with divine *principium* – *i.e.*, with the inner, invisible *Logos* – and if Christ resurrected is the prototype of the believer's resurrection body; and furthermore, if the sacrifice of the church is understood to reify the notion of Christ and all believers as "one body," then surely the language of "sign" must read as efficiently linked to the content of "sacrifice." For participation to be real, the rite must be more than metaphor.

We might see the beginnings of a move in this direction in Augustine's interest in extending the range of what is signified in Old Testament rites beyond spiritual disposition, to include the Christian sacrifice that they portend: "the sacrifices of the holy men of old were the many and various signs of this true sacrifice."⁶⁰⁴ Here the ancient sacrifices commended by scripture are not merely to be read figuratively as outward signs of *inward* attitudes, but as obscure "signs" of a later, *outward* "sign" – as the *signs* of a *sign*, where hindsight reveals those more ancient sacrifices as anticipatory of the Church's true sacrifice. Such a collocation suggests strongly that the comparatively imperfect gestures of Old Testament sacrifice have been replaced by the perfect and substantive sacrifice of the church – a different matter from merely signifying inner states. In the new framework, we are within a conceptual framework in which religious acts have an implied ritual force, and resist mere dissolution into ethical

⁶⁰³ cuius rei sacramentum cotidianum esse ... ecclesiae sacrificium... (*ibid.* 10.20).

⁶⁰⁴ ...huius ueri sacrificii multiplicia uariaque signa erant sacrificia prisca sanctorum (*ibid.* 10.20).

symbolism. As such, when we observe Augustine's thinking on the Christian rite unfolding, we plainly may *not* assume that *signum* functions merely as a metaphor to suggest some inner state. Although he may sometimes appear disposed to yearn for a world in which no formal rites of mediation are necessary – so that “sacrifice” is achieved merely in purity of heart – such a principle simply cannot inform his interpretation of Christian eucharist, in large part because he has so diligently implicated the community of believers as meaningful participants in the Church's daily *sacramentum* / *signum*, which is the Church's *sacrificium*. There is simply too much substantive involvement here, in terms of the destiny of believers, for the Church's sacrifice to be merely metaphor, a pedagogical prompt or an allegorized “text” for some sought-after inner state. The key to this “something more” that the eucharist must be lies in Augustine's reconfiguration of the eucharistic “sign” as parallel to the signing word.

Augustine makes his substantive move in urging that “visible sacrifices are symbols [*signa*] of invisible ones in the way that the words we speak are signs of things.”⁶⁰⁵ The very deployment of such a parallel strongly suggests *Logos* theology, but we should take care lest we confuse the *Logos* of God with a spoken word, and it is very clear that Augustine here speaks of the latter. Perhaps – employing for a moment the *Logos* of God in place of the parallel of a spoken word – the outward sign might be conceived as standing in a relationship to a signified reality in a manner that is analogous to the *Logos*' re-presentation of God the Father, in which the Word is a distinct hypostasis but remains no less God. This is an appealing idea, and Augustine's thought on language is plainly, as we have seen, shadowed by the influence of the Word of God, perhaps to the point of his development of a theory of an “inner,” unspoken word. But we should adhere to the figure that Augustine actually employs: that built on the relationship between a *spoken* word as a “sounded sign” [*sonantia signa*] of the things [*res*] signified, in parallel to “visible sacrifices” (sacraments) as “signs” [*signa*] of invisible

⁶⁰⁵ ... haec [visibilia sacrificia] ita signa esse illorum [invisibilium sacrificiorum], sicut uerba sonantia signa sunt rerum (*ibid.* 10.19).

sacrifices. The inference that is to be drawn is that Augustine is placing the outward “sign” of the eucharist *on the same plane* with the reality of its inner “sacrifice” that it represents. Seen in relation to Augustine’s sign theory of language, whose formulaic assertion of the relationship of *signum-res* is here perfectly replicated, it is clear Augustine means to suggest – despite his earlier tendency to evacuate biblical “signs” of tangible content – that the *visible sign*, in signifying an *invisible* reality, bears within itself a substance that it conveys from point of origin to recipient, in the way that a spoken word (*dictio*) bears its inner conceptual content (*dicibile*) with complete transparency to a hearer; *i.e.*, the substantive content of the “invisible sacrifice” is equally substantively borne by the *sign* to those who receive it. Just as word bears the concept of a thing, transmitting from one mind to another, and establishing it as equally present to the recipient, just so the outward sign of the eucharist bears a content that makes present in equal degree for the recipient the inner sacrifice that it signifies.

Other assertions of “word” as parallel are even more suggestive. We find the figure again in the context of Augustine’s discussion of Old Testament theophanies, where the purpose of the argument is to assert that God can come into an immediate contact with humanity without elaborate hierarchies of mediation. The theophanies may thus be seen as instances in which God has become manifest in the world even prior to the incarnation. Here Augustine suggests that God, who can be perceived in his essence only by the intellect, can nevertheless make himself *perceptible*. In defense of this idea, he again deploys the *signum-res* theory:

Nor should it disturb us that God, though invisible, should often have appeared in visible form to the patriarchs. For just as the sound by which we hear a thought which was first formulated in the silence of the mind is not itself a thought, so the aspect under which God is seen even though He is by nature invisible is not the same thing as God Himself. It is however, He Himself Who is seen, just as the thought itself is heard in the sound of the voice; and the patriarchs were not ignorant of the fact that, even though

the bodily form was not God, they nonetheless saw the invisible God.⁶⁰⁶

Again the same principles are evident, and if anything Augustine works out their implications more forcefully. God, he argues, can be materially present in the world in the same way that a pre-articulate thought can be fully manifested and conveyed by a spoken word. “The sound by which we hear a thought” is a spoken word (*verbum-dictio*); the “thought first formulated in the silence of the mind” is the mental concept (*dicibile*) of the thing signified (*res*) that is conveyed by the spoken word, but which is not itself that word. The distinction should bring to mind immediately Augustine’s assertion in *De Quantitate Animae* that the articulated word is “made up” (*constet*) of “sound and signification” in such a way that “the sound reaches the ears but the signification reaches the mind.” In the present passage “the thought is heard in the sound of the voice,” by which Augustine plainly means that insofar as the spoken word conveys the thought to the receiving mind, it is to be regarded as that thought made manifest. It is distinct from the thought (*dictio* is distinct from *dicibile*), but it is nevertheless the thought rendered audible. In exactly the same manner, theophanies bifurcate into a material manifestation – the “visible form” of God, “the aspect under which God is seen” – and an inner signification – “He [who] is by nature invisible – forming a composite such that the patriarchs may say that although the outward form “was not God,” it is nevertheless “He Himself Who is seen, just as the thought itself is heard in the sound of the voice.”

Augustine is thus clearly applying to the phenomenon of theophanies the same reasoning that he applies to the reality of eucharist; the fact that he would draw upon his sign theory of language to do so surely supplies license to view the two issues in parallel. The essence of God transcends perception, but what is seen and heard is

⁶⁰⁶ nec mouere debet, quod, cum sit inuisibilis, saepe uisibiliter patribus apparuisse memoratur. sicut enim sonus, quo auditur sententia in silentio intellegentiae constituta, non est hoc quod ipsa: ita et species, qua uisus est deus in natura inuisibili constitutus, non erat quod ipse. uerum tamen ipse in eadem specie corporali uidebatur, sicut illa sententia ipsa in sono uocis auditur; nec illi ignorabant inuisibilem deum in specie corporali, quod ipse non erat, se uidere (*ibid.* 10.13).

nevertheless God manifested. If we extend this reasoning from theophanies to eucharist, the visible sacrifice offered daily by the Church *is* Christ without actually being Christ in essence; that is, to borrow the language from Augustine, though the bodily form is not Christ, it is Christ himself who is seen. The eucharist mediates Christ's sacrifice such that it is *no less real or present for being mediated*, just as the spoken word expresses and transmits the thought to which it gives voice in a manner that excludes its diminution. The eucharist, then, is conceived by Augustine as a visible sign that mediates a substantial incorporeal reality. That Augustine would develop a sign theory built around a notion of "inner word" – the unexpressed, unvoiced, incorporeal reality that precedes physical utterance – and that he would apply it *both* to theophanies as perceptible and real mediation of God, *and* to the eucharist as the "sign" of the Church's sacrifice, suggests strongly that he views the eucharist as a materially mediated encounter with the incorporeal Word of God. This conclusion is supported by the fact that such reasoning underpins the incarnation itself, where Augustinian Christology regards Christ as ideal material mediator because of the perfect assimilation of his own rational soul to the *Logos*. The body of Christ itself transparently mediates the incorporeal *Logos*. Given the investment of Augustine's theory in the idea of an "inner word," likely shaped by his meditation on the incorporeal *Logos*, we might conclude that the eucharistic bread, as a sign, is an expressed word giving voice to an "inner word" that is *the* inner Word, and that it may therefore be understood as an encounter with the very *Logos* of God, who heals the wounded rational souls of men through the mediation of an embodied encounter. To believe that this is so requires only that we assent to the proposition that Augustine, in a manner akin to Origen, believes that the "bread of life," conceived in parallel to the incarnation ("I am the bread...") may be conceptualized in accordance with a theory of *sign* that actually effects the soul's purifying access to the healing *Logos*, a process whose end is described in terms of the participation of believers in the life of the eternal, risen Christ.

As noted at the outset, where Iamblichean theurgy supplies *symbola* as the mediating mechanisms enabling the soul's participation in the *logoi* disseminated

through reality by creative work of the Demiurge, Christian sacrament, shaded with this outlook, invokes the eucharistic *sign* as an mediating mechanism enabling an inward encounter with the *Logos* itself, effecting purification and enabling the re-constitution of the human soul in conformity with the soul of Christ, uniquely expressive of the divine *Logos*. It goes without saying that Augustine can afford no open endorsement of theurgy, since it is the business of this portion of *On the City of God* to reject it, but it is also plain that despite his vigorous denunciations, and his attempt at a thorough draining of the language of *signum* / *sacramentum* and *sacrificium* of all but allegorical, spiritualized content, he nevertheless quietly insinuates shades of meaning for *signum* that stand in parallel to Iamblichus' theory of *symbolon*, and appropriates the very categories of mediation that he depopulates of Platonic *daemons*, collapsing mediation into the work of a single divine agency. All of which suggests powerfully that Augustine in some measure dissembles his borrowing of a theory of cult from the very parties whom he condemns, a system of mediations that allow for a materially mediated repatriation of the soul.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The present study has attempted to hold together two often competing scholarly interests, one in Christian rhetoric and the other in Christian thought. These two concerns are often in competition because a rhetoric that asserts difference and distinct identity can easily occlude the substantive appropriations that Christian thinkers make, since its very purpose is to conceal those appropriations from pagan opponents. The task of properly grasping the mutual engagement of pagan and Christian thought can thus give rise to difficulties that are not always resolved in modern scholarship, since many modern approaches have often developed from a principle of isolating a “unique” Christianity from an ambient pagan world.

The fact remains, however, that even if we grant the necessity of regarding the intellectual culture of the ancient Mediterranean as common to both pagan and Christian, and rightly seek evidence for the lateral transmission of ideas – rather than adhering to approaches that isolate Christianity – we must nevertheless confront thinkers of the third and fourth centuries in terms of a narrative of lineage. The necessary qualification is simply that lineages must not be conceived as exclusive. Christians do not influence *only* Christians any more than pagans influence *only* pagans. Origen, as we have seen, was part of an Alexandrian intellectual elite, standing in a tradition with Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus as an heir to the philosophical circle of Ammonius Saccas, whose school mediates much of Neopythagorean Middle Platonism into later antiquity. It is therefore unsurprising that that we can see Origen and Iamblichus’ views on metaphysical first principles, the problem of material embodiment, and material mediation of incorporeal principles as derived from ultimately kindred sources. As we look to later periods, Augustine’s thought suggests

strongly that such questions have a vital afterlife. As an aggressive participant in the continuing dispute over theurgy, Augustine exploits Porphyry's ambivalence over the matter, embracing the latter's skepticism as grounds for asserting the superiority of Christianity as a system of mediation – as a *via universalis*. Iamblichus, Origen and Augustine, then, can be seen as not only men of elite education and Platonist orientation, but as direct participants in the very same debate – with Porphyry's anxiety over theurgy serving as something of a tangible link between them. Under such a construction, Origen and Augustine are distinguished from Iamblichus principally by the Christian need to displace all mediated principles with the one principle of the *Logos*, and by a dissembling rhetoric that enables their retention of core theurgic principles while rejecting particular theurgic hierarchies and rites.

The main preoccupation that lies behind such an intellectual culture and its various lineages is with Plato. Chapter III begins with the assumption that Iamblichus' development of a philosophically grounded theurgy is in part a response to perceived deficiencies in the Platonism of his day. From this premise, he develops his resistance to such claims as the “undescended” soul, and an articulation of a distinctive cosmology, in which the material cosmos is reconceived in more monist terms, to account for its capacity to mediate the fallen soul's repatriation. Through a Neopythagorean metaphysics, he affirms the goodness of material reality as a manifestation of eternal cosmic proportions, thereby resolving the Platonic tradition's ambivalence over the soul's relation to matter, and asserting matter as *both* disorienting hindrance and necessary instrument. From this theoretical basis, he claims that the theurgically re-oriented soul participates in the demiurgic organization of the material cosmos through cult that properly aligns it with the demiurge's *daemoniac* functionaries, whose role is to “create” the material cosmos through the dissemination of formal principles. The Iamblichean theory of the *symbolon* reflects just this kind of outlook, and posits that the truly initiated philosopher knows the secrets of cosmic creation, expressed in terms of *symbola* – the arcane signs and imprints dispersed through material nature that as the theurgist's portal to the invisible demiurgic world of gods and *daemons*.

Since Origen employs this very language of “*symbolon*” in a context that emphatically *rejects* pagan cult, Iamblichus’ explanations of these *symbola* – though chronologically later – may be crucial to understanding the links connecting Christian thinkers like Origen with a theurgic worldview – links that are the more enticing precisely because figures like Origen and Augustine rhetorically dissimulate their own embrace of such language and thought. When we consider further the philosophical preoccupations that are shared between Origen and Iamblichus, as Chapter IV undertakes to show, such claims for kinship in the matter of *symbola* become better grounded. In a manner similar to Iamblichus, Origen resists dualism in favor of a more ambivalent embrace of material reality’s potential. Not unlike Iamblichus in his resistance to Porphyry, Origen undertakes to defend embodiment on traditional Platonic ground, accusing his interlocutor (Celsus) of failing to grasp the vindications of material reality that the Platonic tradition contains. In light of his cosmology and spiritual anthropology – which constitute his Christian variant on the Platonic narrative of the fall of the soul into material being – it should occasion little surprise that for him, too, embodiment requires material cult as part of a remedy. Given such a necessity, it should likewise not surprise us that Origen is pressed to jettison much of the pagan apparatus of mediation – the *daemons* who find a legitimate place in Iamblichus’ system – as preparation for introducing the incarnate *Logos* who mediates divine life for all rational, embodied creatures, and whose rationale is continuous with theoretical justification of material sacrament, construed in terms of *symbolon*. Quite simply, Origen replaces traditional religious forms with a Christian variant, parallel in its conceptualization, but conceived as an extension of the incarnation of the *Logos*, whose mediation thoroughly replaces that of gods and *daemons* in the pagan pantheon.

Augustine, as I have argued, may be reasonably be included in the argument on account of his preoccupation with the same set of problems, evidenced principally by his direct engagement with Iamblichus’ interlocutor, Porphyry, and by his use of rhetorical dissimulation akin to Origen’s to disguise his borrowings. As a latecomer to the conversation, Augustine, too, must confront the question of theurgy and daemonically

mediated cult as systems that claim to effect the soul's remedy and ascent. Unsurprisingly, his arguments in *On the City of God* follow trajectories similar to Origen's account. Like Origen, Augustine must resist a dualist tendency, eventually embracing a view of matter as a neutral medium enabling the soul's contact with a divine *principium*, the Neoplatonic *nous* reconceived as the incarnate *Logos*. Since the *Logos* has become intimately available in the Christian system, he must – again like Origen – dismiss traditional, pagan hierarchies of gods and *daemons* along with the widely dispersed principles that they are thought to mediate, relegating them rather to the categories of magic and theurgy, which consist entirely of empty material contrivances that only entrap the soul in the material world. In a more detailed account than Origen supplies, he replaces theurgic / *daemoniac* models of mediation – as exemplified in the arguments of Apuleius – with a Christian model that is conspicuously adapted to the very structure of mediation that informs Apuleius' account, and that depends on a claim for the incarnate *Logos* as a superior mediator, a gesture that makes Christ the precise remedy for the defects identified in the Apuleian system.

While Augustine's engagement with theurgy is naturally more direct, his appropriations are nevertheless as artful as Origen's, replicating the latter's tactic of directly insinuating eucharist into a conceptual framework prepared by paganism. But unlike Origen, rather than straightforwardly appropriating the language of *symbolon*, Augustine applies his own sign-theory of language as a model for explaining cult mediation, developing the idea that a tangible sacramental *signum* can mediate the work of the *Logos* in the sacrifice of Christ. Somewhat more skillfully than Origen, Augustine initially obscures this point by rhetorically distancing Christian rites from their pagan counterparts by emphasizing the literary function of the term *signum*, making biblical narratives of sacrifice mere *signa* of inner spiritual dispositions, and thus quarantining the term from magic and theurgy; however, as Augustine applies his sign-theory of language as an explanation of the eucharist, he makes clear that for him the eucharist is a visible "sign" that conveys in a substantial way the content of the church's invisible "sacrifice" [*sacrificium*] to participating believers – in the same manner that a material

“word” bears the substance of a thought. Augustine’s engagement with theurgy, then, may be observed to commence from a dualist rejection of matter and *daemonic* rites, and to proceed to an embrace of material mediation in which pagan rites are furtively displaced by Christian practice whose defining difference is the mediated principle, the incarnate *Logos*, whose efficacy through ritual is described in terms of a theory of sign. Augustine’s approach thus preserves an idea of material reality as a mediator of transcendent principle, which creates conceptual space for an incarnate Word and material rituals whose “signification” is coterminous with their effects.

In the end, when we scrutinize what is essentially theurgic in the thought of Origen and Augustine, we recognize that both thinkers, in surprisingly similar ways, construct provisional systems of Christian sacramental mediation, informed by a theology of the incarnate *Logos*, and conceptually parallel to the pagan and theurgic systems of mediation that their rhetorical approach rejects.

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