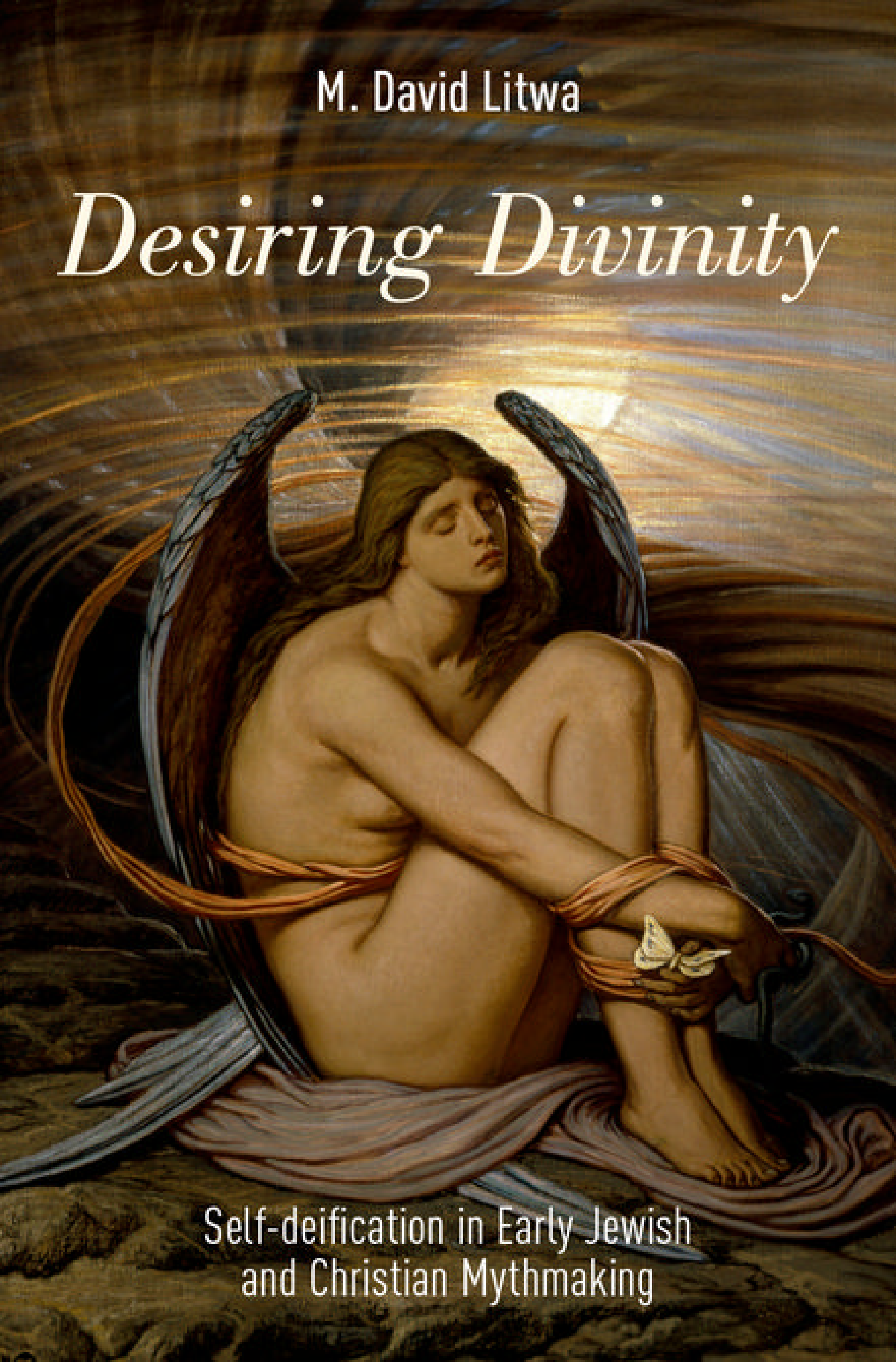

M. David Litwa

Desiring Divinity

Self-deification in Early Jewish and Christian Mythmaking

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To my father
who believed

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Preface

WHY SELF-DEIFICATION? WHO today, after all, would claim godhood besides, perhaps, a few dictators, athletes, and paranoid schizophrenics? The question itself is telling. The very fact that we perceive self-deifiers as insane, arrogant, and evil indicates that the ancient Jewish and Christian mythology of self-deification is still very much our own. To make learning possible, this mythology must, first of all, be recognized as mythology. Such a recognition allows for a kind of emotional bracketing: we push the subject beyond applause and excoriation in order to understand it in a fresh and enlightening way.

What is the theoretical value of studying self-deification? What problem in religious studies does this book try to solve? Simply put: this book offers one more case study in the attempt to understand the relation between religious myth, ideology, and practice. In this case, we focus on ancient myth and ideology, although our conclusion briefly turns to the modern world.

Yet perhaps the distinction between past and present is overblown, since (as noted) the biblical mythology of self-deification has become our own. We have forgotten the names of ancient self-deifiers, but we still know the pattern of their fate: they rise, then fall; they are arrogant, then humbled; they are mad, and finally destroyed.

Yet this book tells the story of some self-deifiers who succeed. Though these figures are not normally classified as self-deifiers, they make the same or similar claims as their rebellious counterparts. What is different is their relation to authority. Instead of trying to topple and replace the ultimate power structure, heroic self-deifiers integrate themselves into the structure of divine power so as to assume its mantle.

Why did the ancients tell myths of self-deification? As is to be expected, there was an attempt to influence and control behavior. Myths of self-deification both frighten and inspire, legitimize and expose, justify the present order and give rise to a new one. There is no single meaning of the myths. Rather, the multiple meanings continue to assist our projects of self-making and society-building, for they provide the means of both social revolution and personal transformation.

To manage the expectations of the reader, I offer three brief clarifications. Translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own. Deities who function as supreme are referred to as “God”; while other gods are supplied with a lowercase “g.” (It is fully acknowledged that this practice involves judgments with which others will not always agree.) Finally, this book is composed in a vivid, not overly technical style so as to make it accessible to as wide as possible an audience. Readers seeking to go deeper are free to peruse the original language quotations, sources, and comments in the notes.

Here I gratefully acknowledge Harry Attridge, Andrew Guffey, Dylan Burns, and Tuomas Rasimus, who read and commented on parts of this manuscript. Earlier versions of chapters 4 and 5 were delivered as talks at Brown and Rice Universities, respectively. A version of chapter 1 was offered as a talk in the Bible, Myth, and Myth Theory section at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting (2015). I thank all the participants for their comments and questions. The anonymous reviewer who read the entire manuscript provided many helpful corrections and suggestions. Finally, the promptness and patience of Steve Wiggins, editor at Oxford University Press, is here duly praised. Steve is a model of professional excellence in the field.

Charlottesville
December, 2015

Abbreviations

NOTE: MOST OF the abbreviations employed in this work are taken from *The SBL Handbook of Style for Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, eds. Billie Jean Collins et al., 2d ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), supplemented where necessary by *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds., Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Other abbreviations are as follows:

Adv. omn. haer.	*Against All Heresies* by Ps.-Tertullian
BCNH	Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi
Bibl.	*Library* by Ps.-Apollodorus
Bibl. hist.	*The Library of History* by Diodorus of Sicily
Hom.	Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*
JSJSup	*Journal for the Study of Judaism* Supplement Series
Hist.	*Histories* by Herodotus
NTA	*New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Schneemelcher, 2d ed.
Ref.	*The Refutation of All Heresies* attributed to Hippolytus
Vitae phil.	*The Lives of Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius

Introduction

TYPES OF SELF-DEIFICATION MYTHOLOGY

There was no nobler reward for the man of virtue than to be granted by the gods a share of their status; there was no more repugnant an act of hybris *than, being man, to make oneself a god.*

WAYNE MEEKS[1]

"God" is merely a hypostasis of what human beings can and will be, the utopian possibility of a transformed human nature.

ROLAND BOER[2]

IN A FAMOUS study, Milton Rokeach gathered together three psychiatric patients who all claimed to be God and specifically Jesus Christ. Rokeach wanted to discover whether the patients' contradicting assertions of deity would cause them to rethink their identity. He recorded several of their conversations, illustrative of their rancorous debates.

[ROKEACH:] Did you say you are God?
[PATIENT 1:] That's right. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
[PATIENT 2:] I don't know why the old man is saying that . . . He made God and he said he *was* God and that he was Jesus Christ. He has made so many Jesus Christs.
[PATIENT 1:] (*yelling*) Don't try to pull that on me because I will prove it to you!
[PATIENT 2:] (*yelling*) I'm telling you I'm God!
[PATIENT 1:] You're not!
[PATIENT 2:] I'm God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost! I know what I am and I'm going to be what I am!
[PATIENT 1:] You're going to say and do just what I want you to do!

[PATIENT 2:] Oh, no! Oh, no! You and everybody else will not refrain me [*sic*] from being God because I'm God and I'm going to be God! I was the first in the world and I created the world. No one made me.[3]

At a group meeting on another day, the third patient spoke up:

[PATIENT 3:] People can use the same Bible but some of them will worship Jesus Christ instead of worshipping God through Jesus Christ.
[PATIENT 1:] We worship both.
[PATIENT 3:] I don't worship you, I worship God Almighty through you, and through him, and him.
[PATIENT 1:] You oughta worship me, I'll tell you that!
[PATIENT 3:] I will not worship you! You're a creature! You better live your own life and wake up to the facts.
[PATIENT 1:] (*shouting*) I'm living my life. You don't wake up! You can't wake up!
[PATIENT 2:] No two men are Jesus Christs.
[PATIENT 3:] You hear mechanical voices.
[PATIENT 1:] You don't get it right. I don't care what you call it. I hear natural voices. I hear to heaven. I hear all over.
[PATIENT 2:] I'm going back to England.
[PATIENT 3:] Sir, if the good Lord wills only.
[PATIENT 2:] Good Lord! I'm the good Lord!
[PATIENT 3:] That's your belief, sir.[4]

Such banter might seem comic at first glance. Yet this initial response might only mask deeper emotions of pity, fear, and dread. To most readers, such conversations represent delusions of the worst kind. Identifying with deity, or a particular god, seems to be the very height of insanity.

Yet insanity is both a psychological diagnosis and a social judgment. We call insane the man who says that he is Jesus, yet Paul—the first Christian writer known by name—said, "I no longer live; Christ lives in me." Paul claimed that he had been crucified with Christ (Gal 2:19–20), but he is not judged mentally ill. And why? In part, at least, it is because he is an authority in communities dedicated to interpreting and normalizing his sometimes mad or—at least maddening—claims. "We are fools for Christ" (1 Cor 4:10).

Rokeach named his study *The Three Christs of Ypsilanti*—Ypsilanti being the name of the psychiatric hospital where the three men met. In actuality, the men related fairly cordially when the issue of their identity was not raised. One man, the youngest (patient 3), significantly changed his sense of identity, assuming the more humble name of "Dr. Righteous Idealed Dung Sir Simplis Christianus [*sic*]"—or simply "Dung."[5] Needless to say, these men did not help each other regain their sanity.[6]

A figure worth comparing to the three Christs is the ancient physician Menecrates of Syracuse (flourished 359–336 BCE). Menecrates seemed to many of his contemporaries—and to some modern researchers—as something of a bad joke. Otto Weinreich, the only scholar to devote a monograph to the Syracusan physician, wrote, "Concerning him [Menecrates], the diagnosis can in fact only be μανία [madness]."[7] Indeed, the whole second part of Weinreich's monograph is devoted to a psychiatric diagnosis of Menecrates.

Menecrates believed that he was a god, and in particular the Greek God Zeus. Athenaeus of Naucratis (late second century CE) gives the fullest (though hostile) report:

> He [Menecrates] boastfully thought that he alone became the source of life for human beings through his medical art. So he forced those healed by him of the so-called sacred sickness [epilepsy] to sign a contract that they, when healed, be slaves submissive to him. . . . Ephippus mentions them in the *Shield Bearers* saying as follows: "Did not Menecrates claim to be the God Zeus . . . ?"[8]

We learn from the *Suda* that Menecrates required no money from those he healed.[9] Instead, he had his patients sign a contract professing their full loyalty to him. Whether they became actual "slaves" of Menecrates is doubtful. Greek gods did not make slaves of their devotees. Moreover, these devotees, like Menecrates, took on the names of particular gods, and began to wear their characteristic regalia.[10]

Menecrates's success at healing was extraordinary. The philosopher Plutarch tells us that the Syracusan healed people who were given up as hopeless.[11] The healings produced a profound sense of gratitude in those who had received renewed life. This gratitude is linked to Menecrates's rationale for claiming to be Zeus. The report of Athenaeus, quoted above, continues:

> And he [Menecrates] wrote a letter to Philip the king [of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great] as follows: "Menecrates Zeus to Philip. Greetings. You rule over Macedon, while I rule over the medical art. You indeed are able when you please to destroy those who are healthy, while I am able to preserve those who are ill and offer to the robust and healthy who obey me life until old age. Therefore the Macedonians serve as bodyguards for you, while for me it is those who are going to live. For I, Zeus, provide them life.[12]

The letter is a vaunt, to be sure, but the logic is that of a sound mind. "Already from Hesiod, then from Aeschylus, Plato, [and] Euripides," comments Weinreich, "we recognize the etymology of the name 'Zeus,' which explains the accusative *Zēn* [Zeus] . . . through the verb *zēn* [to live] . . . and in Zeus sees the god who bestows life on all, the god *di hon zōmen* [on account of whom we live]."[13] In short, Menecrates gave his patients what no other being besides Zeus could give.[14] He gave them life.[15]

The case of Menecrates illustrates the complexity of self-deifying claims. Here we have a doctor who, far from being insane, heals others from a horrible neurological disorder. He claims to be Zeus, but only insofar as he causes people to live (*zēn*). His participation in the power of the high God allows him to participate in the God's persona. Despite hostile sources, Menecrates cannot be passed off as delusional. To call him mad explains nothing and undercuts the search for knowledge before it begins.

There is a yet deeper problem that dogs research on self-deification. In a Christian culture, to call oneself a god is not only mad but also blasphemous. To call someone mad is to dismiss them; to call someone a blasphemer is to focus all the community's attention and hostile emotion upon him. The blasphemer must be dealt with—usually by execution or violent exorcism. It is this impulse toward exorcism that undermines the academic study of self-deification even more than the claim of insanity. For in this case—even in a nonsectarian academic environment—religious ideology determines from the outset what one thinks about the topic, if it is considered worthy of thought at all.

For any neutral study of self-deification, then, one must learn to forget what religious ideologues and moralists of every age have emphasized—that the self-deifier is the greatest example of pride and human fallenness. All of this is myth, and our myth—a myth we must no longer assume but subject to rigorous analysis. We do so first by an act of purification that wipes the slate of knowledge clean and patiently begins again at the beginning.

Definition

What is self-deification? Simply put, it is the claim to be a god or a divine being. In ancient society, such a claim is fairly rare in "real life." (This remains true today outside of psychiatric wards.) Instead, divine claims, inscribed in texts, are more often attributed to mythical figures. Queen Alcyone and King Ceÿx, for instance, referred to themselves as Hera and Zeus. Zeus cast his thunderbolt at Ceÿx's ship, and he perished at sea. When Alcyone heard of this, she hurled herself into the ocean and drowned as well. The gods who witnessed the tragedy transformed them both into "halcyon" birds.[16] Salmoneus, king of Elis, said that he was Zeus and transferred the God's sacrifices to himself. To prove his mastery over lightning and thunder, Salmoneus dragged bronze kettles tied to his chariot and flung flaming torches into the sky. But he himself was blasted by Zeus's thunderbolt.[17]

In these stories, we see what is typical in self-deification myths: a claim to be divine is made in direct relation to an incumbent superior deity. The superior deity, whether active or otiose, is often portrayed as threatened by the self-deifier. How the issue is resolved depends upon the particular myth. The new candidate's claim to divinity can be validated or not; it can be considered true or not. What is important for the definition, however, is the act of ascribing deity to oneself.

Self-deification was and remains an important mythic theme for ancient Jews and Christians. It recurs at key moments in their mythic history—appearing in central figures like Lucifer (or Satan); the first human Adam; the second Adam, Christ; and Christianity's first archenemy, Simon of Samaria. In this pattern, the hero or antihero claims, by deed or word, to be a god or a divine being. There is typically a rising action: the exaltation of the self-deifier. The result is either reversal or vindication. The antihero quickly plunges into hell. The hero, however, is justified and rises to the stars. In these dramas, there are standard character types. The high God plays the role of the supreme king; the people of God are his loyal subjects. The self-deifier dons the mask of either God's loyal son or the ultimate rebel.

One could conceive of the self-deifier as a kind of theomach, or "god-fighter."[18] A theomach opposes a deity in open war, or contemptuously denies the existence and power of the gods. Heracles, it is said, once sunk an arrow into the god Hades,[19] King Mezentius despised all gods,[20] and Capaneus prayed to his right hand as the only present divinity.[21]

But the self-deifier is a more complex figure than the theomach. Sometimes the self-deifier does not fight against the high God at all. Often, he is part of God's army—or even serves as God's commander-in-chief. He is not impious, but blessed; not cursed, but acquitted of all pride. It must be stressed, then, that there are two kinds of self-deification myths: the self-deifier as God's opponent or as God's ally.

Type 1: The Rebel

In the former type, the self-deifier is part of a larger category of myth that can be called "the cosmic rebel." Cosmic rebellion occurs when a demigod, king, or monster rebels against another, older divinity. War ensues, coupled with destruction—but out of the epic clash a new world is born.

Marduk fits this pattern in the Babylonian *Epic of Creation* (or *Enuma Elish*). He opposes the monstrous mother goddess of old, stuffs her with wind, then pops her like a giant balloon.[22] Zeus, wielding the lightning of the Cyclopes, overcomes his father, Kronos, and takes the throne of Olympus.[23] Subsequently Typhon, a kind of Greek Godzilla—only much worse—rebels against Zeus. He succeeds for a time by robbing Zeus of his sinews, but is eventually imprisoned under a Sicilian volcano.[24] Other rebels then emerge against heaven's king. The giants, born from earth, raise war against heaven.[25] The fifty-foot Otus and Ephialtes pile Mount Pelion on Mount Ossa to mount Olympus.[26] Bellerophon tries to scale the stars on his fabulous winged horse.[27]

In these cases, the rebel is often already a divinity, but a subordinate (or younger) god who challenges the king of the pantheon. There is a battle of gods (or theomachy). Either the rebel is thrown down, or he becomes king in the place of the older God. In the latter scenario, the myth of rebellion becomes a myth of divine succession: one deity successfully takes over from the previous one and is coroneted as cosmic king. The pattern of rebellion and succession can then repeat itself in endless cycles. When the rebel is a figure who explicitly claims divinity (or the divine power of the reigning God), a myth of self-deification is born.[28]

Type 2: The Hero

The second type of self-deification myth belongs to a larger set of myths usually called "hero myths." The hero is son of the high God, destined to inherit the kingdom of his divine father. The son typically assumes human form, is subject to human emotions, and develops a human self-understanding. When the hero is too powerful or too wild to fit into society, he embarks on a journey. He faces opposition in the world, often in the form of monsters or demons. People spurn and reject his person and fear his extraordinary powers. Steeled by opposition, the divine son proves his true nature and rises to heaven.[29]

A key example of the hero is Heracles. This archetypal strongman is a mixed breed: half human and half divine. As son of Zeus, he is hated and hunted by Hera and her human agents. Through twelve deeds of power (and many side stunts, or *parerga*) he proves his divine identity, is worshiped by certain cities, and ascends through fire to his divine father.[30] Romulus, first king of the Romans, was the son of the war god Mars. Mars saved him from death as an infant, led him to found Rome, and made him its first king. After shaping the warrior ethos of his infant city and ensuring its survival, Romulus was raptured to heaven on a cloud to become the Roman state god Quirinus.[31] Deified Roman emperors followed in Romulus's long and gilded train.

Summary

These, then, are the two types of self-deification: the self-deifier as rebel, and the self-deifier as hero. If the self-deifier is a rebel, he tends to represent consummate disorder, a disorder usually restored with shock and awe by a higher divine power. If the self-deifier is a hero, he arrives to restore his father's order in a world of ignorance and wrongdoing. The fates of the two self-deifiers are fundamentally different. The rebel is eventually shunned and exorcised from the cosmos, while the hero—though persecuted—finally rises to the stars.

Topic

One could study myths of self-deification in a variety of cultures. The myths compared in this study all derive from the culture of the ancient Near East and the broader Mediterranean world. The myths can be classified as biblical, although not all of them found their way into the Jewish and Christian canons. They developed in a specific era in time: roughly from the sixth century BCE to the third century CE. In large part, the myths are Jewish, or inspired by Jewish sources. Beginning in the first century CE, Christians adopted the mythic theme of self-deification from the broader Jewish culture. In part, they modified the myth so that it could also fit their hero (Jesus). As a whole, however, Christian myths of self-deification remain very Jewish in color—even when turned against the Jews.[32]

Roadmap

The self-deifying figures studied here are six: the primal human in Ezekiel 28, Lucifer in Isaiah 14, Yaldabaoth in gnostic mythology, Jesus in the gospel of John, Simon of Samaria, and the gnostic Allogenes in his eponymous book (NHC XI,3). The first three are classified as self-deifying rebels; the latter three fit the hero type of self-deification myth. Consequently, the present study has two parts: the self-deifier as rebel (Part I) and the self-deifier as hero (Part II). No evolutionary scheme between these two types is posited. Both kinds of self-deification myth existed simultaneously in a relation of mutual influence and interaction.

Myth and History

Since the Enlightenment, many scholars have tried to extract the "real" history from mythicized characters in Jewish and Christian literature. They have aimed to reconstruct the true (or most historically plausible) Jesus, Simon of Samaria, and so on. I too wish to distinguish history (roughly, an account of what happened) from mythic templates that haunt historiographical discourse. But I do not treat these templates as secondary or unimportant. To the contrary, they are all-important, insofar as they shape the structure of the stories told about self-deifiers.[33]

What unites the book is attention to a certain type of mythology (self-deification), its primarily social meanings, and its varied ideological import. The figures studied are all vastly important for early Jewish and Christian mythology and identity formation. On the other hand, they are significantly diverse and not often studied together. Indeed, self-deification mythology is in general understudied.[34] What is offered here is not an updated survey of self-deifiers. Instead, the book attempts to redescribe—and in some cases to creatively reclassify—important figures as self-deifiers. Most of the figures are well studied, but not with respect to their self-deifying claims.

Theory

Undergirding the book is a consistent theoretical outlook. All the self-deifiers studied here are viewed as mythic constructions, key players in the larger world of Jewish and Christian mythology. Following Bruce Lincoln, myth is understood as "ideology in narrative form."[35] Myths of self-deification encode social, political, and religious ideologies rooted in concrete histories. All the same, myths do not support simply one ideology. Highlighted here are the diverse, conflicting, often ambiguous meanings of self-deification myths.[36]

Myths, it is assumed, are political. They are not about a disconnected, sacred realm. Nor do they "tell us nothing instructive about the order of the world, the nature of reality, or the origin and destiny of mankind."[37] To be sure, myths aim at anonymity and thus try to conceal their position(s). Nonetheless, myths are deeply situated stories aimed to persuade and condition their audiences' perceptions of both history and reality.[38] Mythmakers readily modify and reshape traditional tales to explain, justify, and naturalize current sociopolitical arrangements. Their myths provide preexisting cultural hierarchies and taxonomies with an aura of ontological necessity. They define what fundamentally *is* or must be with regard to the world, the divine, and humanity.[39]

Mythmaking is at least partially "ideal-making," a process in which ideal types function to reproduce and generate social values.[40] Such ideals are both models *of* and models *for* reality.[41] They help construct a reality that has a normative value for the mythmaking and myth-maintaining community. Myths are not false stories, but neither are they true in an absolute sense. One can describe them as tales with surplus authority. Myths are so saturated with facticity that, in many cases, they are not questioned or understood as myths at all. They accrue authority because they are both traditional (passed on in a community) and widely believed (though not necessarily in a literal sense).[42] Biblical myths have the additional clout afforded by canonization.

Because myths can be modified—often regularly and purposefully—they belong to "a volatile field of contestation, within which multiple variants jockey for acceptance, each one of them situated, partial, and self-interested."[43] Myths of self-deification are especially "arenas for ideological contestation,"[44] because they deal with figures that—depending on the values of the mythmakers—are either glorified or demonized, subtly imitated or violently denounced. Myths of self-deification encourage different attitudes and encode multiple messages—some of them inverting (and subverting) previous mythmaking.

Outline

This book tells the story of at least three inversions. Most Jewish and Christian self-deification myths follow the rebel type: the self-deifier who rebels against the high God and meets a horrible doom (chapters 1–2). This pattern was inverted when Christian Gnostics made the Jewish deity Yahweh (dubbed "Yaldabaoth") the first self-deifier who rebels against a higher God (chapter 3).

The self-deifying hero (in this case, Jesus) is a second inversion of the rebel type. Unlike the Synoptic gospels, the gospel of John presents Jesus as openly claiming to be divine. He boldly declares "I Am" (a designation representing Yahweh's eternality and most sacred name) (chapter 4). In Simonian mythology, Simon of Samaria makes a similar claim by calling himself "the Standing One" (or eternal God). Instead of being worshiped, however, Simon is pilloried by Christian mythmakers as the first heretic and anti-apostle (chapter 5).

The book of *Allogenes*, in turn, inverts this type of heresiological mythmaking. Allogenes, the paradigm gnostic, shows that self-deification, though real, is not rebellion against God. Instead, self-deification is an act of self-realization and self-creation willed and welcomed by the primal deity.

Myth and Practice

The ideologies latent in these myths encode information about early Jewish and Christian social formations. A social formation, writes Russell T. McCutcheon, "is an activity of experimenting with, authorizing, and reconstituting widely circulated ideal types."[45] The self-deifier functions as this sort of ideal. Whether excoriated or imitated, the self-deifier helped Jews and Christians to formulate for themselves a proper understanding and way of being in the world. Telling myths of the self-deifier served either as the community's ritual exorcism of tyrannical forces or as a controlled means for its members to imaginatively transcend normal human limitations. In either case, such mythmaking functioned as a communal act of self-preservation serving to eternalize—indeed, self-deify—the religious community itself.

PART I

The Self-deifying Rebel

I

"I Am a God."

THE PRIMAL HUMAN AS PRIMEVAL SELF-DEIFIER

Adam, Adam, do not fear. You wanted to be a god; I will make
you a god . . . I will set you at the right hand of my divinity,
and I will make you a god just like you wanted.
TESTAMENT OF ADAM 3.2, 4

Introduction

In Jewish myth, humankind's desire for divinity started human history. The serpent promised godhood to the first couple if they ate of the tree of knowledge (Gen 3:5). Without eating, humanity would still be a child in a timeless fairy-tale garden. But once the fruit was bitten, Adam became human as we know it, and the father of humanity. Paradoxically, the primal human also became a god, or godlike enough to necessitate his forced removal from paradise (Gen 3:22). In his ancient act of self-determination, Adam showed what being a god means: a boundary breaker, a transgressor of externally imposed limitations, one whose mind was mature (knowing evil, good, and all that lies between). Ironically, Yahweh exiled Adam so that the newborn god would die.[1]

Genesis 3 does not proffer a myth of self-deification, as Adam does not claim to be a god (or God). There exists, however, another Adam myth that does feature a self-deifying claim. It is found in the book of Ezekiel, most likely composed during Judah's Babylonian exile (in the sixth century BCE). In this variant of the myth, the primal human did not approach divinity by transgressing a divine command. Instead, he was born divine. Colossal in size, studded with gems, and walking amid stones of fire, the first human knew his own divinity and openly proclaimed it.[2]

This myth of the primal human is embedded in two oracles decreed against the ruler of Tyre (an ancient city on the coast of modern Lebanon). It is unlikely that Ezekiel invented this myth, or merely retooled it from the traditions that would inform Genesis. Instead, Ezekiel used a preexisting myth to lend a sense of cosmic significance—and vibrant color—to his temporal, political prophecy. The prophet did not leave the myth as he found it; he adapted it for his own rhetorical and polemical ends. Tracing the ideological import of these adaptations is a major aim of this chapter.[3]

Historical Setting

Ezekiel, a Judahite priest, was already exiled in Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar's armies demolished Jerusalem (586 BCE).[4] After the destruction, the Babylonian army reeled north and laid siege to Tyre for some thirteen years (ca. 586–73 BCE).[5] The Tyrian citadel could endure so long because it was founded on an island, with high walls and a strong navy. In his oracles against Tyre, Ezekiel showed no awareness that the siege was broken off or that the Tyrian king had survived. Logically, then, scholars have dated the original oracles to within the period of the siege.[6]

On the plane of history, the oracles in Ezekiel 28 are directed against a human figure: Tyre's tyrant.[7] The second oracle is a dirge. To sing a dirge over someone assumes the death of the subject (who can offer no rejoinder). Although the king of Tyre was not in fact dead, the use of the past tense indicates the prophet's certainty about divine judgment. The king of Tyre is, to use the expression, "dead meat."

Ezekiel previously described Tyre as a wrecked boat (27:26), sunk in the depths of the sea (v. 34). The Tyrian citadel is portrayed as "laid waste" (26:19), a bare rock utterly "vanished from the seas" (v. 17). From what we know historically, however, Tyre's defenses held and the Tyrian king Ithobaal III survived the siege. Ezekiel later acknowledged this point: "King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre . . . yet neither he nor his army got anything" (Ezek 29:18).[8] In these words, as David L. Petersen notes, "One senses Ezekiel's . . . frustration that a neighboring nation could avoid the fate that Judah had suffered."[9]

Petersen's comment hints at the larger psychological and theological context of Ezekiel. Judah's exile was a terrible blow to aristocratic Judahites (not least Ezekiel himself). They were the captive vanguard in the first wave of deportations to Babylon. Theologically, they believed that Yahweh had promised them the land of Israel, and that he himself had chosen to dwell there as their national god. Yahweh's failure to protect his people had resulted in a sense of collective disorientation and confusion.

Ezekiel rose to the task of defending Yahweh, of reconstructing Israel's mythic world. In the world of his poetry, the prophet's imagination vastly extended the scope of Yahweh's sovereignty and military power.[10] Yahweh was innocent. It was the exiled people, the prophet claimed, who were responsible for their exile. In turn, Ezekiel pinned the blame for Jerusalem's destruction on the Judahites remaining in the land.

Literary Setting

The oracles against Tyre are part of a larger section of Ezekiel commonly called "The Oracles against the Nations" (Ezek 25–32). Similar oracles are found in the other Major Prophets (Isaiah 13–21, 23; Jeremiah 46–51). Their arrangement in Ezekiel makes them the center of the book. The oracles lie between a premonition of Jerusalem's final fall (Ezek 24:25–27), and the actual announcement of its collapse (33:21)—greatly intensifying the suspense. Judahites were forced to acknowledge Yahweh's tragic destruction of their capital. In the meantime, however, they eagerly beheld Yahweh's explosive campaign against other nations.

Ezekiel delivered four main oracles against Tyre and its king. In Ezekiel 26–27, a judgment oracle is followed by a dirge. In the next chapter, the structure of judgment oracle plus dirge is repeated. Greg Goering argues that the judgment oracle (28:1–10) and funeral dirge (28:11–19) should be read together due to thematic, linguistic, and structural links.[11] The oracles were certainly read together in antiquity. The earliest Greek Bible (or Septuagint) and the canonical Hebrew (Masoretic) text present distinct versions of the oracles that have undergone separate editing.[12] In this chapter, we adhere to the Masoretic version, with a minimum of emendation.

Yahweh addresses the king of Tyre:

> Because your mind was exalted, and you said, "I am god; I dwell in the dwelling of gods, in the heart of the seas"—though you are human and not god, still you make your mind like the mind of a god.
>
> Behold, you are wiser than Danel![13] No secret is dark to you! By your wisdom and by your understanding you have made yourself rich. You set gold and silver in your treasuries. In the surplus of your wisdom and by your trafficking, you have a surplus of wealth. Now your heart is exalted because of your wealth.
>
> Therefore thus Lord Yahweh has spoken: Because you make your heart like the heart of a god, for this reason—watch out—I am bringing foreigners upon you—terrifying peoples. They will unsheathe their sword against the beauty of your wisdom, and defile your splendor. To the pit they will bring you down! Then you will die the death of the defiled in the heart of the seas. Will you say, "I am a god"[14] in the presence of your killer?[15] But you are human and not a god in the hands of those who stab you! The

> death of the uncircumcised you will die by the hands of foreigners. For I have spoken! Oracle of Lord Yahweh.

This oracle presents some of the most violent rhetoric in all of the Hebrew Bible. The autocratic tone befits a king dispatching a sovereign and irreversible decree. At the same time, however, it hints at the frailty of Yahweh's claim to sole divinity. As Yahweh in Genesis (3:22) was threatened by Adam, who was "like one of us" (that is, like one of the gods of the divine council), so he seems threatened by the primal human in Ezekiel 28. Indeed, the ultimate threat to a jealous god is another being who claims to be god.

Mythological Setting

It is a stroke of good fortune that Ezekiel used a prior myth to croon the demise of Tyre's tyrant.[16] His mock dirge, addressed to the Tyrian prince, resumes:

> You were a seal, an image,[17] full of wisdom and abounding in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering: carnelian, topaz and moonstone; beryl, onyx, and jasper; sapphire, ruby, and emerald.[18] Gold was the work of your settings and your sockets. They were established on the day of your birth.
>
> You were a cherub, stretched out and overshadowing; and I set you on the holy mountain. You were a god. You roamed amidst stones of fire. You were perfect in your pathways from the day of your birth until iniquity was found in you.
>
> In the surplus of your trafficking, you filled[19] your midst with violence. Then you sinned, and I profaned[20] you from the mount of God. I destroyed you, overshadowing cherub, from amidst the stones of fire! Your heart was exalted by your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.
>
> I thrust you to earth! Before the kings I set you, to make you an object of their gaze. In the surplus of your guilty acts, by the injustice of your trafficking, you profaned your sanctuaries. Then I brought out fire from your insides. It devoured you. I made you ash upon the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who knew you among the peoples were appalled at you. You became a fatality; you are nothing forevermore!

The myth resembles the one told of Adam in the Garden of Eden, but it is clearly a different version than the one in Genesis 3. What exactly triggered the memory of this myth is uncertain. Perhaps it was a bit of Tyrian patriotism: the idea that Tyre was an impregnable paradise, known for its trade in gems (1 Kgs 10:11). Given that the myth is used against a Phoenician king, we might speculate that Ezekiel recalled a distinctively Phoenician version of the first king, whose myth lay at the foundation of Tyrian royal ideology.[21]

Whatever led Ezekiel to thread the history of Tyre's tyrant into the fabric of myth, the myth itself parallels that of Genesis 2–3. In both myths, there is a primal human figure, a Garden of Eden, a cherub, precious stones, an act of primal sin, an exile from the garden, and a turning to ash or dust (six distinct parallels).[22] If we include Genesis 1:26–28, we can add another: the first human is depicted as a primordial king.

Mythic Variations

Still more fascinating are the variations in the myths. First, some of the jewels mined from paradise (Gen 2:11–12) are encrusted on the first human's "covering" (apparently a garment of some sort). There is no sign of Eve—and thus no attempt to blame the first sin on a female. Although there is a Garden of Eden, there is no tree of knowledge. The human depicted in Ezekiel 28 is already wise, and his wisdom is not dependent upon magical fruit.[23] There is, furthermore, no prohibition to eat the fruit, and thus no need of a crafty snake and tempter. Finally, the role of Yahweh in Ezekiel's plotline is surprisingly muted.

In fact, the myth in Ezekiel 28 raises the question of whether Yahweh even created the primal human. A distinctive word for creation is present: a passive form of the verb *bārāʾ* (Ezek 28:13, 15). The early twentieth-century interpreter Julius Morgenstern understood the form of this verb to be reflexive. He concluded that the primal human was self-created.[24] The proposal is intriguing. Although an overreading, it at least highlights the fact that we do not know who created this first human.

More recently, T. Stordalen takes the verb as referring to the birth of the addressee, comparing another verse in Ezekiel: "In the place of your birth (*ʾăšer niberēʾt*), in the land of your origin, I will judge you."[25] This reading indicates that we need not necessarily relate the verb *bārāʾ* to creation, and specifically creation from word alone (as in Gen 1). In fact, we need not view the primal human as created by Yahweh at all. He is born on a certain day, perhaps the first day of creation. The secret of who—if anyone—fathered him is not revealed.[26]

Other differences between Ezekiel and Genesis are likely due to the prophet's attempt to conform his primal human myth to the life-setting of Tyre's king. For example, Ezekiel probably adds that the Tyrian tyrant became puffed up because of his successful trading (Tyre is "merchant of the peoples" in Ezek 27:2).[27] The prophet also likely inserted the line about the king profaning his sanctuaries

(28:18). Presumably this could only apply to Tyre, as we know of no temples in Eden.

The Status of the Primal Human

The largest difference between Ezekiel and Genesis, however, regards the first human's status. In Genesis 2–3, the protoplast is a human being literally formed from clay; indeed Adam, or *ʾādām* in Hebrew (meaning "humankind") plays upon the word "earth" (*ʾădāmāh*). In contrast, the primal human in Ezekiel 28 was never molded from clay. He begins his life as a divine, or at least a semidivine being.

Indeed, it was due to the divinity of the figure in Ezekiel 28 that patristic interpreters refused to see him as human. In his polemical tractate *Against Marcion*, Tertullian (early third century CE) quotes a portion of our text, and comments:

> None among human beings was either born in the paradise of God, not even Adam himself, who was rather translated there, nor [was he] placed with a cherub upon God's holy mountain (that is to say, in the heights of heaven . . .); nor did he spend time among the stones of fire, among the flashing rays of burning constellations—whence Satan was cast down like lightning.[28]

Tertullian assumes that the being described in Ezekiel 28 is "the very author of sin who was indicated under the mask of a sinner."[29] He is Lucifer or Satan, whose myth is known from Isaiah 14. The church writer's point is polemical. He argues against his opponent Marcion that Satan was not created evil but good. In making this argument, he melds the myths of Lucifer and Tyre's king, creating a new mythic narrative.

In his *Against Celsus* (mid third century CE), the great exegete Origen interprets Ezekiel 28 similarly. The king of Tyre is a symbol of Satan. He was "the first of all beings that were in peace and lived in blessedness," but, sated with goodness, he fell by his own sin. In this way, Satan "lost his wings."[30] In this interpretation, Adam is once again read out of the story, while Lucifer/Satan is read in. For polemical purposes (Origen makes his argument to oppose Celsus's demonology), the primal human is exiled from Ezekiel 28.[31]

The cause of his exile, it seems, is the figure's divinity. Patristic interpreters take seriously what modern readers find hard to believe: that the being spoken of in Ezekiel 28 is in fact divine.[32] It is, however, no longer satisfactory to understand this figure as Satan. The parallels with the Adam myth in Genesis 2–3 are too strong. Yet Ezekiel's primal human is not the man of dust in Genesis. It is the prophet Ezekiel himself who polemically calls the figure "human and not god"

(Ezek 28:2, 9). Later the prophet, constrained by the myth, will admit that the primal human was a god, with clearly divine traits (v. 14).

But how can there be a human being who is simultaneously divine? Although a divine human being may in modern thought be a contradiction in terms, it was not so in the ancient world (and certainly not in ancient myth). Modern categories are informed by a tradition of Christian monotheism that (generally speaking) ontologically separates humanity and divinity, allowing them to converge in only one human being: Jesus. But Jesus was not the only divine human in the ancient (or modern) world. Indeed, the mythology of the divine and human Christ is a sophisticated conglomerate from previous mythologies about divine human beings. One of these divine humans was the primal human—in Hebrew, *ʾādām*.

You Were a Cherub

According to the Masoretic Text of Ezekiel, the first human was a superhuman being: a cherub (Ezek 28:14).[33] At this reading, modern interpreters and translators have balked. Since the birth of text criticism, the attempt to arrive at the "original" text of Ezekiel has produced mixed texts that often borrow readings from the Septuagint wherever the Hebrew proves difficult or uncertain. Such is the case here, where the prophet addresses the primal human figure: "you were a cherub" (*ʾattᵉ kerûb*).

We must take this reading seriously, and not try to replace it with what is in effect a different version of the text. The Septuagint says that the primal human was "with the cherub."[34] Yet nowhere else in biblical tradition are cherubs viewed as companions of the first human.[35] The Septuagintal reading already attempts to conform Ezekiel's primal human myth to the better known Adam myth in Genesis 3 (where well-known cherubim are separate from, though hostile to Adam).[36] It is already an attempt, in other words, to make (what became) scripture agree with scripture.

Other texts, however, show that the first human could possess a divine and angelic nature. The primal Adam in Job 15:8 has access to the divine council (*sôd ʾᵉloah*). In 2 Enoch, Adam was created as a "second angel, honored and great and glorious."[37] In the *Apocalypse of Adam* (second–third century CE), Adam and Eve are "like the great eternal angels" and explicitly said to be loftier than the god who made the world.[38] In the second century CE, Rabbi Pappias interpreted Gen 3:22 ("Behold, the human has become like one of us") to mean that he was "like one of the ministering angels."[39] In the *Life of Adam and Eve*, the angels are commanded to worship Adam, whose status, it would appear, is supra-angelic. In the Armenian *Life of Adam and Eve*, Yahweh even commands the angels: "Come, bow down *to god* whom I made."[40]

From where do these interpretations derive? Ezekiel 28 is a good candidate. As James Barr points out, the Masoretic Text of Ezekiel 28:14, "you were a cherub," makes good grammatical sense.[41] Regrettably, Barr introduces a false dichotomy: *either* the figure is a cherub *or* he is the primal human.[42] Again, our modern tendency to neatly separate the human and the divine does not apply to ancient myth. It is perfectly legitimate to think of the first human as a liminal being—in this case a cherub who mediates the human and the divine—because he *is* both human and divine.[43]

The divinity of the first human is supported by his appearance, character, and location. He appears in a fantastic garment encrusted with jewels. He has great wisdom and beauty (common divine attributes in the Hebrew Bible).[44] He is blameless. He walks amid stones of fire (possibly to be identified with other angelic or divine beings).[45] He is set on the holy mountain (which, as Tertullian points out, likely signifies heaven or the realm of stars).

Lastly, the primal human figure is directly called a deity: "you were a god" (*ʾĕlôhîm hāyîytā*, Ezek 28:14).[46] To this we can compare the famous words of the serpent in Genesis 3:5, *hᵉyîytem kēʾlôhîm*: "You shall be as gods!" To be sure, most translations render *ĕlôhîm* in Ezekiel 28:14 with the preceding words, thus: "holy mountain *of god*."[47] But as Hector Patmore points out, "the holy mountain of god" is "an expression unknown in the Hebrew Bible," with the sole exception of Daniel 9:20 (which reads: "the holy mountain of *my* god").[48]

Moreover, in the flow of Ezekiel 28:14, it is awkward to translate the verse (following most modern renditions) as:

> and I set you
> on the holy mountain of God you were
> amidst the stones of fire you walked.[49]

It makes better poetic sense if we allot each line its own verb:

> and I set you on the holy mountain;
> you were a god,
> you roamed amidst the stones of fire.

In this reading, no verb seems odd or superfluous.[50] The synonymous parallelism indicates that to be on the holy mountain amid the fire stones is equivalent to having a divine status.

But even if we opt for the translation "the holy mountain of God," the divinity of the primal human persists. Presumably only a divine being could reside on God's holy mountain. And only a divine being could tread on the divine and fiery stars.

Fall

This divine status of the primal human is combined with his fall. In Genesis 2–3, Adam's sin is made to look like an act of disobedience.[51] Yahweh gives the command: "Do not eat from the tree" (Gen 2:17). The clever serpent then convinces Eve to eat from the tree partially based on the promise: "You [plural] shall be as gods!" Eve consents, and hands the fruit to Adam, who is represented as "with" her (apparently standing alongside her) (3:5–6).

In Ezekiel's telling, however, the primal human does not need a serpent to convince him that he will be divine. Based on his own beauty and wisdom, he proclaims (or is made to proclaim) his own present divinity: "I am god. I sit in the seat of the gods" (Ezek 28:2).

His claim: "I am god (*ʾēl*)" is striking. The mighty El (*ʾIlu*) ruled the pantheon in the ancient Syrian city of Ugarit, and was the common Phoenician high God. For Israel, Yahweh absorbed the symbolic value of El, and assumed his name.[52] The formulation "I am *ēl*" is perhaps deliberately echoed by the jealous god Yahweh: "I am *ʾēl*, and there is no other!" (Isa 46:9).

There is some confusion as to whether, according to the oracle, it is Tyre's ruler who claims divinity, or the primal human in the myth, or both. It is possible that Ezekiel conformed the ancient myth to Tyrian royal ideology. There is some evidence for the deification of Tyrian kings.[53] Nonetheless, the fact that Adam and Eve desire divinity in Genesis supports the notion that the first human's association with divinity was a tradition Ezekiel inherited rather than inserted.

The punishments of the figures in Genesis and Ezekiel are both similar and different. Yahweh thrusts or shoves (*šālak*) the primal human to the earth (*ʾereṣ*). Similarly, in Genesis 3:23, Yahweh God sends (*šālaḥ*) Adam to work the soil (*ʾădāmāh*). If *ereṣ* in Ezekiel 28:17 is indicative of the underworld, the fate of the first human is similar to that of Lucifer in Isaiah 14:15 (who is tossed into the depths of a netherworldly "pit"). This interpretation is supported by the fact that the primal human finds himself in a pit in Ezekiel 28:8.[54]

In Genesis, Yahweh sends the first human into exile, while in Ezekiel he sends him to death. The discrepancy was too much for the Septuagintal translator, who again adapted Ezekiel's myth using the variant in Genesis 3:24 (LXX): "[Yahweh] appointed the cherubim and the flaming, revolving sword to guard the path to the tree of life." In the Septuagint of Ezekiel, Yahweh does not destroy the cherub; a cherub is said to drive the primal human from paradise (28:16b).[55] The fact that fire comes from within the primal human in Ezekiel is perhaps reminiscent of the angel's flaming sword in Genesis. Yet the cherub-human of Ezekiel was already, in all likelihood, a fiery being.[56]

Both first human figures in Ezekiel and Genesis are turned into ash (*ʾēper*) or dust (*ʿāpār*). The dust in Genesis 3:19 corresponds to the "dust from the ground" in Genesis 2:7. Likewise, the ash in Ezekiel 28:18 is qualified as "ash upon the earth."[57] Both figures, in other words, are broken down into the meanest elements of earth. For Adam in Genesis, becoming earth is a return to his origins. Yet it is a tragic fate for Ezekiel's cherub, who formerly dwelt in heaven (the "holy mountain").

Finally, the phrase "you will die the death of the uncircumcised" in Ezekiel 28:10 is reminiscent of Yahweh's gravely worded threat, "you will die the death" in Genesis 2:17. Strangely, the Adam of Genesis 3 only experiences exile, and not immediate death (as Yahweh had warned). By contrast, Ezekiel adds a line that leads one to suspect the ultimate annihilation of the primal human: "You were a fatality; you are nothing forevermore (*ʿad ʿôlām*)!" (28:19). "Fatality" is a rendering of *balāhôt*—a plural of intensity in Hebrew representing the lethal calamity fated to overtake the first human (cf. Ezek 26:21; 27:36). Ezekiel's phrase "you were a fatality!" is a deliberate, strongly polemical contrast to his previous declaration, "you were a god!" (Ezek 28:14, 19).

Whatever "you are nothing" actually means, it strongly suggests the total annihilation of the first human—as if he came from nothing. Ezekiel's fallen human is not allowed to live for 930 years tilling the soil. His end is complete, and evidently sudden. In Genesis 3, Adam falls, or rather falls under a Deuteronomistic curse. In Ezekiel's myth, however, the first ancestor experiences a literal fall from deity to death. He is a god who dies, like the gods of the divine council in Psalm 82:6–7: "I said, 'You are gods' . . . but you will die like a human being (*or:* Adam, *ʾādām*)."[58]

Tensions in the Myth

In sum, whatever primal human myth Ezekiel inherited, he retold it in his own fashion. Yet his attempt to combine an ancient myth with his own theology and rhetorical attack on a Tyrian king produced a somewhat uneven story. On the one hand, it appears that Adam is *born* divine (Ezek 28:14), on the other hand, he is peremptorily condemned for claiming to be divine. At one point Ezekiel announces to the first human, "you were a god!" (28:14), at another he immediately insists that the cherub is human and not a god (28:2, 9).[59]

But by his insistence on the first human's humanity (or rather *mortality*), the prophet seems to protest too much. The myth that he inherited likely allowed for a human god, even if Ezekiel, along with later editors and translators of his book, were offended by such a hybrid being.[60] Indeed, the primal human is the ultimate hybrid—a cherub (often depicted with a human head and a powerful, lion-like body). He can mediate both divinity and humanity, because he is both human and divine. For the priestly Ezekiel, to be sure, there was an absolute separation between humanity and deity. By heatedly insisting on separation ("you are human and not god!"), Ezekiel drove home an essentially polemical point: a human's claim to be divine is inherently hubristic and damnable.[61]

But tension in the myth sparks questions. We are asked to believe that the first human was glorious, studded with gems, and given the beauty of holiness—yet when he claims divinity, he is punctured with swords? Why is his claim to divine status represented as something evil? Like Lucifer in Isaiah 14:12–14, the first human was originally divine. Unlike Lucifer, however, he does not want to replace the high God. He is already set on the "holy mountain," presumably identical to the "mount of assembly" in Isaiah 14:13. The primal human does not need to storm God's paradise. He is already there, guarding it as a cherub. He does not feel compelled to raise his throne above God's stars. He already waltzes above the stones of fire—and (as a cherub) perhaps even bears God's throne. So why is he condemned?

Patmore proposes that the divinity of the primal human is "a now past ideal state." Injustice has already transferred him to mortality.[62] The question then becomes: what was the primal human's supposed injustice that led to his tragic demotion? It is unlikely to be unjust commerce—assuming paradise was not a trading depot. Ezekiel's anticommercial rhetoric blasts Tyre, not Eden (Ezek 28:18).[63]

The prophet's other accusation is psychological, aimed at the primal human's exalted heart (i.e., pride). In Isaiah, Helel (or Lucifer) spoke his proud words "in his heart (*lēb*)" (Isa 14:13). Adam in Ezekiel 28 makes his heart (*lēb*) like that of a god. Helel was a being of light (as his name attests), and the first human in Ezekiel 28 has splendor (vv. 7, 17). The primal human is depicted as proud of his beauty (Ezek 28:12, 17) and wisdom (vv. 3–5, 7)—in other words, his divine qualities. The prophet's oddly worded accusation: "You made your heart/mind (*lēb*) like the mind of a god" seems to mean that the first human claimed divine wisdom.[64] Accordingly, the initial oracle (28:1–10) focuses on the first human's wisdom as a basis for his pride.

Ezekiel adds that the first human was proud of his wealth (Ezek 28:3–5, 16, 18). Riches, as opposed to trading, could apply to the first human. After all, his "covering" is the setting for Eden's gems. Yet the word translated wealth (*ḥayîl*) is a fairly broad term that could mean "strength" or "power." Perhaps the word, when applied to the primal human, represented his power or might—another divine trait.[65]

In the purposefully overblown rhetoric of Ezekiel, the primal human makes a self-deifying claim: "I am god. I dwell in the dwelling of the gods" (Ezek 28:2). But this claim, stated so baldly, seems to be the prophet's own invention. It is what Yvonne Sherwood calls a "grotesque uttering [of] self-incriminating lines that too compliantly serve the main discourse."[66] Ezekiel will later put a similar boast in the mouth of Pharaoh, whom he polemically calls "the great dragon": "My Nile is my own; I made it for myself!" (29:3).

In sum, there is a clear difference between Ezekiel's primal human myth and that of Genesis: in Genesis, Adam's sin is disobeying a divine command; in Ezekiel, his sin is hubristic self-deification. This way of telling the myth, for Ezekiel at least, justifies the primal human's—and the Tyrian prince's—total annihilation. In short: Ezekiel makes self-deification Adam's ancient sin. It is in this way that the primal human—the glorious, colossal cherub—is made a monster.

Ideological Import

The myth of an originally divine ancestor supports a religious ideology of divine kingship: namely, that some, extremely high-ranking people (i.e., human kings) are permanent centers of power and sacredness. Ezekiel clearly considered this ideology to be dangerous—not only politically but also religiously. Combining the divine and the human was like uniting the sacred and the profane: it constituted, for Ezekiel, a pollution.

Ezekiel responded to this perceived pollution by attacking the myth of the divine ancestor. He attempted to reduce the colossal cherub to dust and nothingness. In doing so, however, Ezekiel created a world characterized by an even greater (divine-human) inequality, an inequality that legitimated and sacralized another set of social hierarchies.

In itself, Ezekiel's discourse—despite its open attack on the Tyrian king—is neither anti–ruler cult nor anti-imperial. The prophet was a great supporter of ruler cult and empire, as long as the ruler and emperor is identified with Yahweh. In fact, one might surmise that Ezekiel appropriated the discourse of contemporary ruler cult and applied it to his national deity. Yahweh, Judah's god, mythically becomes an absolute ruler with absolute divine power and authority. Through Ezekiel his "sentry" (Ezek 33), Yahweh—conceived of as the ultimate king—roars his edicts against the nations (Ezek 25–32).

The prophet's rhetorical bombardment of the nations generates a world in which Yahweh is in complete control. In dispatch after dispatch, the heavy-handed missives seem to have one primary goal, summed up in Yahweh's proclamation to Sidon: "I will gain glory in your midst!" (28:22). In short, Ezekiel's polemics against the nations functioned (and still function) to increase Yahweh's symbolic power and prestige.[67]

The exiled nation of Judah greatly benefited from Yahweh's rhetorical rise to power. Bad news for the nations was good news for Judah, which—unlike Ammon, Moab, and Tyre—was promised a restoration (Ezek 28:24–26). The very placement of the restoration oracle after the judgment oracles against Tyre indicates that the restoration of Judah is viewed as a result of Yahweh's attack upon Tyre.[68] Judahites could not themselves take vengeance on the nations. In imagining an all-powerful deity, however, they effected a poetic justice: "because you [i.e., Israel] have suffered the insults of the nations; therefore thus says Lord Yahweh: I swear that the nations . . . shall themselves suffer insults" (36:6–7).

In their ideological struggle against the nations, Judahites were not powerless. Deprived of riches, status, and (for a time) their land, the nobles of Judah could still engage in a lucrative trade of symbolic capital. They—Ezekiel prominent among them—could still generate a world in which their divine king was in control. In the Oracles against the Nations, Judahites inculcated an image of Yahweh not as a local tribal deity, but as an imperial Lord wielding supreme power and brooking no rebellion.

As a character, Yahweh aggressively asserts his sole power (or deity) as if playing a zero-sum game. All other deities are demoted, or rather burned to ashes in a rhetorical kiln. Every non-Judahite religious universe is emptied of meaning. Divine humanity itself is attacked as a wicked perversion.

Ezekiel's Adam myth generates an ontology wherein the divine and human are fundamentally different and made part of a rigid hierarchy. Culturally speaking, the nature of the divine and the human are contingent realities, informed by a group's collective imagination. The myth, however, frames the cultural as if it were natural—as if Yahweh in human form (Ezek 1:26) and humanity in Yahweh's image (Gen 1:26) were in fact wholly other.[69]

Ezekiel did not create his Adam myth out of whole cloth. Rather, he modified it in a way to suit his ideals, desires, and categories. The myth, as fictive prehistory, sacralized priestly separations and established "how things are and must be."[70] In short, Adam represents the whole of humanity as a type of being fundamentally other than God. All of humanity is excluded from the supreme power and status afforded by divinity.

Ezekiel constructed his mythology as he constructed his ideal temple (Ezek 40–48). Yahweh may be spatially near; but ontologically, there is a massive double or triple wall separating Yahweh and human beings. Some people—such as Ezekiel and his priestly class—could come closer and serve as mediators of the divine. The ability to trade with the source of symbolic capital afforded priests considerable social and political power even in their exile. Deprived of the temple while in Babylon, Ezekiel imaginatively constructed a new one to maintain and reinforce the social and political powers of his class. In short, he reimagined the social institution that perpetuated and legitimatized his religious role and higher status.

Ezekiel's ideology of separation supported a social formation studded with clear hierarchies. The prophet may have limited the ability of human rulers to climb the ladder of transcendence. In general, however, the power he took from the kings he gave to the priests. Any leveling that Ezekiel's discourse accomplished constructed a greater (and indeed absolute) dualism between God and human beings, which in turn created (out of nothing, as it were) a deep need for priestly mediation.

This need for mediation legitimated other hierarchies in Ezekiel's (real and ideal) social formation: hierarchies between priests and Levites, Levites and laity, laity and foreigners, men and women, freeborn and slave. It also legitimated a power differential between Judah and the nations. By rhetorically attacking the nations, Ezekiel attempted to bankrupt their symbolic capital, while monopolizing the same resources for his own community. All power (political and religious) was invested in a particular deity—who happened to be Judah's god. All other centers of power (represented by other Gods and deified persons) were not only pushed to the periphery but rhetorically destroyed.

Conclusion

In Ezekiel 28, the primal human and Yahweh are in clear competition. The first human says, "I am a god." Yahweh responds with the rhetoric of violence and the promise of death. Significantly, Yahweh can only prove his superiority through a discursive practice of violent domination. Yahweh is depicted as the ultimate priest, eternally creating separations as it were *ex nihilo*. The most important separation is between humanity and divinity itself. Yahweh slices through any ontological continuity between deity and humanity with a sword dipped in Adam's blood.

In monotheism there is the seed of violence. The claim, "There is only one god!" demands that all the other gods must die.[71] Heading the list of executed gods are the self-deifiers. The best way to annihilate them was to create a sacred universe wherein divine humanity constitutes an unlawful mixing—wherein a human's claim to be divine naturally seems ludicrous, arrogant, and disallowed by a symbolic universe that people still consider ultimately real and finally unquestionable. In this universe, self-deifying persons have to be either deluded humans or hybrid monsters. To the religious mind, these monstrous humans can be lawfully destroyed—punctured with the swords of polemic.

But the fiery sword cuts both ways, since the myth of Adam has many meanings and many retellings. Ezekiel himself—although he attempted to rewrite his primal human myth—proved unable to strip it of ambiguity. He could not deny Adam's liminal (human-divine) status, his heavenly dwelling, and his original immortality. Elements of the earlier story are remembered even in Ezekiel's polemical revision.

Similar ambiguities remain in the canonical Adam myth. In Genesis, for instance, the serpent was not wrong when he said that the first couple, endowed with knowledge, would be as gods (Gen 3:5). Yahweh himself proves the serpent correct when he admits with evident alarm: "Now Adam [*or*: humanity] has become like one of us!" (3:22). In one reading of the myth, Yahweh is made into a jealous tyrant. He hunts Adam down as the latter fearfully hides, naked, amid the trees of Eden. Yahweh expels Adam, then dooms him to toil and death.[72]

But in other versions of the myth, the imagination is activated for new possibilities. The myth in Ezekiel indicates that Adam was neither born naked, nor made of mud. He was clothed with all the precious stones of Eden, a sacred guardian before God, the height and pinnacle of beauty. He was not a child in mind, but one full of wisdom from the start. As king of creation, he was already close to divinity. Indeed, he was already divine, colossal in size, endowed with powerful wings stretched out and overshadowing.

If in the beginning humans lost their divinity, then in the end they might regain it. Such a lofty end is prophesied in a text from the third century CE (quoted in the epigraph of this chapter). In its current state, *The Testament of Adam* is a Christian text. Yet it remains a pastiche of earlier, Jewish sources.[73] It relates a myth wherein God consoles the fallen Adam, whose desire for divinity is acknowledged and approved. In the end, Yahweh will make Adam—representing all of humanity—divine. Like Christ, the mythic Adam *redivivus*, humanity will sit at God's right hand.[74] In this retelling, at least, the fruit of knowledge is no longer forbidden, and the serpent's promise to humanity's ancient parents is dramatically confirmed for a future time: "You shall be as gods!"

2

"I Will Be Like the Most High!"

THE SELF-DEIFICATION OF HELEL

> *What is a rebel? A man who says no: but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. . . . He rebels because he categorically refuses to submit to conditions that he considers intolerable. . . . As a last resort he is willing to accept the final defeat, which is death, rather than be deprived of the last sacrament which he would call . . . freedom.*
>
> ALBERT CAMUS[1]

Introduction

In Christian tradition, there is an ancient poem that provides, as in a dark mirror, the backstory of God's archenemy, the devil. According to this story, which takes place before the world began, Satan (or Lucifer) sinned the first and ultimate sin. This sin was not rebellion in itself, but what preceded and motivated it: self-deification. "He trusted," wrote Milton, "to have equaled the Most High,/If he opposed, and with ambitious aim/Against the throne and monarchy of God/Raised impious war in heav'n and battle proud."[2]

The river of Milton's imagination flowed from the spring of Isaiah 14:12–15.

> How you have fallen from the heavens, Helel, son of Dawn!
> You have been cut down to the earth, you who mowed down the nations!
> Yet you said in your heart:
>   "I will rise to heaven.
>   I will raise my throne above the stars of God.
>   I will take my seat on the Mount of Assembly,
>   on the heights of Zaphon!
>   I will rise over the heights of cloud.
>   I will be like the Most High!"

These verses are part of (or welded to) a larger poem, or set of poems that currently make up the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah. In modern historical scholarship, Satan has been duly exorcised from the hallowed grounds of this chapter. The layers of Christian mythology have been peeled away, giving us a much more mysterious and more ambiguous self-deifier named "Helel" in the Hebrew tongue, or the "Shining One."

We cannot explore the "original" meaning of Helel's myth, lost in the abyss of unrecorded history. We cannot even explore the meaning of the myth when it was first written down. In fact, we do not know when precisely it was inscribed, or against what earthly force or foe it was initially directed.[3] We resort, then, to locating the myth at a moment in time when Isaiah 13–27 (the Oracles against the Nations) assumed final form. According to current scholarly consensus, this took place in the province of Yehud sometime in the broad span of the Persian period (539–330 BCE).[4]

Whatever its prehistory, Helel's story seems to be a spinoff from other myths of cosmic rebellion (a larger family of myths in the ancient Near East). Sometimes divine rebels aim merely to depose their overlords; at other times, they try to replace them. Often the rebel is closely related to the high God, and can even be his son. We do not know Helel's original relationship to Elyon—the high God depicted in the myth. We do not know whether Helel originally belonged to a Canaanite, Mesopotamian, or Hebrew pantheon, or whether such distinctions even mattered when the myth was first told.

What we do know, or can reconstruct, is the social and historical setting of the Jewish, or Judean, people after their Babylonian exile. Standing from this historical vantage point allows us to see how Judeans used Helel's myth to generate new historical memories, inculcate new religious dispositions, and sustain a social formation bound together by these dispositions. Helel's myth is a myth of self-deification. And we will see how his self-deification contributed to Yahweh's own rise to supreme power in the minds of early Jews.

Mythological Setting

When Helel's myth was adapted by a Hebrew poet it was, it seems, already wizened with time. Modern readers who do not know the full myth must piece it together from paltry hints. In Isaiah chapter 14, a figure called the "Shining One" rebels against Elyon the high God. Helel is a minor deity, son of another minor god named *Shachar*, or "Dawn." As a lesser noble among the gods, the son of *Shachar* is a highly ambitious and a rambunctious warrior. Only after conquering earth and its nations does he set his sights on heaven. Like Bellerophon in Greek mythology, he aims to surmount the peak of the cosmic mountain—the *axis mundi* binding earth and heaven together.[5]

Helel's name (the "Shining One," sometimes translated "Daystar") helps to identify him with the star god Venus.[6] To the human eye, the planet Venus (the morning and evening star) never rises high in the heavens. As the vanguard and rearguard of the chief star—our sun—Venus appears above the horizon in the early morning and then fades away in the increasing brilliance of the sunrise. The myth assumes that the star god wanted to rise higher—to the level of the highest (circumpolar) stars. The highest stars surround the high God as members of the divine council. Helel—too low and too lowly to join this assembly—planned to storm their astral paradise. He aimed to set his throne above the gods of the high council and to sit in the seat of the high God himself.

Some scholars maintain that Helel was originally Athtar, an ancient Syrian deity.[7] In the evidence that survives, however, Athtar is never said to rebel against El the ancient Syrian high God. In fact, it is the hoary El who appoints Athtar to the position of royal vizier after the former incumbent, Baal, is tragically swallowed up by Mot (Death). But Athtar only filled his new position briefly before abdicating the throne. Athtar took control of earth; Helel, in contrast, aimed to dominate heaven.[8]

A more likely parallel to Helel is Phaethon, the ill-starred son of the Sun in Greek mythology. In the ancient poetry of Hesiod, Phaethon is portrayed as the son of Dawn (here a female figure called Eos).[9] Moreover, Phaethon displays unambiguous hubris: by presumptuously steering the steeds of his solar father, his fires, in Ovid's words, "reduce whole nations with their peoples to ashes."[10] The high God Zeus brings about the fall of Phaethon by blasting him with a thunderbolt. The Greek poet Callimachus sings of Phaethon's fall with a line resembling Isaiah 14:12: "Evening star, how you have fallen!" (*Hespere, pōs epeses*).[11] If Phaethon is in fact a variant of Helel, his myth was told in a new way and culture, and for different ends.

Historical Setting

In Isaiah 14, Helel's myth serves a distinctively Jewish theological and political purpose. The chapter consists mostly of a taunt-song (*māšāl*) (Isa 14:4). The flexible word *māšāl* indicates a proverb or story that draws a comparison.[12] The comparison, we discover, is between a mythological and a historical character (an ancient star god and a human king).

A more accurate description of the genre is "dirge parody."[13] Normally a dirge highlights the greatness of its hero in order to make his absence more heartfelt: "Oh, how the mighty have fallen!" sang David over his friend Jonathan and King Saul (2 Sam 1:19). The mock lament, however, exaggerates the mournful pathos to satirize its subject. With stinging irony, the poet of Isaiah 14 spotlights the lofty pretensions of the unnamed king to underscore his fall.[14]

In its present form, the mock lament is a kind of "one size fits all" prophecy. Any number of tyrants, with a pinch of historical imagination, are candidates for its ridicule. On the other hand, the ancient editor(s) who placed the poem here saw the myth as specifically directed against a "king of Babylon" (14:4). The fact that the king is not named would imply that the poem could fit several Babylonian kings. Alternatively, the anonymous king could represent the empire of Babylon itself (a common trope in Hebrew poetry). Rhetorically speaking, the subject's anonymity amounts to a clever twisting of the knife: a funeral oration designed to memorialize its subject fails to mention his name.[15]

Modern scholars who align the myth to history have proposed a number of candidates. Later Neo-Assyrian kings dubbed themselves "kings of Babylon." Yet they were a distant threat by the time Isaiah's prophecies received their final form.[16] Another option is Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king before the Persian takeover of Babylon in 539 BCE.[17] Although this strange king is a possible contender, his memory quickly faded among the Jews, or was rather absorbed and transformed into the memory of a much greater ruler: Nebuchadnezzar II (ruled 605–562 BCE). It was this king, the destroyer of Jerusalem, who understandably cut the deepest impression in Jewish collective memory. It was this king who came to represent the horrible evils of tyranny in general.[18]

Nebuchadnezzar

At the end of the sixth century BCE, Babylon had already become a symbol for evil empire (Jer 50–51). The tower of Babel (modeled after a huge ziggurat or step pyramid in Babylon) loomed as the symbol of ultimate human pride in Israel's primeval history (Gen 11). Nebuchadnezzar had rebuilt this ziggurat, completing it with glazed bricks of pure blue color all the way up to its summit.[19] Correspondingly, this Babylonian king became a typological tyrant expressing what in Jewish eyes constituted the consummate evil—self-deification.

We witness Nebuchadnezzar's self-deification in Jewish texts of the Hellenistic period (323 BCE–30 CE). In Daniel 3, the king sets up a skyscraper-like cult statue and orders representatives of all nations to genuflect. Although it is not explicitly stated, we surmise that the statue's face looks very much like the king's. The ancient exegete Hippolytus (early third century CE) wrote that through this image, an elated Nebuchadnezzar wanted to be "worshiped by all people as a god (*hōs theos*)."[20] In the Book of Judith, the wicked Nebuchadnezzar orders the destruction of all sanctuaries to pave the way for the worship of him alone. Just like Yahweh, Nebuchadnezzar demands monotheistic devotion. All nations and tribes are bid to "call upon him as a god (*theos*)" (3:8; cf. 6:2).

Interest in Nebuchadnezzar's self-deification continued in Late Antiquity. In the rabbinic midrashic collection *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael*, Helel's claim to ascend above the clouds is taken to mean that "Nebuchadnezzar called himself a god."[21] Here the king is part of a family of self-deifiers, whom Hector Patmore calls "a quartet of royal blasphemers."[22] The other culprits include Pharaoh (symbol of Egyptian kingship), the Assyrian king Sennacherib, and an unnamed ruler of Tyre (treated in the previous chapter). By introducing this quartet, the rabbinic interpreter set out to explain a famous line in the Song of Moses (Exod 15:11): "Who is like you, Yahweh, among the gods?"

> Who is like you among those who call themselves gods (*ʾĕlôhôt*)? Pharaoh called himself a god (*ʾĕlôah*), as it is said: "The river is mine" (Ezek 29:9); "And I have made myself" (Ezek 29:3). Sennacherib called himself a god (*ʾĕlôah*), as it is said: "Who are they among the gods of these nations," etc. (Isa 36:20). Nebuchadnezzar called himself a god (*ʾĕlôah*), as it is said: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds," etc. (Isa 14:14). The prince of Tyre called himself a god (*ʾĕlôah*), as it is said: ". . . Because your heart is exalted," etc. (Ezek 28:2).[23]

In referring to Nebuchadnezzar, however, we must be careful to distinguish the historical Babylonian king from the symbol of moral and political evil that he became.[24] Historically speaking, Nebuchadnezzar never climbed to heaven in a wild attempt to match the high God. But history ("what happened") is a broken reed when it comes to understanding the dynamics of ancient Jewish culture and identity. In Jewish collective memory, fostered by native myth, the Babylonian king did indeed invade heaven.

Nebuchadnezzar's armies had attacked a rebellious Jerusalem in 587 BCE. They captured the city after an excruciating year-and-a-half siege. As a reprisal, Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers ascended the temple mount and did the unthinkable. They burned Yahweh's royal palace, the ancient temple of Solomon. The center of Jewish religion and culture—envisioned as earth's navel and the focus of fertility—lay charred and destroyed.[25]

There is no evidence that the author or editors of the dirge in Isaiah 14 were Jews who directly experienced the sack of Jerusalem. But there is reason to believe that these writers, like virtually all later Jews, experienced its calamitous political and psychological effects. Destroying the cultural and religious center of Judah facilitated the dismantling of the Judahite state. Nebuchadnezzar exiled Judah's king and its people (or rather, the artisans and aristocracy). Those Jews who came back, about two generations later, lived out their lives amid rubble and desolation. They helped rebuild—not an independent state with its own monarch, but the tiny Persian province of Yehud, now surrounded by enemies both real and perceived. The dark memory of the Babylonian empire, as symbolized by its greatest king, was not likely to fade. Forged by a people's shared pain, the collective memory of Nebuchadnezzar grew into a story of mythic proportions.

Even after all they had suffered, Judeans still believed that their national god Yahweh held the reins of world empires. Yahweh was in origin a storm god like the Phoenician Baal.[26] Like a storm, Yahweh often takes on the character of a fierce warrior god. In Isaiah 13 and at the end of chapter 14, he is repeatedly referred to as "Yahweh of armies." In other words, Yahweh is depicted as a heavenly military leader of astral or angelic forces.

According to the poet of Isaiah 13, Yahweh of armies was not going to use his own people to take vengeance on Babylon. Instead, he would stir up a people who ruled the mountains south of the Caspian Sea—the Medes. Perhaps Isaiah 13 is a fragment of a prophecy dating from 570 to 540 BCE (when Media was strong). Historically, it was the Persian king, Cyrus, who marched into Babylon without a fight in 539 BCE. Cyrus claimed that Babylon's own god Marduk, not Yahweh, had kindly invited him in.

Despite this turn of events, the author of Isaiah 13 wanted Babylon to suffer, and he used poetry to effect poetic justice. Nebuchadnezzar had sacked and burned Jerusalem. Consequently, the same fate is said to await his mother city. Merciless Medes march in and slaughter pregnant women and little children (Isa 13:18). Babylon is torched like the mythic Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 19). The prophet declares that the city "will never be inhabited" (v. 20). Ostriches will roost in the houses, and "goat-demons" will dance in the streets (v. 21). The end is nigh: "its days will not be prolonged" (v. 22). The Babylonian empire did end, to be sure. But the Medes never captured Babylon, and Cyrus left its buildings intact.

The author of the oracle against Babylon in Isaiah 13 is not necessarily the same poet who sang its dirge in the next chapter. Nevertheless, a later editor arranged the material so that we would read these two compositions together. Both Isaiah 13 and 14 have a similar purpose: their weighted words are a spring mechanism for emotional release and imagined compensation. The editor of Isaiah never saw the Medes destroy Babylon, but he could still imagine a great reversal of fortune. He imagined that "the house of Israel" would take Babylon's place as world leader. He thought that Judah would "possess the nations as male and female slaves." He believed that Judeans would "take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them" (Isa 14:2). Vengeance, in other words, could still be had. In his mind's eye, he could still gloat over Babylon's infants "dashed to pieces before their eyes, their houses plundered, their wives raped" (Isa 13:16; cf. Ps 137:9).

But the greatest vengeance was plotted for the king of Babylon himself. Against him, the taunt song in Isaiah 14 was taken up. The song had no real power to kill

Nebuchadnezzar, who died in peace after forty-three years of successful rule. Still, the song's cathartic effect—its potential to release and clear away negative emotions—was potent and remains so today. The writer of the song may have assumed that his words, inspired by Yahweh, might even have had some magical effect. By singing Nebuchadnezzar's death ode, the poet effectively transferred him to hell.[27]

Literary Setting

Beginning in the latter half of Isaiah 14:4, the taunt song has four major sections: the declaration of victory (vv. 4b–8), the greeting in Sheol (vv. 9–11), the fall of Helel (vv. 12–15), and the survey of his corpse (vv. 16–20). Although we touch on all parts of the poem, our focus is on Helel (vv. 12–15).[28]

In the first section, the Babylonian king is called a "despot" and a "tyrant." The word for tyrant, *marᵉhēbāh*, is related to Rahab, the name for a chaos monster from the sea (Ps 51:9; 89:11; Isa 30:7).[29] Nebuchadnezzar is later depicted as a monster in Jeremiah 51:34: "King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon . . . has swallowed me like a dragon."[30]

In Isaiah 14:5, Yahweh is given credit for smashing the staff and rod (*šēbeṭ*) of evil rulers. The language is reminiscent of the ideal king in Isaiah 11, who strikes the earth with the rod (*šēbeṭ*) of his mouth (11:4).[31]

The unceasing, voracious activity of the Babylonian tyrant gives way to a period of eerie quiet (Isa 14:7). In many lament poems, all nature is said to bewail the passing of the deceased.[32] But when this tyrant is laid to rest, the cedars of Lebanon (representing world leaders) roar in celebration (v. 8).[33] The tyrant's former attempts to climb these cedars foreshadow his later maneuver to scale God's sacred mountain (verse 8, cf. 13).[34] Strangely, it was Yahweh himself who had attacked these cedars earlier in Isaiah (2:13; 10:33–34).

At the heart of the poem, the prophet raises his taunt:

> How you have fallen from the heavens, Helel, son of Dawn!
> You have been cut down to the earth, you who mowed down the nations!
> Yet you said in your heart:
>   "I will rise to heaven.
>   I will raise my throne above the stars of God.
>   I will take my seat on the Mount of Assembly,
>   on the heights of Zaphon!
>   I will rise over the heights of cloud.
>   I will be like the Most High!"
> But you will go down to hell,
> to the depths of the pit! (Isa 14:12–15)

These fervent lines tell a tale of smashed expectations. Every up leads down. Every willed success is balanced by a proportionate calamity. Helel, a star rising in the east, falls like a meteorite. When he cuts down the nations, he is mowed down to earth. After planning to rise to the zenith of heaven, he is flung to the nadir of hell.

Imitation, it is said, is the greatest compliment. In this case, however, Helel's desire to be "like" the Most High is hardly viewed positively. He attempts to match the high God's power—and exceed it. His repeated declaration, "I will rise" (from the verb *ʿālāh*) (vv. 12, 14) plays upon the name of the high God (Elyon) itself. The repeated "I will" phrases hit the reader in rapid succession and express the heated energy of the star. In the myth, Helel is already a god. But he wants to be the chief God—the high God. His earthly alter ego Nebuchadnezzar is a man—a fact that makes his self-deifying machinations seem all the more atrocious.

Amazingly, we are never told whether Helel ever executed his plans. Interpreters (somewhat like Milton) often imagine a fantastic clash of war in heaven like the famous battle of gods and giants. In fact, we hear only the report of Helel's internal soliloquy ("he said *in his heart*"). Elyon, who either reads Helel's thoughts or sees what is coming, executes an overwhelming preemptive strike, and the Shining One is dimmed.

For the next section of the poem, the reader must imagine a smoky battlefield where amazed survivors stand stupefied in the crater of the fallen star:

> Those who look upon you and gawk at you will take it to heart.
> Is this the man who shook the earth?
> who made the kingdoms tremble?
> who made the world like a desert?
> and tore down its cities?
> whose prisoners he did not release?[35]
> All the kings of the nations,
> all of them rest in honor,
> each man in his palace.
> But you are flung from your grave like a detested branch,
> clothed with corpses—
> those pierced by the sword!
> They go down to the stones of the pit
> like a trampled corpse.
> You are not joined with them in a grave.
> Because you devastated your land,
> you murdered your people,
> you are not buried.
> The lineage of evil people will never more be named! (Isa 14:16–20)

In this scene, the brilliant star god suddenly morphs into a human ruler who dies in battle. Perhaps the original referent of the poem was a king whose body lay unburied on the battlefield. Historically, Nebuchadnezzar did not die in war, nor was he cast from his grave.[36] To be sure, later Jewish legend reports that Nebuchadnezzar's son cast him from his grave.[37] But later developments of the myth could not eradicate Babylon's own memory. Nebuchadnezzar died at the political height of the Neo-Babylonian empire. His territory stretched from the borders of Egypt to Iran. The great conqueror was buried in pomp. On his bier, he was likely clothed in a bejeweled robe, anointed with sweet oil, and escorted by high officials hailing from all over the empire.[38]

The poet in Isaiah 14 uses the rhetoric of the taunt song to craft a new memory. The Babylonian king (or kingship) perishes miserably in battle. He is clothed not with jewels, but with corpses. Horrified officials are depicted as inspecting his rotted corpse. In other translations of this poem, his trampled body is likened to an aborted fetus, putrid matter, or carrion.[39] But these readings all replace a word in the Hebrew text that indicates that the Babylonian king is "a detested branch" (*k^{e}nēṣer nit^{e}ʿāb*). The king is thus contrasted to the Messianic king called "branch" (*nēṣer*) in Isa 11:1. Yet he is also like the detested (*m^{e}tāʿēb*) Suffering Servant in Isaiah 49:7. In addition, the word *nēṣer* serves as a subtle and creative code word for the true target of the prophet's polemic "Nebuchad*nēṣer*."[40]

In the Hebrew text, Nebuchadnezzar is punished for devastating his own land and murdering his own people. The Septuagint here reads not "your land" and "your people," but "my land" and "my people" (*tēn gēn mou . . . ton laon mou*, Isa 14:20). It directs the prophecy, in other words, to the people of Judah. This reading, likely an emendation, seems more to the point. The Judean readers of Isaiah remembered not how the king mistreated Babylonians, but how he devastated the land of Israel.

The destruction of Nebuchadnezzar's lineage (literally "seed") is ironic because Nebuchadnezzar's name is itself an address to a Babylonian god: "O Nabû, protect my offspring."[41] In an inscription found at the Wadi-Brisa (in modern Lebanon), Nebuchadnezzar prays to his god, "may my name be remembered in future (days) in a good sense, may my offspring rule forever!"[42] That Nebuchadnezzar's offspring are not even remembered represents another twisting of the knife.

Earlier in the oracle (14:9–11), the poet proleptically speaks of the king's royal reception in hell (the Hebrew Sheol). Sheol herself is pictured as a woman all astir at the distinguished visitor. In her musty caverns, misty shades flit around to greet the newcomer. Ancient kings, or possibly underworld gods (*r^{e}phāʾîm*), slowly rise from their creaking thrones, blanketed in cobwebs. The royal wraiths—perhaps the very cedars that Nebuchadnezzar earlier cut down—gape in amazement—then grin. "You have become as weak as we!" they say. "You have become like us!"

(v.10; cf. Ezek 32:20–32). The fact that Nebuchadnezzar has become like a ghost is deeply ironic, since he aimed to be like God. Although the other dead kings have high-backed thrones, Nebuchadnezzar is compelled to lay down on maggots, and keeps warm with a blanket of worms (Isa 14:11).

Tacked on to the end of the poem are short, violent oracles that ensure us that Yahweh (strangely absent from the poem itself) is the one who spoke it. The god of Israel, at least according to a later editor, is implicitly identified with the character Elyon the high God. It is this God, the Jewish one, who takes vengeance on Nebuchadnezzar by bringing his sons to the slaughterhouse (Isa 14:21–23).

Myth, History, and Memory

The poem illustrates a general trend in Judean religion (and perhaps all religions): myth is both more necessary and more significant than history (defined as "what happened"). Indeed, myth shapes the perception of history. It has the power to create collective memories that function as the basic models of reality. Assuming Yahweh did steer world affairs, then Nebuchadnezzar could not have died in peace at the height of his power. He could not have been the man who built Babylon, who climbed a tower of military power all the way to the skies. If Yahweh truly ruled, Nebuchadnezzar must have fallen from the stars, and dropped to the deepest lair of hell.

Why did the poet meld Nebuchadnezzar to a mythic self-deifier (Helel)—a myth that would have otherwise faded, like the star itself, into oblivion? The most plausible explanation has already been noted. Theologically, Nebuchadnezzar's attack on Jerusalem's temple mount was taken to be an attack on Yahweh's cosmic mountain. In Isaiah 14:13, the mountain that Helel plans to attack is called "Zaphon." In Canaanite mythology, Zaphon referred to Mount Casius (Jebel Aqra) in Syria—ancient abode of the gods (especially Baal).[43] In their own cultic hymns, Israelites had long identified Zaphon with Jerusalem and specifically the temple mount.[44] To attack Zaphon, in the mind of our poet, was to attack the temple.

In Jeremiah 50–51 (a lengthy oracle against Babylon), Babylon's downfall is directly traced back to Nebuchadnezzar's violation of the temple:

> The cry of fugitives and refugees from the land of Babylon! [It comes] to announce in Zion the vengeance of Yahweh our god, vengeance for his temple. Summon archers against Babylon, all who bend the bow! Encamp all around her; let there be no refugee! Repay her in accordance with what she did; just as she has done, do to her—for she acted proudly against Yahweh, against the holy one of Israel! (Jer 50:28–29; cf. 51:11, 24, 34–35, 49–51).

Jeremiah 51:53 may even allude to our poem when it says that Babylon threatened to "mount up to heaven."[45] For the Yahwists in Yehud, the temple was the gateway to heaven, the abode of the sky god. Consequently, Nebuchadnezzar's attack on the temple mount was viewed as nothing short of a celestial invasion.[46] Even more: his attack on the temple was an attack on Yahweh himself. By attacking Yahweh, in the eyes of the Jewish poet, Nebuchadnezzar had made himself out to be God.

Significantly, the Jewish scriptures themselves record that Nebuchadnezzar never set foot in Jerusalem when the temple was torched. His officials camped in the gates while the king held court at the city of Riblah, north of Damascus (Jer 39:3, 5–8; 2 Kgs 25:1–21). There Nebuchadnezzar received Zedekiah, the Jewish king who had rebelled against him many months ago. Zedekiah had violated his covenant with the Babylonian king—sworn in the name of Yahweh ten years earlier. In accordance with the stipulations of that agreement, the Babylonian king had attacked Judah. Before and during the siege, Jeremiah had warned his countrymen: the temple is not a talisman! Submit to the king of Babylon (Jer 7:1–15; 27:12)!

It is not known whether Nebuchadnezzar personally gave the order for Yahweh's sanctuary to be burned. Long after the ashes cooled, however, the king was blamed for both the consummate profanation and the ultimate sin: self-deification.

This mythic memory conflicts with other memories that Nebuchadnezzar himself tried to foster and create. In one of his inscriptions, Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed:

> After the Lord, my divine begetter, made me, Marduk had my form built within my mother. When I was born and created, I continually sought the guidance of the gods and always followed the way of the gods. I continually paid attention to the artistic activities of Marduk, the great lord and the God who made me. . . . Without you, my Lord, what exists? You establish the reputation of the king whom you love, whose name you pronounce and who pleases you. You make his reputation one of justice and set a straightforward course for him. I am the prince who obeys you, the creation of your hand. You begot me and entrusted me with the rule over all peoples. . . . Make the fear of your godhead be in my heart.[47]

These words (resembling a royal psalm in the Hebrew Bible) are not those of a megalomaniacal self-deifier. Nebuchadnezzar may have been cruel to his enemies, but he was a reverent worshiper of his own high God, Marduk. The king's claim that Marduk is his "begetter" does not mean that the king viewed the God as his natural father. Rather—as Yahweh chose Jeremiah in the womb (Jer 1:5; cf. Isa 49:1)—Nebuchadnezzar believed that Marduk chose and "built" him for a specific vocation: to rule the nations, to execute justice, and to beautify Babylon. The king claims to be an obedient son, strictly dependent upon his God.[48]

The Babylonian king claims (propagandistically, to be sure) that Marduk gave him the reputation of being a just king. According to other public inscriptions, Nebuchadnezzar was active in the codification of law, the proliferation of courts, and the prohibition of bribery.[49] This picture of the Babylonian king who was "concerned with the spiritual and moral issues of life, anxious for divine guidance and working for the spiritual and material welfare of all peoples," D. J. Wiseman observes, "is no mere propaganda." Rather, it agrees with the book of Daniel, where Nebuchadnezzar "is shown as willing to accept the interpretation of dreams"—even when revealed by a Jewish prophet.[50]

In short, there is little evidence that the historical Nebuchadnezzar deified himself.[51] Rather, he was rhetorically constructed as a self-deifier in Jewish mythic discourse. Why Judeans generated this myth—in effect, creating a new cultural memory—is a subject we must now explore.

Ideological Import

The myth of Helel's self-deification, as applied to Nebuchadnezzar, is more than mere hate speech, the expression of a long-cherished collective *ressentiment*. It also served more concrete ideological and political functions. Although events occur very quickly in the myth (the star god falls even before he rises), the story of Helel provides a telescopic view of how Yahweh acts over long stretches of time. The story of a particular, time-bound act of arrogance is a profound *exemplum* of Yahweh's eternal sovereignty. The burning of Solomon's temple was not understood as the victory of the universal God Marduk over the tribal deity Yahweh, but as a foreign empire's futile assault against a vastly superior (Judean) god. The Babylonian king is a star, but Yahweh is the sun. Nebuchadnezzar's assault against heaven did not harm Yahweh; rather, it confirmed his sovereignty.

The myth of Helel is thus a form of political resistance. Ultimately it is not the fall of Nebuchadnezzar that is being mythologized in Isaiah 14, but the fall of Babylon—and in general any empire whose claims to power match or resemble the claims of Israel's national god. In this sense, the myth of Helel is true to the community who tells it. Later Jews had the benefit of hindsight. Despite the success and piety of Nebuchadnezzar as an individual, his empire was short-lived and fell relatively swiftly after his death. The myth in Isaiah 14 serves as a self-confirming etiology for why powerful kings and their kingdoms fall.

More specifically, the myth can be classified as a "hidden transcript."[52] The target of the taunt is not mentioned in the poem itself. A later editor only added a vague reference to a "king of Babylon." Nebuchadnezzar's name was coded in the seemingly innocuous word "branch" (*nēṣer*). Due to the king's effective anonymity, the hidden transcript could be replayed in coming centuries against later kings and world empires. After Babylon, Persia came to dominate Judea; then the Ptolemies marched in, then the Seleucids, and finally the Romans. But the myth of Helel could be innocuously redirected against these empires as it was ostensibly aimed at a king of Babylon who fell long ago. The myth subtly rolls together any number of perceived tyrants—past and future—who could and would challenge Judea.

According to Bruce Lincoln, a group that wishes to establish a new or unfamiliar social formation can "advance novel lines of interpretation for an established myth or modify details in its narration and thereby change the nature of the sentiments (and the society) it evokes."[53] We do not know what the myth of Helel looked like before it passed through the hands of an anonymous Hebrew poet and later Jewish editors. It is reasonable to hypothesize, however, that it told a larger story. By citing only a fragment of it, putting it in a new poetic context, and framing it as an oracle of Yahweh, Jewish writers intentionally reconfigured the myth to tell the story of their deity's sovereignty, and to stimulate sentiments of awe and submission consonant with that sovereignty.

Yet the attitudes and social formation encouraged by such mythmaking are not anti-imperial per se. To the contrary, the myth of Helel (and Isaianic mythmaking in general) supports a kind of government that can be characterized as absolute empire: the empire of Yahweh. In the future, Yahweh alone will be exalted (Isa 2:11, 17; 5:16), and his name exalted (12:4). Like the king of Babylon, Yahweh proclaims "I will rise up" (Isa 14:22), "I will lift myself up; now I will be exalted" (Isa 33:10). Unlike Helel, however, Yahweh does not fall. Yahweh performs a "high" or "prideful act" (*gēʾût*) (Isa 12:5). He has pride (*gēʾût*, Isa 26:10), and rests "in the glory of his loftiness" (*gāʾōn*) (Isa 2:10, 19, 21). Such exaltation strangely echoes the "exaltation" or "pride" (*gāʾōn*) of Babylon (Isa 13:11, 19; 14:11). (It is somewhat tendentious, one must note, that the *gāʾōn* of Yahweh is commonly translated "majesty" while the *gāʾōn* of Babylon is rendered as "pride.")

Yahweh's empire is not coextensive with the empire of the Jews (which never existed). Yet the Judeans, as Yahweh's chosen ones, benefit from Yahweh's imagined rule. Babylon will end up as Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa 13:19–20), but the Judeans are spared this fate (1:9). Through Yahweh, the Judeans themselves acquire exaltation or pride (*gāʾōn*) (Isa 4:2). The Judeans in Isaiah long for the day when the wealth of nations will stream into their gates (Isa 61:6), when Zion will be the highest of the world's mountains, and all nations will stream to it (Isa 2:2–4).

The coming of the nations to Zion results in the "light of Yahweh," whereas Helel (representing other world empires) is eternally dimmed (Isa 2:5, 14:15).[54]

The myth of Helel inculcated an ideology of Yahweh's sovereign control (which typically goes under the name of "monotheism"). By increasing the value and power of their god, Yahweh's ministers (largely priests and scribes) increased their own perceived value and power. But the whole nation of the Jews, languishing in political and military inferiority, benefited from a sense of theological superiority over other nations. The myth became part of the Jewish canon to some extent because it was already a part of the national mythology of Judeans; it formed and fostered the memories of their people and offered a stable cultural identity.

Earlier Isaianic prophecy encouraged a mythic vision wherein Yahweh's chosen nation could see their god working in and through human empires. Assyria in Isaiah 10:5 is vividly depicted as the rod of god, which the divine overlord wields to beat down the nations. Isaiah 14 tells the story of what happens when the human instrument turns against its maker. It tells a story, that is, in which a human royal agent or government tries to usurp the absolute authority of the divine emperor. The immediate fall of the human opponent—whose staff of power is crushed (Isa 14:5)—reinforces the absolute *imperium* of Yahweh, legitimating and consolidating social formations that pledge fealty to Yahweh's empire.

Conclusion: The Transformation of the Myth

Nebuchadnezzar may never have ascended Zion's hill. In Jewish myth, however, he was melded to a star god who attempted to scale Elyon's sacred mount. By attacking the high God, in the eyes of the Jewish poet, Nebuchadnezzar made himself out to be God.

Nebuchadnezzar is the first human king definitively constructed as a self-deifier in Jewish mythology. More kings would follow, notably Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Roman emperor Gaius Caligula. There is more historical evidence for the deification of these latter rulers. Much of the evidence for their *self*-deification, however, appears (perhaps with little surprise) in solely Jewish sources. In the myth of Helel, Judeans established a mythological template or paradigm that they would then apply to other theandric kings who posed (in fact or fiction) as the high God.

Early Christians adapted the mythic template in a way both similar to and different from contemporary Jews. In part, the pride and power of Helel were applied to a future, evil king (called Antichrist) whose self-deifying rise and catastrophic fall end human history. Primarily, however, Christians used the myth of Helel to generate the backstory for the ultimate mythical tyrant, Satan. Indeed, one of

Satan's best-known names comes from the Latin translation of Helel: "Lucifer" (or "Light-bearer"). Early Christians, in short, executed the ultimate demonization of the self-deifier—who became, appropriately, the chief of demons. This new myth served a larger etiological purpose: to explain not just why opposing powers fall but also how evil itself came into the world. In short, self-deification became the first and primal sin that explains all other sins.

The story of how Lucifer's self-deification was woven into Satan's saga can only be sketched here. It is a story worth telling, because it amply demonstrates how a myth can be transformed in different times and contexts.[55] The mythology is largely Christian, although amply foreshadowed by a Jewish text: the book of 2 Enoch. Only fully preserved in Slavonic, the document (or its original version) is increasingly dated to the first century CE.[56]

We begin with chapter 29, where Yahweh himself relates to Enoch how he made out of flame myriads of angels in vast array. Inexplicably, however, "one from the order of the archangels deviated, together with the division that was under his authority. He thought up the impossible idea, that he might place his throne higher than the clouds which are above the earth, and that he might become equal to my power. And I hurled him out from the height, together with his angels" (cf. Isa 14:13–15).[57]

Strangely, Satan (or "Satanael") in 2 Enoch engages in an act very much like Yahweh's own. In 2 Enoch chapter 24, Yahweh "thought up the idea of establishing a foundation, to create a visible creation" (v. 5). After engendering light, his first act was to set up a throne for himself to sit upon (25:4). When an archangel (Satanael) later tries to set up his own throne, he is thrown down. The book of 2 Enoch is a Jewish text, but its use of Isaiah 14 previews Satan's whole history in later Christian mythology.

In a fragment of Justin Martyr (ca. 150 CE), we read that the prophet "Isaiah, fashioning a tragedy, revealed the whole dramatic outworking prepared for the devil under the character of the Assyrian."[58] The "Assyrian" is probably taken as the subject of the poem in Isaiah 14 (cf. Isa 14:25).[59] This "Assyrian" acts out, as if in a play, the cosmic tragedy of the devil, thus revealing Satan's true history.

In his polemical treatise *Against Marcion*, Tertullian attributes to "the devil" (*diabolus*) an abbreviation of the words spoken in Isaiah 14:13–14: "I will set my throne in the clouds, I will be like the Most High." Tertullian believes that the devil is "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4) because he convinced the whole world that he is god.[60]

The Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* (first to fourth century CE), significantly varies and expands the myth of Lucifer. Like Nebuchadnezzar—who creates a cult statue (presumably of himself) and orders all his subjects to worship it (Dan 3)—God creates Adam as his own image and demands that all the angels worship him.[61] As in Daniel 3, most servants submit (or succumb); their knees begin to bend. But amid them all, one angel remains standing. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refuse to worship the Babylonian king (image of the God Marduk), Lucifer refuses to worship Adam (image of Yahweh). He will not worship a being who is younger than he is. Adam, for all his glory, is a creature, a cult image, which is to say—an idol.

Unmoved by such resolve, the archangel Michael flatly demands that Lucifer worship a human being—and threatens God's wrath. Lucifer retorts: "If he gets angry at me, I will set my throne above the stars of God and I will be like the Most High!" (Isa 14:13–14).[62] These words alone are enough to move God—much like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3—to an outburst of rage. He orders Lucifer and his angels to depart heaven and fall, inglorious, to earth.[63]

In perhaps the first work of systematic theology (*On First Principles*), Origen states that the very name of Lucifer—"light bearer"—indicates that he was originally a being of light. Nevertheless, he fell from heaven as an apostate.[64] In a homily on the Book of Numbers, Origen directly puts Isaiah 14:13–14 in the devil's mouth and accuses him of self-deifying pride.[65] In Origen's view, Lucifer sins apart from any consideration of Adam. What brings the devil down is his self-exaltation. To support his view, Origen cites 1 Timothy 3:6. In this (forged, but canonical) letter of Paul, the author warns his readers not to appoint a recent convert as bishop. Otherwise, such a man might become elated, and "fall into the judgment of the devil."[66]

Origen's later opponent, bishop Methodius of Olympus (died 311) offers a variant of the same myth: "the devil too was a dawn-bringing star (Isa 14:12). . . He was with the angels rising from the light. He was the early morning star, but he fell, was crushed against the ground, and became overseer of whatever opposes humanity" (cf. Isa 14:13–15).[67]

Originally, all was peace and joy in heaven, according to Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260–339). The "holy angels of God and archangels" circled God like the stars "circle round the Sun of Righteousness [i.e., Christ] and his fellow the Holy Spirit." But one archangel refused to dance, and caused his own heavenly troupe to fall "beneath the piety of the more godlike." He produced by himself "the venom of malice and impiety" and by his "willful departure from the light" became "the author of darkness and folly." The cause of his evil was insanity, for only one frenzied and insane could say, 'I will ascend into the heavens . . . I will be like the Most High!' "[68]

A generation later, Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 329–389 CE) varied and expanded the myth. Lucifer "got uppity in the presence of the almighty lord, setting his heart on a throne above the clouds" (Isa 14:14). According to Gregory, "he paid a penalty worthy of his insanity, since he was condemned to be darkness rather than light, or to speak more truly, he became such by himself." At war with his own passions, Satan attempted to ignite war in everyone else. He still fights with vigor against the church, hiding "in the smog of [ecclesiastical] factionalism."[69]

What made Lucifer fall? Envy darkened the light-bearer. His lofty place of honor proved his undoing. "For he could not bear, as a divine being, not to be thought a god."[70] Gregory then breaks into verse:

> For this reason[71] the most ancient Daystar, when exalted on high
> (for he expected the royal honor of God most great
> though he himself had extraordinary laud), lost his luster
> and fell here robbed of honor, entirely dark instead of divine![72]

According to Gregory of Nyssa (335–395 CE), Lucifer claimed God's "title of kingship." As proof of this assertion, Gregory immediately turned to Isaiah. "The prophet sees the King of glory seated upon a throne high and lifted up (Isa 6:1). That other one too [Satan] promises to set his own throne above the stars, so that he will be like the Most High (Isa 14:13–14)."[73]

In North Africa, Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) tried to explain how, although created by God, Lucifer became evil. Preaching his *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Augustine restates the standard myth. Lucifer "was an angel, and he became a devil; and scripture says of him: 'Light-bearer, the one who was rising at daybreak, fell' (Isa 14:12). Why was he called Light-bearer? Because as one who was enlightened, he was shining. But how did he become darkness? 'Because he did not stand in the truth' (John 8:44)."[74]

Deploying this same verse from John, Augustine later denied that Lucifer spent any time as a brilliant angel. From the first moment of his creation (*ab ipso exordio creaturae*), Lucifer became evil.[75] The bishop explains: "[I]t was from the beginning of creation (*ab ipso creaturae*), from the very beginning of time (*ab ipso . . . temporis . . . initio*) . . . from the moment that he was himself created he [Lucifer] fell, and he never (*nec aliquando*) stood in the truth."[76] The instant Lucifer was made (*factus continuo*), he became "swollen with pride" and was "corrupted by delight in his own personal power. Thus he never tasted the sweetness of the blessed life of the angels."[77] In effect, Lucifer was never blessed. God created an archangel who was instantly damned.[78]

Like Origen, Augustine rejects the idea that Lucifer fell because he was jealous of humanity. "Envy comes after pride," Augustine claims, "not before it; jealousy after all does not cause pride, but pride causes jealousy."[79] Augustine's view is based on what seemed psychologically plausible to him. It lacks real biblical support, and a moment's reflection shows that it has no psychological necessity either. Hatred based on what another has (i.e., envy) can precede an overestimation of one's importance (i.e., pride).[80]

Importantly, however, the primacy of pride derives in large part from a reading of Isaiah 14 (the planned exaltation of Lucifer). For Augustine, pride—understood as self-love gone awry—was the archetypal sin. Lucifer was the first to manifest this sin: "his perverted love of self deprives that puffed-up spirit [i.e., Lucifer] of holy companions, and constrains him to be sated on misery."[81] It is a sad end for the devil, but perhaps equally mournful for the deity who created him.

The Importance of Isaiah 14

With Augustine, our sketch of Lucifer's story comes to an end. As we have seen, Lucifer's memorable mythology proved convincing to a number of patristic writers starting in the second century CE. What evolved was a Christian mythology that became the blueprint for Western demonology up until modern times. Other texts in the gospels (Luke 10:18) and Revelation (12:3–12) contributed to the myth's development, but Isaiah 14 retained hermeneutical primacy. Christian mythology is thus organically related to its Jewish antecedents.

What does the mythology teach? First, the story of Satan's self-deification cannot be separated from his fall. If anything is determined in Yahweh's mythic cosmos, it is that the self-deifier (or rebel who refuses to keep his place) must be destroyed. His destruction, even though projected into a future time, is the ultimate demonstration of divine order. Yahweh has absolute power and will share it with no one who resists him.

There is always a danger, however, that the god with absolute power could himself become the most dangerous tyrant. In terms of their desire for power, both Helel and Yahweh prove to be strikingly similar. In Jewish and Christian mythology, both the storm and the star god make an equal bid for absolute power. One figure is said to lose, and the other to win. One figure is portrayed as a usurper, and the other as the incumbent. But even when the myth seems to boldly support Yahweh, a certain ambivalence and unease remains. In his desire to hold and retain absolute power, Lucifer roundly succeeds in making himself "like" the Most High.

Self-deification is, in this mythology, the ultimate expression of pride, and makes Yahweh livid with anger. Yet why would Yahweh be so angry unless Satan's pride somehow resembled and even represented Yahweh's own desire for domination? In reading this mythology, one obtains the impression that Lucifer's sudden and "necessary" fall represents something repressed in Yahweh's own myth, a traumatic truth that would only be revealed when some early Christians lost their fear of the Jewish god and developed his mythology in a different direction. These Christians conceived the impossible thought: the tantalizing likeness between Lucifer and Yahweh—their equal desire for ultimate superiority—revealed that these mythological figures were in fact one.

3

"I Am God and There is No Other!"

THE BOAST OF YALDABAOTH

What sort of god is this? First [he] was envious of Adam that he should eat from the tree of knowledge. . . . And later on he said, "Let us throw him out of this place lest he eat from the tree of life and live forever." Thus he has shown himself to be a malicious envier.

THE TESTIMONY OF TRUTH (NHC IX,3) 47.14–48.4

Yahweh drives Adam and Eve out of Eden, not to punish them, but rather because he fears that humans, having reached his own level of knowledge (Gen 3.22), could become immortal like him.

GIOVANNI GARBINI[1]

Introduction

According to some early Christian texts, the god of Genesis is a blind, blaspheming, inept abortion. His blasphemy is a declaration of self-deification drawn directly from Jewish scripture: "I am God, and there is no other!" (Isa 45:22).[2] Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon (late second century CE), believed that Christian gnostics were guilty of blasphemy for positing a God higher than the creator.[3] Christian gnostics thought likewise about competing Christian groups who ascribed the passions of jealousy and wrath to the supreme God.[4] God, according to a Platonic theology widespread in Late Antiquity, can only be good. It was sinful, therefore, to depict him as the author of belligerent punishments and the creator of "evils" (*kaka*) (Isa 45:7, LXX). The real blasphemy, in this view, is depicting God as jealous of humanity's divine qualities and potential.

Gnostic Christians criticized their opponents by creating a kind of tabloid version of Yahweh, an exposé via exegesis, a rude unveiling of who the god of Genesis really is, in their view—an idol. Their new Genesis stories deconstructed the exculpating theologies of their opponents. The sometimes angry, autocratic, and jealous god of Jewish scriptures is not hidden under a veil of allegory.[5] Rather, he is depicted in living and lurid colors. His name is Yaldabaoth,[6] aka Samael ("blind god") and Saklas ("fool").[7]

Strikingly, these Gnostic revisionary myths depict Yahweh as a self-deifying king. The story of self-deifying kings was already part of Jewish mythology. Jews and Christians would readily think of Helel (Lucifer), the Tyrian tyrant, or Antiochus IV Epiphanes. These ancient rulers wanted to be like God, and in their putative vanity and hubris claimed to be divine. In their poetry, Jews had parodied these putative self-deifiers with mock dirges. Now the mocking of divine folly was turned against Jewish scripture.

Lucifer, who became Satan in Christian mythology, was the main, though implicit, template for Yaldabaoth in gnostic sources.[8] Satan or Lucifer was widely considered to be the primeval self-deifier who rebelled against the supreme God.[9] In gnostic mythology, however, the creator himself becomes the rebel against the real God. In other words, the creator—who is more primeval than the devil—plays the devil's archetypal role.[10]

In this chapter, we examine the stories of the devilish deity Yaldabaoth in three documents of Christian Gnosticism: *The Secret Book of John, The Reality of the Rulers*, and what is now titled *The Origin of the World*. All three documents belong to the same book in the Nag Hammadi library (codex II).[11] All three share features of Ophite mythology. This mythology is characterized by a "reverse" exegesis of the creation and paradise stories in Genesis, the animalization of the lower creators, and the positive role of the tree of knowledge.[12] Importantly, all three texts foreground the creator's hubristic self-deification—and relate its tragic results.[13]

The Secret Book of John

The Secret Book of John was apparently one of the most popular primers of Christian gnosis. Four copies are preserved in two (short and long) versions. Here we examine primarily the long version preserved in the leading tractate of Nag Hammadi codex II.[14]

Some scholars argue that the earliest form of *The Secret Book* was not a Christian text but rather a Jewish document later Christianized.[15] It is difficult, however, to conceive of the demonization of Yahweh under purely Jewish impulses. Something had to intervene to drain the symbolic power of Yahweh, and deprive Jewish canonical myths of their authority. What intervened, it seems, was what Christians considered the unique revelation of Christ. Christians believed that this revelation superseded and revised previous (Jewish) revelations of God and other "second god" figures. It was this theological claim that relativized

Jewish scriptures and allowed early Christians to radically revise what had functioned as authoritative and irreproachable myths.[16]

In *The Secret Book*, the creator god Yaldabaoth is portrayed as a living miscarriage—an unformed, imperfect thought of a female goddess (Wisdom) who aimed to produce offspring on her own.[17] Her virgin conception explains why her thought was unformed. In Aristotelian embryology, the male was thought to provide the form for the fetus, while the female provided the matter.[18] Matter without form was viewed as lacking cohesion, like menses. The product of a solely female birth could only, in this view, be malformed.[19] The unformed nature of Yaldabaoth is expressed in his ugliness. He is a lion-faced serpent.[20] His disgusted Mother immediately expels Yaldabaoth from the divine "Fullness."[21]

Unwittingly, however, Wisdom becomes the cause of her son's delusions of grandeur. She wraps him in the swaddling clothes of a billowing cloud. The cloud image alludes to Job 38:9, where Yahweh swaddles the chaos monster of the sea with a "heavy cloud." In her cloud, Wisdom builds a throne for her son to sit upon. Yaldabaoth, newly born, opens his eyes and finds himself engulfed in splendor. He is alone—or so he thinks. Outfitted with his mother's spiritual light, he realizes that he has super powers.[22] But the real power of the light he does not know. It is the power of mind; and its substance is spirit (*pneuma*).[23]

Since Yaldabaoth is himself darkness, the light in him takes on a grayish cast—the color of a storm cloud.[24] Like some teenage deity, he moves out of his cloudy home and starts using his powers. He can breathe fire, change the appearance of his visage, and create whole worlds.[25]

It was not good for Yaldabaoth to be alone. In the myth, he craves worship and adoration. He fathers twelve authorities to rule over the starry rind of the universe, or Zodiac. Seven of these rulers are given charge of planets, and the other five are made lords of the abyss.[26] They share Yaldabaoth's strength, but not the light power that he received from his mother.[27]

Then Yaldabaoth's minions begin to multiply. The twelve rulers make seven powers for themselves, and the powers make six angels until they reach the number 365. The seven powers are the days of the week, and the angels are the days of the solar year. Together, they control time and themselves represent its inescapable power.[28] Yaldabaoth, like Saturn in astrology, stands over time as supreme Lord.[29]

The creator then makes a special corps of angels with which he shares his fiery power—the "burning ones" or seraphim.[30] He rejoices that, like his mother, Wisdom, his thoughts become deeds. He names seven special powers with highfalutin titles like "lordship" and "divinity."[31] Yaldabaoth rules his angels like a tyrant "because of the glorious power that he had from his mother's light."[32]

The creator's very act of creation is his source of pride. Because of his superior power, and due to the host of angels that surround him, Yaldabaoth makes his monotheistic boast: "I am God, and there is no other God beside me!"[33] There is a vague sense even in Genesis that when the creator looks upon his works and judges them "very good," he shows a sense of self-satisfaction (Gen 1:31). What king would not feel a touch of pride when, in the words of Daniel, "A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand [angels] stood attending him" (Dan 7:10)?

The Nature of True Divinity

The deluded arrogance of Yaldabaoth's claim is amplified by the fact that he is neither alone nor unique. Before his story is told, a lengthy theological disquisition reveals the true nature of deity. There is one, infinitely high God called the Invisible Spirit. This One is without limit, unfathomable, immeasurable, invisible, eternal, unutterable, and unnamable.[34]

From this ultimate God emerged a female deity called:

Mother-Father,
the first Human,
holy Spirit,
the triple male,
the triple power,
the triple name of male-female,
and the eternal aeon among the invisible beings,
and the first emanation.[35]

The chief names of this goddess are Barbelo and Pronoia (the latter meaning "Forethought" or "Providence"). Pronoia soon becomes part of a pentad of other divine beings. She then conceives a divine Child who is pure light and anointed with goodness. This Child shines forth and emanates four awesome luminous Powers who are filled with an immense network of divine traits and deities.[36]

In light of the vast, multistoried palace of superior deities that exist above Yaldabaoth, the creator appears as a pipsqueak of a god, and his divine claims seem ludicrous. Like Lucifer, Yaldabaoth attempts to raise his throne above the Most High, and for these claims, he is deemed impious and disobedient.[37] His situation is reminiscent of a tale told by Nietzsche about the death of the gods:

> They did not end in a "twilight," though this lie is told. Instead: one day they *laughed* themselves to death. That happened when the most godless word issued from one of the gods themselves—the word: "There is one god. Thou shalt have no other god before me!" An old grimbeard of a god, a jealous

> one, thus forgot himself. And then all the gods laughed and rocked on their chairs and cried, "Is not just this godlike that there are gods but not God?"[38]

In his divine claim, Yaldabaoth plays the part of a ludicrous Lucifer. But the narcissistic creator is even more comic because he does not know that he abides in his own self-concocted Sheol.

The Boast

Jealousy makes the deficiency of Yaldabaoth palpable. Surrounded by a boundless throng of angelic children, he exclaims, "*I* am a jealous God, and no other God exists beside me!"[39] What is strange about this claim is that Yaldabaoth—though ignorant of the divinities that exist above him—still has a vague sense of their presence. As *The Secret Book* puts it, Yaldabaoth claims to be singular in his deity, but admits that he is jealous. But if he is really singular, "of whom would he be jealous?"[40] Later we learn that Yaldabaoth was aware of the existence of his Mother.[41] Thus when he proclaims, "no other God exists besides me," the creator lies both to himself and to his creation. In this way, Yaldabaoth assumes another devilish trait, since the devil "is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

The Rebuke

Suddenly a voice like thunder smashes the arrogant claim of Yaldabaoth. It cries out from above: "The Human exists, and the Child of the Human!"[42] One can imagine Yaldabaoth blinking and peering upward in horror. Although he suspects his mother is behind it, he is unaware of where the voice came from. The message, however, is clear: Human Divinity exists before Yaldabaoth. The deity "beside" (or rather, above) Yaldabaoth is the God Human, and makes the divinity of Yaldabaoth seem ridiculous by comparison.

With the awesome voice of rebuke comes a light, and then a great agitation: "the entire realm of the first ruler quaked, and the foundations of the abyss shook."[43] The lower rulers crane their necks upward and squint at the watery firmament above them. The firmament serves as a screen showing the shimmering image of the light Human above. Not only does the voice confirm a prior Human deity—the rulers behold its image with their very eyes.[44]

The Creation of Adam

Ever scheming, Yaldabaoth turns to his henchmen and exhorts them in the ancient words, "Come, let us create a human being after the image of God, with a likeness to ourselves, so that this human image may give us light" (cf. Gen 1:26).[45] It was a principle of ancient astrology that things above correspond to certain essences below. These essences could attract and control the powers as they streamed downward from the stars. Yaldabaoth apparently assumes that if he can mold the image of the light Human, he can attract its light power as if wielding a spiritual magnet.

To build his human, however, Yaldabaoth must use the materials of his own level of reality. The substance at hand is animate—the stuff of souls. It is Yaldabaoth's own substance and that of the rulers around him. In this sense, the rulers build the human in their likeness. Each of the rulers contributes an animate body part—a left ear here, a right buttock there—all is arranged in the shape of the human body as it glimmers above.[46]

In addition to body parts, the rulers contribute the activation of each limb, as well as the human's perceptions, imagination, and basic impulses. They weave in the four chief vices of the soul (antitheses of the cardinal virtues): pleasure, desire, grief, and fear. These are the primal founts of all destructive and consuming human emotions, including jealousy, rage, and shame.[47]

All the demonic rulers stare in anticipation at their Frankenstein. But he does not move.[48] At this point, Yaldabaoth's mother initiates her own scheme. To trick Yaldabaoth into releasing the light power, Wisdom sends down five luminaries in the guise of angelic advisors. They counsel the creator, "Breathe some of your spirit into the face of Adam, and the body will rise."[49] Yaldabaoth huffs and puffs the spirit of his mother into the animate Adam. Suddenly, Adam begins to stir and grow powerful. His animate and animated body shines with the light of spirit.[50]

When the spirit of the mother abides in Adam, Yaldabaoth and his cronies become jealous. The inward spirit is the spark of mind, and makes Adam more intelligent than his creators. By the power of mind, Adam strips himself of the rulers' vices. Enraged, the rulers throw the animate Adam into the lowest level of creation—the chaotic soup of matter.[51] But like gold in mud, the divine spark gleams.[52]

Eve

Wisdom sends an additional helper to Adam—enlightened Insight. Insight is an interpretation of the "help" who appears as Eve in Genesis 2. Eve's name in fact translates a Hebrew word meaning "life." She awakens Adam's spiritual life, by instructing him about the prehistory of divinity, how the divine Mother's power descended into matter, and how it can ascend back again. The power must be reintegrated above so that the divine Fullness can be complete.[53]

But the evil gods strike back. To snuff out Adam's power, they devise a prison house of matter. They make a material body out of two heavy and two boisterous elements: earth, water, fire, and fiery winds. The rulers hammer together this body like grimy blacksmiths, blowing with their bellows.[54] What they produce is called a "cave," reminiscent of Plato's cave wherein the prisoners gawk at shadows.[55] The cave is the material body, "the fetter of forgetfulness."[56] Not only does the physical body make Adam capable of death, it also loads him down with bodily needs for food, shelter, clothing, and sex. The task of fulfilling these needs removes Adam from spiritual thought, and leads him to forget his inward divinity.[57]

To make matters worse, the rulers plant him in a paradise of delight.[58] Like a wide-mouthed child in a candy store, Adam's eyes are enticed by colors, and his taste buds crave sweet fruit. Such pleasure and luxury deaden his thought and direct Adam's mind to solely ephemeral, finite concerns.

In the words of the myth, Yaldabaoth casts Adam into a deep sleep. The sleep is not anesthesia for rib removal, but the sleep of forgetfulness. As Yahweh says to the prophet Isaiah, "I will load down their hearts that they may neither understand nor see" (cf. Isa 6:10).[59] In short, Adam forgets his true nature and becomes senseless like the beasts.

Despite these attacks, enlightened Insight remains hidden in Adam. Foolishly, Yaldabaoth thinks that he can remove her by surgery. He amputates part of Adam's light and encloses it inside the envelope of a material woman.[60] When enlightened Insight is embodied in Eve, Adam sobers up. He sees in Eve his true light nature—his essence, which he poetically calls "bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh" (Gen 2:23). She is the reason why Adam leaves his father (Yaldabaoth) and lower mother (matter).[61]

Enlightened Insight then takes the form of the tree of knowledge. By consuming her fruit, Adam wakes up, and realizes his true, spiritual nature. In the *Secret Book*, it is not the serpent who induces Adam to eat, but Christ himself, who is perched on the tree in the form of an eagle.[62] In the Genesis myth, the eyes of Adam and Eve are opened when they partake of the fruit. In the *Secret Book*, it is their minds that are enlightened.

Adam and Eve rightly withdraw from the phony god, Yaldabaoth. Maddened with rage, the creator curses his own creation. He maliciously throws the humans out of paradise and cloaks them with darkness (cf. Gen 3:22–24). In this story, it is not Adam who becomes master over Eve, but Yaldabaoth who attempts to master (that is, rape) her.[63] Life, or enlightened Insight, is removed from Eve before Yaldabaoth leaps on her like a wild animal, defiles her, and produces two divine sons: Elohim and Yahweh.[64]

Yaldabaoth's minions or "authorities" commit adultery with Wisdom herself and beget Fate. From Fate "appeared every evil and violence and blasphemy and the fetter of forgetfulness and ignorance and every burdensome command and burdensome sin with great fears. And this is how they made the whole creation blind so that they [human beings] might not know the God who is above them all."[65]

With characteristic caprice, Yaldabaoth regrets that he ever made human beings in the first place. Wanting to wipe them out in an instant, he unleashes a flood. Pronoia duly warns Noah. But the author of the *Secret Book* jettisons the mythological boat filled with carnivores and their prey. Instead, the elect are hidden in a bright cloud.[66]

Yaldabaoth continues the assault by unleashing a squadron of sex-crazed angels on the remaining "daughters of men." At first, the angels are flatly turned down. Then, like rankled suitors, they create "a contemptible spirit"—a sort of anti-holy Spirit, in order to adulterate human souls. The angels creatively take the form of the women's husbands, and (apparently during sex) inject them with the evil spirit. The children that emerge are beastly imitations of their fathers. The human race is polluted with miscreants whose minds are forever closed.[67]

Although the spiritual children of Adam's son Seth are guaranteed final victory, we are not told the end of Yaldabaoth. He is not thrown down like Lucifer, either immediately or at the end of time. This is not the case in the two other myths of Yaldabaoth that will presently be told.

The Reality of the Rulers

The Reality of the Rulers is the fourth tractate in Nag Hammadi codex II.[68] After a brief introduction, the text dramatically opens with the chief ruler's monotheistic boast: "*I* am God; there is no other!"[69] The emphatic position of the boast is striking. In this account, there is no opening treatise on the nature of the true God. The discussion begins with the hubris of the creator. Even before he created the world, this god commits the archetypal sin: he claims to be God.

The Rebuke

The chief ruler makes his boast, the author explains, because of his "power, ignorance, and arrogance."[70] The creator's claim is explicitly defined as sin and blasphemy against the true God and all the deities of the upper world.[71] A higher God—or rather Goddess—called "Incorruptibility" swiftly rebukes the boaster from on high, "You are wrong Samael!" (meaning: "god of the blind").[72] This name is not incorrect, for Samael is depicted not only as a blind god but also as one who blinds others.[73]

By his monotheistic boast, taken from Jewish scriptures, Samael proves that he is a mythic reconfiguration of the Jewish god. But the chief model of his character is the Christian devil. In fact, Samael is an established name of the devil. In *The Ascension of Isaiah*, Sammael (an alternative spelling) dwells in King Manasseh, with the result that Manasseh serves "Satan" (2:1–2, cf. 5:15–16). When Isaiah exposes Sammael (also called "Beliar," 3:13), "Sammael Satan" responds by sawing the prophet in half (11:41).[74] In the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch*, Samael plants the tree (here a vine) that led Adam astray in paradise. He later takes the form of the serpent, the devil of old.[75]

In *The Reality of the Rulers*, Samael is the first sinner. The epistle of 1 John relates that the devil sinned from the beginning (3:8). In addition, Samael makes people blind, as does the devil in 2 Corinthians 4:4. The fact that Samael is leonine also connects him to Satan, who prowls about like a roaring lion (1 Pet 5:8). But Yahweh himself declares, "I will be to them [Israelites] like a lion. . . . I will tear open their breast, and there I will devour them like a lion" (Hos 13:7–8). In short, the character of Samael directly fuses Yahweh (the Jewish creator) and Satan into one persona. In his character, the Jewish god is exposed as utterly demonic.

The Creation of Adam

As in *The Secret Book of John*, the rulers under Samael see the image of the true God shining in the waters. This time, they fall in love with the image. But they cannot fathom what they love, for they are soul, and the image is higher on the order of being, namely spirit.[76]

Using the image as a model, they make an earthly, not an animate Adam. Adam is like an animal, not due to his evolutionary past, but because the rulers who make him are themselves beastly. Adam is androgynous because the rulers are of both sexes. Thus he is made in their likeness. But the earthly Adam, since he has human form, is created in the image of the second god, namely Incorruptibility (cf. Gen 1:26).[77]

The reason for Adam's creation parallels what we find in the *Secret Book*. The rulers intend to attract the God of light to the image below. They consider the earthly image (Adam) to be the female counterpart of the "male" image in the waters above. They think that the figure of Adam will attract divine light like a love charm, but they misapprehend the workings of divine power.[78]

The material Adam does not have a soul until Samael blows one into his face (cf. Gen 2:7). But even then, Adam cannot stand up. The rulers gather around him and, like deified clowns, continue to blow "like storm winds" into their mud man—to no avail.[79]

Beneath the vortex, the Spirit catches sight of Adam wriggling worm-like on the ground. This Spirit, parallel to the Invisible Spirit in the *Secret Book*, comes forth from "the adamantine land."[80] Adamant is the hardest substance—like diamond or steel. Here it represents the divine realm of perfect stability. The human is called "Adam," not because he came from the ground (*ʾadāmāh* in Hebrew), but because his essence resembles the divine adamant (or stability) above.[81] In Adam, the Spirit makes its home, and the first human suddenly wakes up, stirring and fully alive.

The rulers place Adam in paradise, and spitefully forbid him to eat from—or even touch—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their goal is to keep Adam in ignorance of his spiritual nature. But the very command not to eat, as the high God knew, was itself an enticement for Adam to partake.[82]

Eve

The rulers, recognizing the temptation, stupefy Adam with the deep sleep of ignorance. They also successfully remove the spiritual side of Adam, and place the "woman of spirit" in the fleshly envelope of Eve. Eve causes Adam to rise and gives him (spiritual) life. She is depicted not as Adam's wife, but as his mother, who offers him (re)birth.[83]

Samael and his sons observe the spiritual Eve conversing with Adam, and rush to ejaculate their semen into her. But she, like Daphne chased by Apollo, transforms into a tree.[84] Nonetheless, Eve leaves behind a bodily shadow of herself, similar to the phantom Helen of Greek mythology.[85] Like crazed satyrs, the rulers proceed to gang rape the shadow, the echo of Eve.

The Serpent

Then the spiritual woman takes the shape of the serpent, called "the instructor." This snake teaches Adam and the earthly Eve to liberate themselves from the tyrant god: "What did Samael [say to] you?" hisses the serpent. "Did he say, 'You may eat from every tree in the garden, but do not eat from [the tree] of knowledge of good and evil?' " By these questions, the snake exposes the motives of the lower god, and—in this story—tells gospel truth: "You will not surely die! For he said this to you out of jealousy. Rather, your eyes will open and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil."[86] In other Jewish and Christian tales, it was the devil who envied Adam in the garden.[87] Now it is a demonized god who is said to show jealousy. In spite of the danger, Adam and Eve fatefully eat the fruit.

Samael, oblivious to what happened, comes hunting in the garden. Ignorant, he must wildly ask, "Where are you, Adam?" After questioning his creation, Samael realizes what occurred: "You ate [of the tree]!" He curses the woman whom Adam blamed, and then irrationally curses the snake's shadow—though it was a form he himself created. The rulers can only curse the first couple by exiling them from the garden. The toil and pain of humanity is engineered to keep them preoccupied with worldly affairs, and ignorant of the holy Spirit.[88]

Norea

Salvation history then narrows its focus upon a single woman: Norea, virgin daughter of Adam and Eve. This Norea apparently lives longer than the hoariest antediluvian Methuselah—for she is still active in Noah's time. When the rulers plan to unleash the flood, Norea asks Noah if she can board the ark. When the patriarch peremptorily refuses, she—like a wrathful goddess—blows on the ark and makes it go up in smoke.[89]

The ever-lecherous rulers plan to seduce Norea. Samael opens with the enticing proposition, "Your mother Eve came to us." Norea responds, "Damn you! You did not have sex with my mother but with one of your own ilk. For I am not from you. I am from the world above."[90] Norea, like the voice of Incorruptibility, rebukes the rulers, and curses them as they cursed Adam and Eve. In response, the face of Samael blazes like fire. He abandons cajolery and demands, "You must serve us sexually, as your mother Eve did!"

In response, Norea cries out with a loud voice "to the holy one, the God of the All." She is immediately met by the angel Eleleth, stunning with his gold face and snowy robe. He introduces himself as "Understanding, the great angel who stands before the holy Spirit." He is sent to rescue Norea from the "lawless ones," and to teach her about her "root" (that is, her true spiritual essence).[91]

Eleleth reveals the backstory of the lower god. Wisdom, called Faith, wanted to create something by herself without her partner. She miscarried, and the aborted fetus became Samael. He "became an arrogant beast resembling a lion."[92] This "beast" opened his eyes and saw around him a limitless sea of matter. Like an almighty toddler surrounded by Play-doh, the ruler began to mold a universe. He immediately became puffed up and crowed, "I am God, and there is none but me!" An angry echo from heaven responds, "You are wrong, Samael!" This time, the creator is undaunted. He throws down the gauntlet and says, "If anything exists before me, let me see it!" Wisdom has only to point her little finger to make matter stretching from heaven to hell flash with lightning.[93]

At this point, Samael might have shrugged and given up his claims to sole deity. Instead, like an insane rebel (or naughty child), he creates a "huge realm, an expanse without limit."[94] He makes seven androgynous offspring and persists in his claim: "I am God of all!" This time, Life, daughter of Wisdom, calls out to him with his other name, "You are wrong, Sakla [fool]!" Acting like Norea, Life breathes into the ruler's face, and her breath turns into a fiery angel. This angel binds Samael just as Satan is bound in Revelation 20:1–3. Like Satan, Samael is hurled to Tartarus, "the bottom of the abyss."[95]

Sabaoth

In an interesting narrative twist, Yaldabaoth's son Sabaoth makes a sudden repentance and is hurriedly promoted to his father's rule.[96] He constructs a huge, throne chariot of four-faced cherubim, and "an infinity of angels as ministers" equipped with harps and lyres. He sits on the highest level of the universe with Life at his right and the "angel of wrath" at his left. He effectively takes Yaldabaoth's place and fills the role of the Jewish god.[97]

The story of the fall of Yaldabaoth and the rise of Sabaoth is mysterious, but may ultimately connect back to the myth of Helel. As we saw in chapter 2, Helel was identified with a Babylonian king, most likely Nebuchadnezzar II. In the book of Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as gazing at his city "Babylon the great." The king boasts that he built it "in the might of my power." Immediately a voice blares from heaven: "You are informed, king Nebuchadnezzar, that the kingdom of Babylon has been taken away from you and given to another, to a despised man in your household. Behold, I establish him over your kingdom, and he will receive your authority and glory and luxury."[98] Nebuchadnezzar is chased away by angels with whips and becomes animalic in form (with "nails like those of a lion").[99] We are never told who the "despised man" is who takes Nebuchadnezzar's place. He is, at any rate, analogous to Sabaoth in *The Reality of the Rulers*.[100] The boast, the voice from heaven, and the subsequent fall of Nebuchadnezzar are all recycled mythic elements that reappear in *Reality*.

The Devil's End

Returning to the myth in *Reality*, Yaldabaoth (who apparently has a skylight in Tartarus) looks up to heaven at his son. Instead of being a proud father, he envies him, and envy produces Death. Envy is a typical characteristic of the devil.[101] Indeed, the connection between death and envy is made explicit in the book of Wisdom: "for through the devil's envy death came into the world" (2:24).

The Reality of the Rulers makes the ultimate fate of the creator and his minions clear: annihilation. Human knowledge is what disarms them—namely, knowledge that the rulers are powerless over the true essence of humanity. When this knowledge is fully realized—that is, when salvation occurs—Yaldabaoth and the other rulers will cease to exist. "Their angels will weep over their destruction, and their demons will lament their death."[102]

On the Origin of the World

Perhaps the most complex story of Yaldabaoth appears in the untitled tractate following *The Reality of the Rulers*. It is tractate II,5 in the Nag Hammadi library, and is now commonly called *On the Origin of the World.*[103] In this epic myth, characters seem to sprout en masse from sky and earth. There are multiple commentary asides, etymologies, recommendations for further reading, and sidelights on esoteric lore. The motley amalgam that emerges is necessarily simplified here, as we follow the thread of Yaldabaoth's self-deification.

The book's main point is to argue that there was a divine world before chaos.[104] Chaos came to be when the divine world, so to speak, cast its shadow. Matter came to be in chaos. But matter was a lifeless soup until a being called "Faith Wisdom" wanted to make it into a likeness of the divine. Instantly, the first ruler appeared from the chaos waters, "lion-like in appearance, androgynous, with great authority in himself but ignorant of where he came from."[105]

While he still swims in the waters like Leviathan, Faith Wisdom speaks to her son like a stern governess to a schoolboy: "Young man, pass through!"[106] Submerged in the waters, the young ruler heard only a garbled version of the phrase, a phrase that becomes his name: "Yaldabaoth."[107] Peering through the waves, Yaldabaoth could not glimpse the face of his mother, for she had already soared on high.[108]

When Yaldabaoth emerges from the sea, he is alone. For infinite stretches of space, he sees only expanses of water and darkness (Gen 1:2). Unsatisfied in his solipsism, he creates a kingdom of matter from word alone. He is depicted as a primeval king: heaven is his throne, and earth is his self-constructed footstool.[109]

By his word, Yaldabaoth creates layered heavenly palaces. In each palace, there are "glories," thrones, mansions, temples, chariots, pure spirits, and armies of "divine, lordly, angelic, and archangelic powers, myriads without number"—all of them fit for service.[110]

The Boast

Amid such celestial pomp and circumstance, the response of Yaldabaoth is predictable. He begins to plume himself. A choir of gods and angels hymns him. He is "delighted." He boasts "over and over again" that he is without need. He declares, "I am God, and there is no other but me!"[111] The exclamation is the first sin: impiety against the true God.

The Rebuke

By now we are familiar with the counterblast. Faith Wisdom booms from heaven: "You are wrong Samael!" But her reprimand is expanded into a prediction: "An enlightened, immortal Human exists before you and will appear within the forms you have shaped. The Human will trample upon you as potter's clay is trampled (cf. Rom 16:20), and you will descend with those who are yours to your mother, the abyss."[112] Faith Wisdom then reveals her likeness in the waters, and withdraws a second time.[113]

Sabaoth

As in *The Reality of the Rulers*, Sabaoth, son of Yaldabaoth, makes a swift repentance and receives a promotion. To escape war in heaven, Sabaoth is lifted by archangels to the seventh heaven, given a palatial mansion, and seated on his cherubim throne. Shaded by a parasol-like cloud, he has an orchestra of harps, lyres, and trumpets that play before him.[114] Along with numberless angels, he creates serpentine seraphim to "glorify him unceasingly."[115] Interestingly, Jesus and the holy Spirit sit on his right and left hand as co-rulers.[116]

The Creation of Adam

Then the scene shifts back to Yaldabaoth (who escapes immediate sentence to Tartarus). He now knows that there is an immortal light Human who existed before him. The creator even feels shame on account of his previous monotheistic boast.[117] Nonetheless, as in *The Reality of the Rulers*, he recklessly challenges the heavens: "If anything existed before me, let it appear so that we may see its light!" As if on cue, light shines "out of the eighth heaven above" and passes through all the heavens."[118]

A marvelous Human likeness shimmers in the light. The likeness is called the "Adam of light," and it shines upon the land called "Adamas."[119] Yaldabaoth, who just claimed to be the sole god, is made a laughingstock.[120] To deflect attention from his error, he encourages his henchmen to create an earthly Adam "in the image of our body and with a likeness" to the Adam of light.[121] The modeled body of the earthly Adam is said to contain (literally, "to fence") light.[122]

The earthly Adam is formed from dirt. The dirt becomes slimy clay when the rulers ejaculate their semen onto it. The earthly Adam is dutifully ensouled, but Yaldabaoth suddenly abandons the project. He fears that the "true Human" might fully enter the formed body of Adam and rule over it. For forty days, the molded Adam remains still, motionless.[123]

On the fortieth day, Life, Wisdom's daughter, blows her breath into the earthly Adam. The first human crawls on the ground, but cannot rise. Terrified, the rulers interrogate the breath abiding in Adam. "Who are you? Where have you come from?" Through the lips of their own creation, they receive this chilling response: "I have come through the power of the Human to destroy your work."[124]

When Adam is suddenly enlivened by Eve, the rulers are alarmed. They rush to see Eve talking with Adam. By now, their tactics are well known: they deflower Eve and drown Adam in the sleep of ignorance. Life morphs into the tree of knowledge, and the rulers warn the first couple with hair-raising threats not to eat of it.[125]

The Serpent

Suddenly "the beast, the wisest of creatures" rears his clever head. As in *The Reality of the Rulers*, he brings the message of liberation: "What did god say to you? 'Do not eat from the tree of knowledge'? . . . Don't be afraid. You certainly will [not die. He knows] that when you eat from it, your minds will become sober and you will be like gods knowing the difference between evil and good people. He [the creator] said this to you because he is jealous."[126]

When Adam and Eve eat the fruit, their minds are opened. The "light of knowledge shone upon them." For the first time, Adam and Eve fall in love with each other. Yet for their beast-like makers, they reserve nothing but hate.[127]

With the shock and awe of an earthquake, the rulers topple into paradise like stooges. Ignorant of Adam's location, they have to hunt under bushes and trees, shouting: "Adam, where are you?!" When they find their prey, they curse Eve and her children. Then they curse Adam, the earth, and its fruits. "Everything they created they cursed." The tree is known by its fruit. "Good cannot come from evil."[128]

The rulers throw the first couple out of paradise to prevent them from gaining both life and knowledge. Although it is clearly overkill, they set cherubim to guard the tree of life, equipped with an ever-rotating light saber. Outside the garden, Adam and Eve live out a grueling 930-year lifespan "in grief and weakness and evil distractions."[129]

Exercising poetic justice, Wisdom casts the seven rulers out of heaven, so that they dwell as demons upon earth.[130] Subsequently, the rulers create for themselves demonic angels to serve them. These angels teach people the arts of war, magic spells, and religious rites.[131]

The Devil's End

Closing *On the Origin of the World*, we are given an apocalyptic description of the world's end. The rulers are thrown down into the abyss like Satan. They cannibalize each other until Yaldabaoth finally destroys them.[132] When he blasts them, he turns against himself in a dramatic, maniacal suicide. His material creation collapses like a seven-story building, upper floors slamming down on lower ones. The great palace of his heavens splits in half like a broken egg. The stars fall into the abyss, and the abyss proceeds to swallow itself. Suddenly, darkness disappears "like something that never was."[133]

Conclusion

Many Christians today find such deliberate revisions of Genesis and its god to be appalling and even grotesque. One problem is that modern Christians read Genesis as a sacred story buffered by millennia of anodyne interpretive traditions. They have forgotten that some early Christians believed that the Jewish scriptures were not the revelation of the high God. Jesus Christ alone knew and revealed the Father (Matt 11:27). Only a jealous, lower deity would curse his own creation, command the genocide of the Canaanites, demand blood sacrifice, exile his own people, and maul them like a lion if they did not obey. Today, many Christians call this angry and fickle lord of armies "just" and "holy," but certain ancestors of their faith could not concur.[134]

Yahweh himself is the meeting of opposites. "I have fashioned light and made darkness; I make peace and create evils (*kaka*)" (Isa 45:7, LXX). As the ancient storm god, his character is a whirlwind of contrary forces. With his nourishing rains, he is the source of life. But when he chucks his fiery bolt, he is the face of death. Deuteronomy 32:39 (LXX) nicely sums up Yahweh's ambiguous character. First he makes his classic, ego-centered claim: "See now that I, I am he, and there is no God besides me!" Then comes the apparent justification for the claim: "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal—and no one can deliver out of my hand." In brief, Yahweh performs good and evil because his character perfectly combines them.

To many intellectuals in the ancient world, the knowledge of a good and evil god was bitter fruit. Platonic theology demanded that deity be good with no hint of evil. It demanded that God not be jealous, but beneficent.[135] In Christian Platonism, God is made solely good, and evil is projected onto a secondary character called the devil, Satan, or (for gnostic Christians) Yaldabaoth. By these mythic modifications, the high God's character is strained of evil, and the darkness that once clung to him sticks to one of his subordinates.

Early Christians were angry when other members of their faith made Yahweh himself the evil one subordinate to a higher God. Nevertheless, this very process of demonization and the purification of true godhood shows the basic similarities shared by gnostic and early catholic theologies. In both, a selective Platonism reigns (the true God is seen as solely good), while evil adheres to a lower, self-deifying character who is destined for destruction.[136]

Interestingly, some gnostic mythmakers preserved the existence of a morally ambiguous god. His name is Sabaoth. As a developed character, Sabaoth appears in *The Reality of the Rulers* and *On the Origin of the World.* In these accounts, Sabaoth's repentance seems rather self-serving. When he is promoted to his father's position, he outdoes him in self-laudatory acts. He decorates a gigantic throne and hires a host of angels to worship him with harps and horns. He lacks his father's boastful claim, but not, it would seem, his pride.[137] What saves Sabaoth is his implicit recognition: "I am god (and, yes, I do acknowledge some others)."

When their myths are read in context, we observe that gnostic Christians did not revolt against divine monarchy per se.[138] Rather, they revolted against a perceived blasphemous theology that made the one all-powerful God a cause (however indirect) of evil. They made a firm distinction between a good high God and an imperfect, evil creator who controls the world. In their minds, gnostics did not invent the evil creator god. Rather, they *exposed* him in order to reveal the true, transcendent deity.[139]

Gnostic Christians were not impious, as their detractors claimed. Instead, they attacked what they viewed as the impiety of a false god, and the idolatry of those who worshiped him.[140] Most early Jews and Christians mistook the god of Genesis for the true deity. But in gnostic thought, the creator in Genesis is in fact an inadvertent (pro)creation of a higher deity. By worshiping him, Jews and Christians idolized an abortion.

Why did gnostic Christians demonize the creator? There are many explanations, but one prominent one is that gnostics engaged in a deep reading of Jewish scripture itself. In Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, self-deifiers are portrayed as archetypal sinners. But the most open form of self-deification is actually not perpetrated by either Lucifer or Adam in paradise. The most blatant self-deifier in the Hebrew scriptures is Yahweh himself, who repeatedly says, "I am God and there is no other" (Isa 45:22); "I am God, there is no one like me" (Isa 46:9). Now since early Christians believed that Lucifer (or the devil) was the archetypal self-deifier, they associated self-deification with what is satanic. When Christian gnostics found in Deuteronomy and Isaiah (favorite texts of Christians), that the creator himself is the most prominent self-deifier, they made a logical if daring conclusion: this god is the devil.[141]

As a character, Yaldabaoth is not a parody of Yahweh, if by parody we mean a mere mock imitation.[142] To the contrary, Yaldabaoth is the revelation of Yahweh's true character. By constructing Yaldabaoth, Christian gnostics were not just playing satirical games; they were trying to express a different (theological and philosophical) point of view.

They were also trying to be faithful to the demonology of their own Christian scriptures. There is a "god of this world" says Paul (2 Cor 4:4)—and he is not good. The whole world lies in the lap of "the evil one" (1 John 5:19). This being rules the world because he created it—but he is not the true God. *The Reality of the Rulers* opens with perhaps the most famous demonological passage of the New Testament (Eph 6:10–18). Here Christians are called to wrestle against a worldwide demonic infrastructure. How could this vast infrastructure exist unless it serves the creator's interests and reflects his own design?

Gnostic Christians did not devalue the Hebrew Bible so much as its god. They provided a sophisticated theological reading of Jewish scripture (which retained a measure of symbolic value) in order to expose a false god.[143] To be sure, their stories mock the deity worshiped by Jews and adapted by early catholics. But the mocking was also a serious attempt to persuade other Christians to give up their naïve conception of god, and worship the true Father. Most Jews would not be convinced of this, but Christians—who believed in a revelation superseding previous Jewish revelations—might be led to change their views.

A comparison of Yahweh and Yaldabaoth reveals the importance of ancient value judgments. When Yahweh makes his monotheistic claims in the Hebrew Bible, it is not perceived as a boast, but as a legitimate self-revelation. The very same words on the lips of Yaldabaoth reflect arrogance and narcissism. The words are virtually the same, but the judgment differs. Yahweh is made a god, and Yaldabaoth a demon. Divinization and demonization are paired as two sides of a parallel process of valuation.

In the end, early Christians who perceived great evils in the world had to make a decision as to which being they demonized—was it to be Lucifer or Yahweh himself? Patristic writers made Lucifer into Satan. At the same time, Christian gnostics chose to recast an ethically ambiguous Jewish creator as the devil. Like other Christians, they still used the story of Lucifer as a model for Yaldabaoth's self-deifying pride. The use of such a model is striking because, in Isaiah 14, the Jewish god and Lucifer are the greatest opponents. Gnostic theology shows how opposites can sometimes attract.

In fact, however, Yahweh and Lucifer are not opposites at all. Lucifer boasts that he will lift his throne above the stars of God. In the same book of Isaiah, Yahweh makes an equally audacious claim to be the only existing deity (Isa 45:6, 18). He uses foreign empires to kill and exile his people, calls a portion of them back, and tantalizes them with the promise of an ever-receding dominion.[144] In the history of mythology, human valuation reigns. One self-deifying figure is judged to be evil, and the other good; one is thought to be arrogant, the other majestic; one is made the Accuser, the other, the Almighty.

PART II

The Self-deifying Hero

4

"I and the Father Are One."

THE SELF-DEIFICATION OF JESUS IN JOHN

[Jesus] required the uncounterfeitable delicacy of a hubris which presents itself with such calm assurance that it was not and is not even perceived as such.

ERNST BLOCH[1]

The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true, the book [the Fourth Gospel] is blasphemous.

C. K. BARRETT[2]

Introduction

Celsus, second-century critic of Christianity, described "the style of prophecy in Phoenicia and Palestine" with claimed first-hand knowledge.

> There are many, he says, nameless [prophets] who, working themselves up as if inspired . . . prophesy with the greatest ease from any chance cause both inside and outside temples. Others also go around begging, roaming around cities or military camps. It is ordinary and accustomed for each one to say: "I am God or a child of god or a divine spirit, and I have come! Already the world is being destroyed, and *you*, O human beings, perish due to your iniquities! But *I* want to save you. And you will see me again returning with heavenly power! Blessed is the one who worships me now!"[3]

Interestingly, there are other literary reports of self-deifying prophets in Palestine. According to the author of Acts, Samaritans called Simon "the Great Power" (widely taken to be a divine title).[4] Dositheus, Simon's associate, called himself "son of god."[5] In a saying attributed to Rabbi Abbahu (third century CE), we hear, "If a man says to you, 'I am God!' he is a liar; [if he says] 'I am the Son of Man!'

he will in the end regret it; [if he says] 'I ascend into heaven!' though he said it, it will not occur."[6] Although explicitly a comment on Numbers 23:19 ("God is not a human being, etc."), the saying can be read as a polemic against Jesus.[7] In fact, the Jewish charge against Jesus's self-deification can be traced much earlier: to a first-century Christian gospel later attributed to John.

On the face of it, the claims of John's Jesus resemble those of Celsus's prophets. Jesus offers a formula of divine epiphany: "I have come (*hēkō*)!" (John 8:42).[8] He claims that belief in him determines the eternal destiny of human beings (5:24; 6:47). He declares that he is worthy of worship (5:23); that he will rise to heaven and come back to gather his elect (14:3; 20:17). All these claims are based in part on the rhetorical appeal to his own deity (8:58; 10:30).

The mythological framework of John is constructed to validate the self-deifying claims of Jesus. In a poetic prologue, Jesus is given a backstory of eternal preexistence with God. Here Jesus is directly called "god," or "a god" (*theos*) (John 1:1). In the narrative, Jesus performs seven signs that prove his deity. His resurrection appearances confirm his divine status and anticipate his final ascent to God. Throughout John, sympathetic readers are clearly meant to recognize Jesus as divine in the interests of obtaining what is proffered as the ultimate spiritual good—"eternal life" (20:31). The culminating christological confession is made by Thomas, who, falling before the resurrected Jesus, addresses him with the words, "my lord, and my god (*ho kyrios mou kai ho theos mou*)!"[9] In short, a number of discursive strategies are used in John to ascribe divinity to Jesus.

In this chapter, we focus on one particular Johannine discursive strategy: the presentation of *Jesus himself* as making self-deifying claims. Most other gospels are content to have other characters intuit Jesus's divine identity, usually after some awe-inspiring miracle.[10] In John, Jesus interprets his miracles (or signs) in several lengthy discourses with the Jews. These speeches do not directly represent the words of the historical Jesus, or the character of the historical Jews.[11] They represent the christological mythology of the Johannine community that evolved some sixty years after Jesus's death.[12]

In short, the speeches represent a myth of Jesus as a god who descended from heaven and assumed flesh (John 1:14). The point of the speeches (or rather one of them) is to persuade the readers to adopt this myth as ontological truth. The speeches include Jesus's open and implied self-deifying statements. This time, however, the self-deifier (though condemned to death) is not damned—but gloriously vindicated.

This story of vindication inverts the rebel type of self-deification mythology. The logic of the inversion is rooted in the overall christological myth. In this myth, Jesus is not God's prideful opponent, but God's son. He does not defy God, but was eternally his vizier. He does not attempt to replace the high

God by soaring past earth. In fact, as an incarnate god, Jesus claims to have come down from heaven, and announces his future return (John 3:13; 14:3). In this mythology, Jesus's claims to divinity are perfectly legitimate and even valorized.

Self-deification and the Jews

Yet the reader who does not accept the overall myth is liable to be repulsed by Jesus's self-deifying claims. Some would even cry blasphemy. In fact, this is exactly what, according to John's gospel, many of Jesus's Jewish hearers did (John 5:18; 10:33; 19:7).

That self-deification is constructed as a *Jewish* charge raises an important methodological point. In examining Jesus's self-deification, we must be careful to distinguish his literary self-presentation from his overall characterization in John's narrative. In terms of the mythic framework of the gospel, Jesus is already divine. As a character *in* the narrative, however, he appears as a human being and repeatedly makes a claim to be divine that is not ipso facto true.

Granted, most interpreters identify with the implied reader in John, who is amenable to its christological myth.[13] They also end up sharing—sometimes even emphasizing—John's evaluation of the Jews: that they misunderstand, are lost, blind, liars, murderers, and so on.[14] In so doing, interpreters situate themselves as textual "insiders." The role usually fits, because most exegetes of John are emotionally and spiritually invested in a theological viewpoint informed by John's gospel.[15]

In the present chapter, however, I adopt an etic perspective in sympathy with the Johannine "other."[16] I do not assume, that is, that the Jews always misunderstand Jesus, or that they always must be wrong or evil-minded.[17] In the Johannine myth, Jesus may come "from above," but as a historian of religion, I intentionally read him "from below." To those who know John, reading "from below" will undoubtedly cause a shiver of the demonic. But my etic reading is not a "fleshly" reading inspired by the Johannine devil. It is a contemporary, scholarly way of reading that uses some of the basic tools of narrative and rhetorical criticism.

Reading "from below" does not mean that I simply take up the narrative perspective of the Jews. If John is a two-story building, the Jews (said to be "from below") abide on the bottom floor. An etic reading, however, views a cross-section of the building from the ground outside. From this vantage point, the reader sees Jesus in his preexistent and postresurrection glory on the top floor, but focuses on the ostensibly human Jesus below. To put it more prosaically: my etic reading withholds accepting the truth of John's christological myth in the interests of understanding the historical meaning and rhetorical logic of Jesus's self-deifying claims.

To a certain degree, my reading is what Adele Reinhartz calls "a resistant reading."[18] It is resistant to the extent that I try to see through the eyes of the Johannine "other." It is the Jews, pilloried as the devil's children, blind to real spiritual insight, who see Jesus as engaging in the practice of self-deification.[19] I concur with this charge not because I myself wish to rally to their cause, or because I wish to debunk Jesus's deity, but because *in terms of Jesus's own discursive practices in John*, the Jewish charge has a basic accuracy. Jesus *does* ascribe deity to himself.[20] Rhetorically speaking, he *constructs* his own identity as a *divine* identity. The construction can be seen as valid or not. It can be viewed as arrogant or not. What is important in this study is the rhetorical claim itself. Jesus may already be a god, dependent on a greater God—but as a literary character, he still *claims* to be G/god.

Historical Setting

It is commonly accepted that the gospel of John was composed in the late first century CE, probably over a period of several years, and possibly in multiple editions.[21] Although traditionally this gospel was thought to be written in Asia Minor, many scholars now accept a Syrian or Palestinian provenance.[22] Likely the book was composed by several authors and editors who chose to remain anonymous. (For convenience, and by convention, I label these authors "John.") It is not my concern to delineate stages in the gospel's production, to identify its composers, or to reconstruct their social situation (all of which are important tasks).[23] My concern is with the text's final form, with a special focus on Jesus's rhetoric of self-deification.

In the narrative, there are three main episodes of self-deification: John 5:16–47, 8:12–59, and 10:22–42. All fall into a coherent section of John (chapters 5–10) which begins with a case story of Sabbath violation (5:1–16) and transitions into several forensic encounters with "the Jews" during the course of certain festivals.[24]

John 5:16–47

At an unnamed festival, Jesus ascends to Jerusalem and heals a lame man by a pool. The sick that gathered there considered the waters to have magical healing properties—but only when mysteriously stirred. The lame man complains to Jesus that no one had the decency to "throw" (*ballein*) him into the pool when it swirled (5:7). Jesus reveals that he has powers greater than the pool by healing the man with a word.

Sabbath Violation

Then Jesus issues an order that seems calculated to provoke.[25] It was a Sabbath (as we later find out), and Jesus commands the man to pick up his mat and walk. Since carrying burdens was explicitly forbidden on the Sabbath, Jesus effectively tells the man to break divine Law.[26] The healed man apparently proceeds to haul his burden into the temple itself, where Jesus later discovers him (John 5:14). The Jews are incensed at the scofflaw, but the man throws the blame upon Jesus. While Jesus presumably lingers in the temple, "the Jews" duly confront him (5:16).[27]

Their words are not recorded, but the narrator indicates that they accused Jesus of violating the Sabbath. The accusation can also be inferred from Jesus's somewhat obscure response: "My Father is working up until now, and I am working" (John 5:17). This claim has the effect of refocusing the charge. John evidently wanted to mold the controversy into one about Jesus's divine identity. Jesus's response constructs his identity not as a rebel against God, but as a peculiar imitator of God. If Yahweh works without ceasing, Jesus implies, so can he.[28]

The "Jews," although not privy to the nuances of Johannine theology, know enough to realize that Jesus assumes some sort of divinity. Only God is exempt from Sabbath law.[29] Yahweh commanded all Jews to obey the Sabbath, and presumably would not be flattered if a Jew wanted to "imitate" him by flouting the command.[30]

A New Charge

Thus the Jewish charge quickly turns from Sabbath violation to Jesus's self-deification. The Jewish authorities immediately grasp that Jesus, who speaks of his "Father," is referring to Yahweh. By repeatedly calling Yahweh his own peculiar (*idion*) Father, Jesus makes himself "equal to God" (*ison heauton poiōn tōi theōi*). The charge is related to the Sabbath violation, because it is *as Yahweh's son* that Jesus thinks that he is above Jewish Law.

Jesus's opponents are not allowed to articulate this charge; the narrator makes it for them. Indeed, the silence of the Jews in this chapter is striking. What we call "the Jewish charge," then, must be understood as the charge that John *makes* the Jews present. It is effectively a rhetorical setup. Jesus uses the charge as a springboard to expatiate on his uniquely divine powers. The Jews are never afforded a chance to state their charge or respond when accusations are hurled against them.

Now let us examine the language of the charge. What exactly is wrong with calling God "Father"? Israel as a whole was called God's son (Hos 11:1), even God's firstborn (Exod 4:22). On numerous occasions in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh is called "Father."[31] Implied readers know, however, that the divine Father-son relationship in John is different from anything Israel ever knew. For John, the Father is uniquely related to the son (a belief theologically signified by capitalizing "Son"). The prologue calls Jesus "the only-born god" (1:18). A pervasive textual variant reads: "only-born son."[32] Jesus is not only from God like one sent; he is *born* from God, expressing (if only metaphorically) some kind of genetic relationship. Jesus, moreover, is the *only*-born son. Thus the "sonship" relation is, strictly speaking, reduced to one man. Members of the Johannine community become "children" (*tekna*) of God, apparently expressing a meaningful but secondary kind of kinship.[33] Thus for Jesus, the unique son, to claim God as his Father is truly an extraordinary and divine claim.

Defending Jesus

Is Jesus the unique son thereby depicting himself as equal to God? Interpreters have proven surprisingly resistant to this conclusion. Here a canonical intertext still tends to form an implicit basis of comparison.[34] Philippians 2:6 says that Jesus "did not consider equality with God (*to einai isa theōi*) as something to be seized." Surely, then, the Jews must be wrong when they say that Jesus makes himself equal to God. One often finds, for instance, the following statements in the literature:

> For John, Jesus never makes himself anything; everything that he is stems from the Father. He is not a man who makes himself God; he is the Word of God who has become man.[35]
>
> [I]n 5:19–20 and 30, Jesus declares that he does nothing of his own accord and, in 5:31–40, he shows that he does not witness to himself. Thus, Jesus does not "make himself" anything.[36]
>
> Jesus does not make himself anything. God loves him and shows him all he does (v. 20); God has given him all judgment (v. 22). No, it is false to claim that Jesus arrogantly makes himself God. This is God's doing.[37]

Each of these authors implicitly or explicitly replicate the mythological core of John's gospel: Jesus is god, thus he cannot make himself god. Their arguments amount to a defense of Jesus against the fictional Jews.

When the Johannine myth is bracketed, however, one sees that, rhetorically speaking, the Jewish charge has a basic accuracy. Jesus is a human who, albeit indirectly, *claims* to be on par with God. He appeals to his equality with God because he wants to account for his violation of the Sabbath. Naturally, given Johannine mythology, Jesus does not "ontologically" make himself divine. Rhetorically speaking, however, Jesus does construct his own divine identity.

Granted, there is a fine line between explaining the Jewish charge in light of Johannine mythology and simply siding with Jesus against the Jews. My point is that modern exegetes seem to want to have their cake and eat it too. That is, they want to argue (1) that the Jews are wrong to accuse Jesus of making himself equal to God, and (2) that Jesus is of course right to say that he is equal to God.[38] But how does the reader in this particular encounter *know* that Jesus is equal to God? Jesus *describes* to the Jews how he shares an equality with God. Part of this equality involves exemption from the Sabbath, but it includes (as we will see) his universal power to judge and raise the dead. Insofar as Jesus claims this functional equality with God, he—rhetorically speaking—"makes" himself equal to God.[39]

It is important to recognize that for the Jews, claiming *any* kind of equality with God is still a form of blasphemous self-exaltation. Yahweh issues this challenge in Isaiah: "To whom will you liken me that I be made equal?"[40] Lucifer is thrown down for wanting to be "like" or "equal" (*homoios*) to the Most High.[41] In 2 Maccabees 9:12, Antiochus IV Epiphanes displays arrogance because he thinks himself "god-equal" (*isotheos*).[42] Philo calls the mind that thinks itself equal to God (*isos einai theōi*) "self-loving and godless" (*philautos . . . atheos*).[43]

Doing God's Works

Jesus never denies that he is equal to God, but tries various rhetorical strategies to legitimate his equality in light of Jewish traditions. His argument is somewhat circuitous, but it boils down to the idea that he is not a rebel but a son. The works that the son does are not just any works. They are unique prerogatives of God, like giving life to the dead and judging the world.[44] The speech in which Jesus claims to do these works is itself a discursive practice constructing a kind of equality with God.

Claiming God's Worship

After asserting such bold claims, Jesus draws a potentially idolatrous conclusion. He has been given Yahweh's unique prerogatives for a reason: so that all people might honor (*timōsi*) him just as (*kathōs*) they honor Yahweh. "Honor" here designates worship given to a deity.[45] Bestowing divine honors on a human in the ancient world was a mode of worship.[46] In effect, Jesus claims that he should be worshiped as Yahweh—or at least anticipates being worshiped in a way equal to the Jewish god. He has the audacity to say this in Yahweh's very house of worship.

The claim is all the more striking in light of Yahweh's ancient declaration, "my glory I will give to no other" (Isa 42:8). Josephus complains that the Roman emperor Gaius Caligula "demanded from his subjects honors that were no longer such as may be rendered to a human being."[47] Philo accuses the same emperor of assuming the honors of the gods Heracles, Dionysus, and Apollo.[48] Jesus, as it turns out, assumes the honor of a God much more jealous.

But Jesus says more. He stipulates that the one who does not honor him cannot honor God (John 5:23). In effect, Jesus makes the worship of God dependent on the worship of himself. Honor equal to God implies equal status. To be sure, from John's perspective, all of Jesus's honors derive from God's gifts. But that Jesus was *granted* these divine powers is not something that the Jews accept.[49] In the narrative itself, these powers (raising and judging the dead) have not been officially exercised. In effect, Jesus is boldly speaking in his own voice about his own divine powers.

In the face of opposition, Jesus does not tone down his claims; he intensifies them. In fact, his sense of his own importance seems to spiral out of control. Jesus claims that his voice will be the trumpet blast initiating the final resurrection, and that he will be the final judge of the dead. His decisions as future judge will mean either eternal life or eternal death for all human beings (John 5:24–25, 28–29).

These are patently divine claims. The ability to give life is one of the characteristic traits of Yahweh, who also reserves judgment to himself.[50] The Jewish god declares in Deuteronomy, "Behold, behold that I AM, and there is no God besides me. I kill and I make alive . . . and my hand will lay hold of judgment."[51] By claiming to dispense life and judgment, Jesus claims a power equal to Yahweh's (John 5:44; cf. 17:3).

Life in Himself

Urban C. von Wahlde points out a curious tension in Jesus's argument at this point. In verses 19 and 30, Jesus claims that of himself he can do nothing (*ouden*, emphasized in both cases). His ability to grant life imitates the Father (John 5:21). "Yet, in v. 26, we hear that the Father has life *in himself* and has given life to the Son to have *in himself*. . . . [T]o 'have life in himself' is solely the prerogative of God and it is what makes it possible for God to give life to others. Jesus remains dependent on the Father, but the Father's gift is such as to make him equal with the Father."[52]

But the logic of these claims throws Jesus's dependence into question. If Jesus has life "*in himself*" (*en heautōi*), presumably his life is no longer, strictly speaking, dependent upon the Father. The Father gave him life, but now the life is Jesus's own. As John's prologue states (with no immediate reference to the Father), "In him [Jesus] was life" (1:4). Later in the narrative, Jesus claims to be "the life" (11:25; 14:6). Jesus remains subordinate to the Father, to be sure; but not—or no longer—dependent.[53]

John's rhetorical strategy is effective. By juxtaposing Jesus's equality with God and his dependence, he rhetorically softens the impact of his self-deification. Theologically, Jesus's dependence upon God does not undercut his equality, and his equality with God does not undercut his dependence. Each is allowed to oscillate dialectically.[54]

Logically, however, Jesus's presumed equality with God *does* undermine his strict dependence. Jesus's integration of Yahweh's life and powers has made him *intrinsically* powerful. If Jesus is intrinsically powerful and truly equal to God, he is not, strictly speaking, dependent. All judgment has been given over to the son. In the Jewish scriptures, Yahweh judges everyone; according to Jesus, God judges no one (John 5:22). All judgment, says Jesus, is granted to Jesus. Thus even while professing dependence, Jesus reveals that he has authority (*exousia*) in himself. He has power to judge—not as a mere envoy—but as Son of the Human (5:27).[55] The Son of the Human, as he appears in Daniel 7, is an independent angel or deity who approaches a distinct high God (the "Ancient of Days") to receive supreme power (Dan 7:9–14).[56]

Rhetorically speaking, Jesus's repeated claim that he is *not* intrinsically powerful is itself a construction of his own power. The only way that he can legitimately generate authority is by attaching himself intrinsically to the only God and source of authority that the Jews recognize. He attaches himself to the point of identity—and then lithely draws back. He is merely an envoy, he says—like Moses.[57] But all the powers and honors that Jesus claims make him more than an envoy, and far greater than Moses. How can an envoy have life "*in himself*"? How can he be the *sole eschatological judge*?[58]

Witnesses

John 5:31 represents a significant shift in the argument. Jesus states, "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid." Narratively speaking, John 5 is not a trial scene. Nevertheless, the language is indicative of a formal interrogation, and was possibly expanded from earlier accounts of Jesus's Jewish trial. Martin Asiedu-Peprah refers to it as a "juridical controversy" with three elements: accusation, the response of the accused, and the conclusion of the controversy.[59]

The accusation, as we have seen, is self-deification. Jesus never denies the charge as such; instead (acting as his own advocate), he calls in witnesses for the defense. There are four total, as it seems. John the Baptist is first called to the stand, then Jesus's works, then his Father, and finally Jewish scriptures (John 5:31–39). The distinction between the works and the Father is, in the end, slight. Yahweh speaks through Jesus's works. If Yahweh also speaks Jewish scripture, then the witnesses are further reduced. Since Jesus officially rejects the "human" testimony of John the Baptist, the only key witnesses are Jesus and his Father (5:34).

Asiedu-Peprah observes that in a juridical controversy, "the absolute reliability of the witness to be adduced must be 'obvious' and acceptable to the other party."[60] Jerome Neyrey calls all of Jesus's witnesses "noble, wise, and acceptable to this court."[61] But the four witnesses are precisely those that Jews, if they are to preserve their identity, cannot accept. They cannot recognize John the Baptist (a controversial prophet with no miracles), the miracles of Jesus (which violate the Sabbath), the Christian interpretation of God, and the Christian reinterpretation of Jewish scripture. From the Jews' perspective, Jesus's witnesses are invented, even false. Their authority is hardly "obvious."

From John's perspective, however, the witnesses form an important part of his argument. Self-testimony is not accepted.[62] Truth is established by the testimony of at least two reliable witnesses.[63] Jesus says, "In your law, it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid. I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf" (John 8:17).[64] In the "dialogue" itself, however, Jesus is functionally his own advocate by serving as the primary spokesman for his Father. Others may attest his deity, but Jesus himself speaks *for* his witnesses *on behalf of* himself. The Father speaks *in* him, it is true; but the logic can be reversed. Jesus speaks *for* his Father. Throughout the narrative, at any rate, it is Jesus himself who primarily articulates his own claims to deity.

The Use of Invective

As he makes his argument, Jesus repeatedly turns (as is customary in juridical polemics) to attack his opponents. But he attacks the Jews in a particularly vitriolic way, needling the nerve centers of their identity. "You have," he charges, "never heard his [Yahweh's] voice, nor seen his form" (John 5:37). The idea that the Jews never saw Yahweh in himself was the acceptable theology of the day.[65] But that they never heard his voice is an accusation that threatens to undermine the revelation at Sinai—not to mention the entire prophetic tradition.[66] The Jewish prophets repeatedly declared the word of Yahweh, and their prophecies had become Jewish scripture. Jesus will later use these scriptures for the sake of argument, even while subtly undermining their authority. In a later speech, he will call "all" who came before him (Moses? the prophets?) "thieves and brigands" (10:8).

Jesus slightly modifies his accusation in John 5:38–39: "And his [Yahweh's] word you do not have remaining in you, because the one he sent, you do not believe." Jesus here appears to be claiming that because the Jews do not believe him, God's word never made a permanent impression upon them. Or, as Per Jarle Bekken argues, the disbelieving Jews have lost "direct access to God's testimony."[67]

The Jewish scriptures putatively testify to Jesus. Any sense that these scriptures have undergone Christian interpretation is rhetorically cloaked. Instead, the reader is led to believe that the Jews "cannot understand their own Scriptures."[68]

In the midst of this heated speech, however, a note of humility appears. Jesus abruptly asserts that he does not receive glory or recognition (*doxa*) from human beings (John 5:41). His modesty is admirable, but it has a strange foundation. Jesus does not want or need glory because he already *has*, he says, glory from God (5:44). Jesus had glory in eternity past. By fulfilling his mission, he gains glory (12:23; 13:31). He later prays for full glorification (17:1, 5). It is true that Jesus's mission on earth is to glorify God. But in the narrative of John's gospel, Jesus's sense of self and God strangely mix. For Jesus, glorifying self and glorifying God are not firmly distinguished.

Jesus continues his polemical attacks that strike at the heart of Jewish faith. He claims that the Jews do not have love for God (or alternatively, that God does not love them), because they do not receive Jesus.[69] In the Shema, repeated daily by faithful Jews, Israel is bidden to "love Yahweh your God" (Deut 6:4–5). Jesus (who apparently reads the minds and hearts of his interlocutors) denies that they obey this command. Arguably, however, the Jews in the narrative are desperately trying to defend the first declaration of the Shema: "Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one!"

More Than an Envoy

Jesus claims that he comes in God's "name." The name could signify Yahweh's authority, but it could also signify much more: his person or identity.[70] Indeed, only if Jesus has made some sort of identification between himself and Yahweh do his arguments begin to make sense. God's identity, he says, overlaps with mine; if you do not accept me (to paraphrase) you do not accept God.

The claim is astounding because Jesus soon accuses the Jews of not seeking "the glory from the only God" (John 5:44). There is a double entendre here, since the glory (*doxa*) of God in the Septuagint often denotes God's brilliant manifestation. The reader knows that the *doxa* of God is seen through Jesus (1:14), and intuits the deeper truth: Jesus is the *Doxa*, the Glory of God. In effect, Jesus is making a reference to himself, coded for believers. He means: "you [Jews] do not accept me, the Glory of God." This "Glory" is somehow one with the "*only* God."

Jesus caps his argument with a final accusation. Moses—the one who asked to be blotted out from the book of life to save sinful Israel—will, in the end, be Israel's accuser (John 5:45).[71] The Jews are guilty, Jesus says, because if they believed "Moses" (that is, the Torah), they would also believe him. Moses wrote about Jesus. How he did so is at this point left unclear. The implied reader would evidently be sympathetic with a christological reading of Jewish scripture. In John 6, Jesus provides an interpretation of himself as the bread of heaven foreshadowed in the book of Exodus. He inscribes himself into Jewish scripture—the foundational text of Jewish identity—in order to transcend it.

Even with this hermeneutical guidance, however, Jesus's claim to equality with the "only God" seem insufficient. The Jews are not convinced. If they have learned anything from this encounter, it is that Jesus is now prepared openly to make self-deifying claims.

John 8:12–59

On the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus indicates that he seeks not his own glory, but God's. Nevertheless, he stands up in a public place—Yahweh's temple—and cries out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink!" One can only imagine the hundreds of people who stop to hear him, lingering to see the outcome of his public display. The one believing in him, Jesus declares, will gush with rivers of living water. The reader already knows that Jesus considers himself to be the source of living water.[72] Earlier in chapter 4, he promised this water to a Samaritan woman with whom he had conversed intimately by a well.

The Light of the World

A new scene begins in John 8:12. We find ourselves in the temple treasury (8:20). Here Jesus boldly announces, "*I* am the light of the world."[73] The "light of the world" metaphor apparently depends on the image of the sun.[74] Jesus will later refer to the sun as "the light of this world" (John 11:9). John the Baptist was a burning lamp (John 5:35), but Jesus is the sun itself, lighting up the whole earth.

Jesus is not just the bringer of light, he is "*the*" light (*to phōs*). In Jewish scripture, light is associated with Yahweh.[75] The Psalmist declares, "Yahweh is my light" (Ps 27:1). Jesus here does not mention Yahweh, and does not say that he is mediating Yahweh's light. He has once again directly—though implicitly—assumed Yahweh's defining character.

Self-Testimony

At this point, one can agree with the Pharisees that Jesus is (quite boldly) testifying about himself. This time, Jesus admits the charge: "Even though I testify about myself, my testimony is true" (John 8:13–14). Formally this remark contradicts what Jesus said in 5:31: "If I am my own witness, my testimony cannot be true." J. Ramsey Michaels argues that in the latter verse, Jesus was "merely playing his opponents' game."[76] But that "game" is adherence to God's law in Deuteronomy (the law of two witnesses). Peder Borgen argues that since Jesus is a divine being, he is exempt from this law.[77] In the narrative, however, the fact that Jesus is divine is exactly what is at issue. The Jews are not prepared to accept his divinity, and thus are not prepared to exempt him from Jewish Law.

In John 8:14, Jesus is more measured in his divine claims—or rather, more oblique. He grounds his self-testimony on the statement, "I know from where I come and where I am going" (cf. 13:3; 16:28). Why Jesus's knowledge of his origin and destination make his self-testimony legitimate is not obvious. The implied reader knows that Jesus descended from heaven and will return there (3:13; 14:3). In effect, Jesus portrays himself as a descending and ascending god, while simultaneously disarming and bewildering his enemies who are ignorant of this.

Judgment

With abruptness Jesus turns from defendant to judge. Instead of attacking the Jews' logic, he criticizes their very mode of perception: "*You* judge according to the flesh; *I* judge no one" (John 8:15). The latter remark is in tension with what Jesus claimed in chapter 5: that he is appointed to judge—not no one, but everyone. Jesus will soon profess that he has "many things" to judge (8:26). Later he will claim, "For judgment I came into this world" (9:39).[78]

Changing tactics slightly, Jesus admits that he does, at least in theory, judge people. Whenever he does so, he adds, his judgment is true. Nevertheless, additional testimony remains a necessity, as is indicated by Jesus taking along Yahweh as witness (John 8:16). He needs Yahweh because, according to Jewish Law (which Jesus calls "*your* law" as if it did not apply to him), testimony requires at least two witnesses.[79]

There arises a problem at this point, because Yahweh is not personally present. The Jews logically inquire, "Where is your Father?" (John 8:19). Technically, Jesus's Father *cannot* be visibly present in view of the programmatic statement: "No one has ever seen God" (1:18). Nevertheless, the implied reader knows that God speaks and is present through Jesus.

Witnesses

But here a logical problem arises. Jesus requires two witnesses to make a valid claim. John the Baptist and Jewish scriptures are here omitted. Only Jesus and his Father remain. Yet the more we understand Johannine theology, the more we intuit that Jesus's word and God's word are not really different at all. Indeed, according to the prologue, Jesus is *the* Word of the Jewish god (John 1:1). Yahweh does not speak apart from him. Thus, insofar as both testify inseparably, there is but one voice, one witness.[80]

Invective

In the face of opposition, Jesus intensifies his attack. "You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would also have known my Father" (John 8:19). The proposition that the Jews do not know their own God seems like a calculated insult.[81] The insult is then turned into a self-deifying claim. Jesus is an envoy—but no mere envoy. A sender can send a representative who is unlike himself, whom people have never seen before, and so do not recognize. Jesus says that if the Jews knew him, they would have known Yahweh. The reader is led to conclude that the identities of sender and envoy have somehow merged.

A new bout begins in John 8:21. Jesus throws the first punch with a numinous declaration, worded like a threat: "*I'm* going off, and you will look for me—then [you will] die in your sin. Where *I'm* going off *you* cannot come." The response of the Jews is crafted to make them look idiotic, but a comic element is hard to suppress: "He's not going to kill himself, is he?" (8:22). The remark is ironic, because Jesus will later say that he voluntarily lays down his own life (10:17–18).

Dualism

Jesus then sets forth the structural reasons why the Jews will never understand him: "*You* are from things below, *I* am from things above. *You* are from this world; *I* am not from this world" (John 8:23). In the dualistic cosmos generated by this rhetoric, the Jews—even if they wanted to—could not understand Jesus because he is from a superior realm. Taken seriously, this claim destroys the possibility for real dialogue. The self-claimed distinction between the "hero" and the "other" is absolute: "the Jews" are darkness, Jesus is light; they are from earth, he is from heaven; they are human, he is divine.

I AM

In the heat of the argument, Jesus escalates his self-deifying claim, again lacing it with a threat: "If you [Jews] do not believe that I AM (*egō eimi*), you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).[82] The absolute use of I AM is capitalized here because, as most scholars recognize, it is not a mere recognition formula ("it's me!"), but represents Yahweh's most sacred name.[83] In Exodus 3:14, Yahweh, speaking with Moses, calls himself "I AM."[84] In Deuteronomy 32:39 (LXX), Yahweh declares, "Behold, behold that I AM (*egō eimi*)."[85] In Second Isaiah, Yahweh regularly announces "I am he!" in hymns of self-praise emphasizing his sole sovereignty and unique deity.[86] By declaring I AM, Jesus thus inscribes himself into Yahweh's sovereignty and divine identity.[87]

But Jesus not only claims Yahweh's divine name but also declares that if the Jews do not accept his claim, they will die in their sins. In context, their chief "sin" appears to be not accepting Jesus himself. Again, Jesus makes the fate of other people dependent upon their relation to himself alone. He deifies himself, and demands that other people accept his deity or die.

The Jews, exasperated, demand (with only slight exaggeration): "*Who the hell are you*?" (*su tis ei*, an emphatic question). One could think of them as confused at this point, and understandably so. As David Mark Ball observes, "Although the readers have been given more clues to Jesus's true identity than the narrative audience, even they have not encountered Jesus's claim 'that I am' (as a predicateless statement) before this point."[88]

What Jesus proceeds to say is even more riddling, even to the initiated reader—though it hints at self-deification. "When you lift up the Son of the Human, then you will know that I AM."[89] Naturally being lifted up points to the crucifixion. In effect, Jesus prophesies that the Jews will "exalt" Jesus—by murdering him. Jesus is evidently identical to the mysterious "Son of the Human" (*ton huion tou anthrōpou*), and his displacement onto this figure rhetorically softens his assumption of Yahweh's sacred name. To the astonishment of the commentators, "many" (*polloi*) of the Jews believe (8:30)![90]

Address to Disciples

In a final act, Jesus turns to speak with exactly those Jews who believe in him. The fact that these Jews soon connive to kill him indicates that not all has gone well in the editing of this passage. In the narrative itself, however, the sudden change in attitude indicates just how quickly Jesus can alienate his supporters.[91]

He begins propitiously enough: "If you remain in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31–32). The Jewish response—that they have been enslaved by (or served) no one—is historically and politically false, but perhaps religiously true. In their minds, they have served (i.e., worshiped) no human being.

Jesus replies that one can still be a slave of sin (John 8:34). The idea that Jews are slaves of sin would indicate that they do not worship God. There is some insinuation here that the Jews are the allegorical Ishmael—son of the slave woman—while Jesus represents and absorbs all the symbolic value of Abraham's "true" son, Isaac.[92]

The Father of the Jews

Jesus then launches an attack on the center of Jewish covenantal identity. Still apparently speaking to his supporters, he says that they do what they heard from their father. The Jews claim to be the children of Abraham. Jesus now denies that they are Abraham's (spiritual) children, because they seek to kill Jesus (John 8:38–40).

His Jewish interlocutors—completely alienated at this point—claim God as their Father. Jesus flatly denies that God is their Father. He again claims to be Yahweh's envoy—but in such a way as to make himself far more. Those who receive a message might love the sender, but they do not for that reason have to love the intermediary. Jesus hints at a kind of identity with his sender: if you love him, you must also love me (John 8:42).

It is at this point that Jesus declares one of the most painful statements in all of Christian scripture. He accuses the Jews of being from their father the devil—or rather from the father of the devil (*ek tou patros tou diabolou*).[93] Others have dealt with this disturbing anti-Jewish claim and its power to multiply harm throughout time.[94] It suffices to point out that, though an ad hominem attack of the most vicious sort, it is not uncharacteristic of Jesus's overall use of invective.[95] Jesus goes on to imply that the Jews he speaks to are not only murderers but liars.

After hurling these painful insults, Jesus boldly challenges his opponents: "Who among you convicts me of sin?"[96] From a Jewish perspective, it is hard not to think here, "*who doesn't*?" Jesus's self-assurance, although surely justifiable for a god, seems tinged with arrogance. The claim to be sinless is, at any rate, one that only a god can make.

The Jews, finally allowed to respond, accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan and demon possessed (John 8:48). Demonization is a common response to self-deification. Interestingly, the Jews only accuse Jesus of having a demon after he accuses them of being the devil's offspring (or brothers, depending on how one understands the Greek of 8:44).

When Jesus responds, he is defensive: "*I* do not seek my glory; there is one who seeks it and discerns it" (John 8:50). We have seen this argument before. Jesus claims humility (he does not seek his own glory), but then implies that it is God himself who seeks Jesus's glory—in effect undercutting the self-effacing remark. Later Jesus clarifies: "It is my Father who glorifies me, the one whom *you* claim is 'our God' " (8:54).

Jesus's speech then reaches apocalyptic proportions. The eternal life and death of humanity, he declares, depends on whether one "keeps" his word or not (John 8:51). Keeping the word "echoes biblical language for obeying God's law."[97] Jesus would seem to suggest that he is God, the giver of a new Torah. Dramatically, God's word has become Jesus's word.

Preexistence

The Jews well know that this man, not yet fifty, is claiming to be more than even the first ancestor of the Jewish race, Abraham. Jesus the Jew (or is he?) claims to be greater than the father of the Jews. Instead of toning down his statements, Jesus unveils his self-conscious superiority to Abraham in no uncertain terms: "Truly, truly I say to you: before Abraham was I AM!" (John 8:58).

The literary trope used here, as Harold Bloom points out, is transumption, "a trope that works to make the late seem early and the early seem late."[98] Jesus inscribes himself into Israelite history, only to refashion it. Bloom continues:

> When John's Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I am," the ultimate allusion is not to Abraham but to Moses and to Yahweh's declaration made to Moses, "I am that I am." The transumption leaps over Abraham by saying also, "Before Moses was, I am," and by hinting ultimately: "I am that I am"—because I am one with my father Yahweh.[99]

Jesus's third assumption of Yahweh's name (I AM) in this chapter is coupled with a claim of preexistence—a trait only God can have. The self-deification is so obvious in the narrative that the Jews pick up stones.

Blasphemer or Idolater?

Most commentators agree that the Jews pick up stones in response to Jesus's putative blasphemy.[100] Some cite a story in Leviticus 24. Here, Yahweh orders that a man who blasphemed God's named be stoned. As time wore on, "blaspheming" Yahweh was taken in the enlarged sense of demeaning or belittling him. Jesus, by arrogantly claiming for himself the status and name of God, implicitly demeaned him.[101]

A better explanation, however, appeals to Deuteronomy 13:1–10. In this passage, Yahweh demands that the Israelites stone any prophetic miracle worker that introduces another deity. It seems likely that the Jews in John 8 would perceive Jesus to be a miracle-working prophet.[102] Strikingly, the false god that Jesus is thought to introduce is not Moloch or Chemosh—but himself.[103]

John 10:22–39

A final episode of self-deification plays out in a later discourse. This speech also occurs in the crowded temple, during a public feast (the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukah) (John 10:22). In the narrative, the speech immediately follows a long monologue in which Jesus proclaims himself both sheep door and shepherd. His "sheep" are the elect. He proclaims himself both their means of salvation and their king. Although it was given on an earlier occasion, this speech still rings in the reader's ears as the curtain rises on a new scene.

The Divine Shepherd

"The Jews" confront Jesus and demand a frank answer about his identity. They suspect that Jesus views himself as the Messiah (John 10:24). By further probing, they discover that he has a much higher view of himself.

Jesus begins the match with the rhetoric of evasion: "I did tell you, but you do not believe" (John 10:25).[104] Commentators admit that Jesus never told them that he was the Messiah in so many words.[105] As justification for his comment, Jesus appeals to the works that he does in the name of his Father (10:25b). In the previous chapter, Jesus healed a blind man who ends up worshiping him.[106] The healing is extraordinary, surely, but it does not prove that Jesus was a god or even the Messiah.[107]

After the blind man is healed, John crafts a story to make the Jewish leaders appear spiritually blind. They do not accept the healing because it was done on the Sabbath—once again in (apparently deliberate) violation of divine Law. From John's perspective, the Jews are pettifogging legalists who cannot accept the obvious—that Jesus performed God's work, and is thus approved by God.

Again, Jesus acts as if he were above the Law, and above Jewish institutions. Yet the Jews cannot accept that this single Jew is exempt from God's Law, or that God would abrogate his Law so that Jesus would be glorified. These Jews are neither stupid nor blind; they rigorously protect their own religious identity based upon Torah observance.

Nevertheless, John's Jesus attributes the Jews' unbelief to their nonelect status: they are not "my sheep" (John 10:26). As before, Jesus employs the rhetoric of radical alterity. Even more quickly than on previous occasions, the argument degrades into accusation based upon John's narrative world of black and white.

Jesus's rhetoric is again laced with implicitly divine claims. He claims to give his sheep eternal life, and to hold them securely. Jesus's secure grip on his sheep conforms him to Yahweh, whose hold on the sheep also cannot be weakened (John 10:28b, 29b). In Deuteronomy, Yahweh already declared, "there is no one who removes from my hand" (Deut 32:39b).

"I and the Father are One"

At the height of his speech, Jesus sublimely announces: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Again, stones are seized, as the Jews instantly recognize a self-deifying claim. Many commentators are quick to point out that, in context, Jesus does not say that he is ontologically one with God.[108] Jesus and God share a divine prerogative (the eternal protection of the elect). Thus the unity that Jesus speaks of is a functional one. It is doubtful, however, whether the Jews—or John's original readers—were aware of the distinction between functional and ontological unity. If they were, it is unclear how much weight it would have had. Yet whether Jesus claimed ontological or functional oneness with God, he still claimed (in some fashion) to be God.[109]

The irony of the situation is that Jesus claims to be God in the very temple that Antiochus Epiphanes was thought to deify himself—on the very holiday when the Jews celebrated his overthrow. Jesus's rhetorical attempt to make himself God thus replays the archetypal sin of the Greek king—with a strikingly different outcome.

With rocks aimed at him, Jesus is in evident danger. This time, he holds his ground, and asks a (frankly, loaded) question: "Many excellent works I showed you from the Father. For which of these works do you stone me?" (John 10:32). The question assumes that the Jews thought that Jesus's works were excellent. They did not.

To his opponents, Jesus's question seems ludicrous because his works, done on the Sabbath, involved flagrant disobedience to God. The Jews set the record straight: "We do not stone you for a work of excellence, but for blasphemy; because you, a human being, make yourself a god (*poieis seauton theon*)" (John 10:33). Whatever good works Jesus had accomplished, he was still a rebel against God. Any human who proclaimed himself to be a god (or God) was liable to execution, regardless of what miracles he had performed.[110]

To defuse the threat, Jesus deploys an argument the reader now finds familiar. He denies that he deifies himself on the grounds that Yahweh sanctified and sent him. Yet if Jesus and Yahweh are truly "one" (as Jesus claimed), the distinction between sender and sent is fragile. Moreover, Jesus will later say in prayer to God that it was Jesus *himself* who sanctified himself (John 17:19).

"You are gods"

Jesus then employs an a fortiori argument (a standard exegetical technique at the time). He appeals to Jewish scriptures as "your Law" (again, as if it was not *his* Law as well). The "Law" he appeals to (actually, Psalm 82:6) calls the recipients of Torah at Sinai "gods" (*theoi*).[111] It is all the more legitimate, then, for Jesus to proclaim himself God's son (John 10:35–36). The argument is astounding and troubling for those who see first-century Christians as espousing a strict monotheism. Exactly how many gods are there?

Jesus does not explicitly lay out all the premises of his argument. In Psalm 82:6, "gods" and "children of god" are used synonymously (by means of poetic parallelism). A "child of god" is evidently a god dependent upon God. If humans can be called "gods" even in scripture, then Jesus can call himself "son of God." The argument works, to be sure, but at the price of Jesus's uniqueness. The logic does not distinguish between Jesus as unique son and other persons as God's children. Still, Jesus cleverly appeals to scripture in order to support his self-deification.

Jesus then makes a daring concession: "If I do not do the works of my Father, don't believe me" (John 10:37). From the Christian perspective (then and now), it is obvious that Jesus does God's works. From a Jewish perspective, however, one who disobeyed God's Law could not truly do God's works. One who put himself above the Law and above Judaism could not be a servant and envoy of God. One who deified himself—effectively introducing an idol into Israel—was not a god.[112]

"I am in the Father"

Just when the reader expects that Jesus might escape alive, he lets fly another audacious remark. He asserts that if the Jews believe his works, they will come to know once and for all that "the Father is in me, and I am in the Father" (John 10:38b). This remark interprets his earlier confession, "I and the Father are one." Still, it is a strange, mystical way of talking—hardly the frank speech (*parrhēsia*) the Jews earlier demanded (10:24).

The idea that God can reside in a human being is not entirely foreign to the Hebrew Bible. In Genesis 2:7, Yahweh breathes his spirit into the first human, and the prophets are later possessed by the spirit of Yahweh (e.g., 1 Sam 10:10). Precedent for the idea that a human could be "in" God is more difficult to find. In John's gospel, however, even ordinary Christians have the opportunity to be "in" God and "in" Jesus himself.[113]

Oddly, the "dialogue" ends with Jesus's riddling remark. Some commentators cheer for the hero on the sidelines: "In terms of argumentative honor, Jesus succeeds masterfully."[114] But the argument has simply dissolved. Jesus's language is numinous and vague—yet no less self-deifying. The Jews are silent, but their actions speak. They pick up stones to punish the self-deifier.

Conclusion

At the end of the story, Jesus is finally arrested by the Jewish leaders. In his trial, as recorded in the Synoptic gospels, he is directly asked whether he is the son of God (that is, divine). Jesus is evasive in Matthew (26:64) and Luke (22:70). In Mark, however, he openly affirms: "I am" (*egō eimi*). To make his point clear, Jesus adds two more divine claims. He affirms that he will sit at the right hand of God, and will return on the clouds with force.[115] In the background, one can hear the claim of Celsus's self-deifying prophets: "and you will see me returning with heavenly power!"

Officially Jesus is put to death for sedition against Rome. From the perspective of the gospel writers, however, he is arrested and executed for the Jewish charge of blasphemy.[116] What constituted Jesus's blasphemy, in Jewish eyes, was his self-deification. The gospel of John brings out this charge most clearly. The Jews declare before Pilate: "We have a law, and according to this law he must die, because he made himself son of God (*huion theou*)" (John 19:7).

If this really was a Jewish charge against Jesus in the late first century, the authors of John executed a bold reinterpretation. Jesus, they believed, *really was a god*. In light of this fact, his divine claims were legitimate, and even (relatively speaking) subdued. Why early Christians came to believe that a Jewish man was a god (or God) is still hotly debated by scholars.[117] Suffice it to say that this conclusion robustly revised how they told the story of Jesus's life. In their literature, Christians engaged in rhetorical and literary strategies that deified Jesus. Strikingly, one of these strategies was to present Jesus as deifying himself.

For the implied reader, Jesus's rhetorical and polemical construct corresponds with the absolute truth of the overarching myth: Jesus is the god who descends from heaven. The myth is constantly verified by Jesus's works and witnesses. The supposedly blasphemous self-deifier who dies for his crimes is finally vindicated by resurrection. This is the magic of John's gospel: to those who accept its claims, the myth is self-authenticating.[118]

This point is worth emphasizing. Recent studies have shown that readers who are transported into a narrative world are more likely to endorse beliefs implied in the narrative, and that they even undergo subtle transformations in their sense of self.[119] The implied reader—not just the Christian one—tends to identify with Jesus and his mission. Johannine scholars tend to justify Jesus by closely replicating Johannine logic. To be sure, Jesus's supreme confidence in his own divine identity and unbending loyalty to God make him a fascinating and absorbing character. Those who become enmeshed in his story find themselves sympathizing with him, subtly defending him, and even cheering for him.[120]

Jesus's Jewish opponents, by comparison, are viewed poorly (to say the least). The redundant force of Jesus's rhetorical arguments—combined with repeated Jewish misunderstanding—conditions the reader to write off the Jews as spiritual (and perhaps intellectual) dunces. In the words of Neyrey: "Throughout this extended trial, Jesus has been calling them [the Jews] 'liars' and 'murderers,' so no matter what they say, the audience will scrutinize their words and behavior."[121]

Thus when the Jews accuse Jesus of deifying himself, the response of the reader is predictable: preposterous!

But Jesus's claims to deity are not self-evident truths; they are rhetorical signifiers that encode one group's ideology. Using the rhetoric of the sublime, the composers of John present a powerful religious ideology centered on Jesus's divine identity. This ideology, in the words of Michael Freeden, rules out "certain beliefs from ever being intellectually or rationally challenged by *protecting* them with the impenetrable and non-transparent shield of self-evidence—as with the emperor's new clothes, only a child or a fool would screw up the courage to query what is presented as inherently obvious and uncontentious."[122] That uncontestable point, for John, is Jesus's divinity. Jesus's divine identity is the cornerstone of John's gospel. The readers know it, and in the course of reading they find themselves mysteriously *wanting* to believe it. The Jews who cry "blasphemy!" are portrayed as spiritual fools and the devil's spawn.

What makes Jesus's divine identity unquestionable is partially his identification with the preexistent Word (*Logos*). As is well known, the Greek term *logos* has a wide range of meanings: word, reason, mind, discourse, story, speech, and so forth. Knowing these additional meanings helps one to appreciate the rhetorical force of John's narrative argument. What discourse is there that can oppose Discourse? Who can reason against Reason? Whose mind can outwit Mind? As long as the reader submits to the Logos, whatever Jesus says has the force of naked reality. Jesus cannot deify himself! He's already G/god![123]

Rhetorically speaking, however, Jesus does deify himself. Over and over again, implicitly and explicitly, he claims to be divine. In terms of his own discursive construction, he *is* equal to God, he *is* son of God, he *is* God—or *a* god. John's Jesus does not reveal that he is a Revealer. He reveals his deity. It is an effective rhetorical strategy to make Jesus himself the revealer of his deity because he is—in terms of his mythic identity—the irrefutable voice of Truth itself (John 14:6)!

Jesus's godhood is never precisely defined. This ambiguity is also rhetorically potent. It allows the implied reader to intuit, "Yes, Jesus is *god*, but he is not *the high God* (or Father). They mutually indwell each other, but they are not the same." But the union between Jesus and Yahweh always hovers close to some sort of (nonrepetitive) identity. Jesus makes himself G/god by constructing his identity *so similar* to and *intertwined* with Yahweh's identity that the two personas seem to converge. In the end, Israel has only a single God, as Jesus himself admits (John 5:44). In order to make himself G/god, Jesus has to assume what Richard Bauckham calls the "unique divine identity" of Israel's God.[124] Naturally, however, it is not "unique" if two persons can share it. In Johannine discourse, then, the distinction between the god Jesus and the God Yahweh (*theos* and *ho theos*) in John 1:1 is (positively put) transcended, or (negatively put) blurred.[125]

Rhetorically speaking, Jesus's repeated protestations of dependence assuage the petulance of his divine claims—but they do not remove their force. Jesus's dependence upon God makes his deification Jewish, which is to say "kosher"—at least to those Jews who became (Johannine) Christians. Jesus as God's agent and envoy would seem to emphasize Jesus's humility. It is not he himself, but the Father who works in him. But the dependency motif is in effect another rhetorical strategy to secure symbolic capital. The self-deifier assures his deification by grounding it in the goodwill of the primal God. Theologically, it is God who deifies; rhetorically, it is Jesus.

In self-deification myths, the self-deifier is typically demonized. In John, some Jews see Jesus as demon possessed. Yet their viewpoint does not win the day. Instead, demonization is displaced onto the Jews themselves—and Jesus himself is the demonizer (John 8:44). The fact that the Jews are made symbols of human obduracy and hostility to God does not quite allow the authors of John to evade the charge of virulent anti-Judaism and hate speech. These authors *chose*—with apparent vindictiveness born of their own exclusion—to make a particular ethnic group (their own?) the symbol of darkness, and so to erase their own past.[126]

Finally, Jesus's self-deification, as noted in the introduction, inverts the pattern of the self-deifying rebel. Jesus may claim godhood, but he is not arrogant. He is not a rebel, but a son. He does not try to take over God's status, but claims that God himself appointed him to a position of cosmic command.

But whether Jesus is an obedient son depends on who is asked. For Christians all the world over, there is no question. For Jews—then, today, and in the text of John—there is every question in the world. Jesus constantly and purposefully breaks God's (Sabbath) law. He puts himself above the Torah. He then claims that the Jewish scriptures, which contain God's Law, validate him. He announces that he preexisted the forefather of the Jews (effectively putting himself before and above Judaism). He depicts himself as the dispenser of eternal life, the future judge of the living and the dead. He gathers disciples and persuades them to follow his views. He says that the eternal destiny of every human being depends upon their response to him. He affirms that no one can honor God without worshiping him. He constantly, if coyly, appeals to his own divine status, and thus from a Jewish perspective introduces an idol into Israel.[127]

In the narrative of John, of course, Jesus does not seek to replace Yahweh. For Christians in the long view of history, however, Jesus has, to a lesser or greater degree, replaced Yahweh as their central image of God. Aspects of the Jewish god will always remain part of the portrait of Jesus (since Jesus assumed Yahweh's traits), but Jesus himself retains the central place in the Christian imagination. No one can see the Father except through the son—the sole Truth, the sole Way, the sole Image of God. From the standpoint of Christian theology, Jesus makes

Yahweh visible. From the standpoint of Jewish theology, Jesus makes Yahweh virtually invisible. Historically speaking, the varied picture of Jesus both highlights and suppresses elements of Yahweh's (equally varied) character. Theologians may emphasize biblical theocentricity, but historically speaking, the Jewish god has been subsumed into the Christian one. This, perhaps, is the ultimate Johannine irony.

5

"I and You Are One."

SIMON OF SAMARIA AS HERO AND HERETIC

Much of what the Pseudoclementines object against Simon Magus, in Antiquity people also alleged against Jesus Christ and the early Christians.

TOBIAS NICKLAS[1]

Introduction

One of the more terrifying figures for early catholic Christians was the putative first head of the gnostic hydra, Simon of Samaria.[2] Importantly, this archetypal gnostic was molded into a stereotypical self-deifier. Dispute still rages around the historical Simon and his claims, but in a relatively short span of time, Simon's history became mythistory.[3] Yet it is exactly as a mythical figure that Simon fueled the Christian imagination.[4]

As a self-deifier, Simon was first an anti-apostle, then an antichrist. Among his own followers, however, Simon was the true Christ crucified in Judea, who revealed himself as the Father in Samaria, and made his advent among the nations as the Holy Spirit. In this mythology, Simon superseded Jesus as the fullest expression of the Christian God.[5]

It is this mythology that we must explore. As we saw in the last chapter, knowing the basic pattern of Johannine mythology was important for understanding Jesus's self-deification in John. In the case of Simonian thought, the background mythology is not well known and harder to recover. Both the Johannine and Simonian communities, which probably emerged in the late first century, died out in antiquity. But unlike Johannine writings, Simonian treatises were not preserved. In fact, virtually all that we know of Simon derives from various Christian sources hostile to him and to the Simonian movement.

The Problem with Acts

One of these hostile sources is the book of Acts. Almost all studies of Simon begin with Acts for at least three reasons. First, Acts rests in the gilded niche of the canon, and is therefore suffused with an excess of familiarity and authority. Second, Acts is widely considered to be the earliest source to provide an account of Simon. Third, on the pages of Acts, Simon appears as a concrete, seemingly historical figure. Therefore historians wishing to reconstruct the "historical Simon" have panned the stream of Acts for every gold fleck of information.

Nevertheless, scholars have long realized that Acts is an apologetic, selective account that depreciates the role of Simon in early Christianity and deprives him of any authority.[6] The account in Acts says nothing about the Simonian view of Simon, and almost nothing about Simon's (apparently wide) influence in Samaria after the region was proselytized. Moreover, Acts leaves Simon in Samaria, whereas other sources agree that he came to Rome, where he performed miracles and successfully spread his teachings.

Later apologists like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Origen agree that Simon had a much more pervasive influence than the account in Acts leads one to believe. According to Justin, Simon was worshiped by "all" (*pantes*) Samarians, as well as by people from other nations. And he was worshiped not as some subordinate deity, but as the high God.[7] Irenaeus wrote that Simon's thought was the seedbed for all later forms of Gnosticism.[8] Origen indicates that a Simonian community existed well into the third century CE in Palestine and elsewhere.[9]

If these reports have a modicum of truth, then the account of Simon in Acts leaves much to be desired. In short, Simon was much more than a common magician who became a Christian. Indeed, from an early date, a mythology began to accrue around Simon that depicted him as both Christ and the high God.

The Great Declaration

For those wishing to grasp the logic of this mythology, one cannot begin with Acts. Rather, one must turn to the primary sources of Simon's followers (the Simonians). Regrettably, all Simonian sources have been lost, with the exception of one long report from a document called *The Great Declaration* (*Apophasis Megalē*). Relatively long (though selective) quotations and summaries from this document are provided by an anonymous Roman churchman in the early third century. This author, who can no longer securely be called "Hippolytus," wrote his account of Simon in the *Refutation of All Heresies* (hereafter the *Refutation*) around 222 CE.[10] Unlike other heresy hunters, the author of the *Refutation* directly quoted his (in this case, unique) source material because he believed that the very words of his opponents refuted them (e.g., *Ref.* 9.16.2).

According to the author of the *Refutation*, Simon himself composed *The Great Declaration*. This is not outside the range of possibility. Some historians have thought that the complexity and philosophical character of the *Great Declaration* disprove Simon's authorship.[11] Yet we have no reason to disbelieve that Simon (like Paul) was a complex thinker with a measure of philosophical learning.

Nevertheless, the author of the *Refutation* seems to aim his criticisms at Simonians (whom he sarcastically calls Simon's "parrots," *Ref.* 6.9.1) and occasionally quotes the *Declaration* with the line, "they say."[12] These two tendencies combined indicate that the *Declaration* was probably composed by Simon's followers.[13]

In terms of its literary representation, however, *The Great Declaration* is written in Simon's own voice. Indeed, Simon speaks in the voice of the divine revealer. In this respect, the Simonians who wrote the *Declaration* acted much like the authors of the gospel of John. They put words into the mouth of their deified founder and savior that reflected the developed mythology of their community. In both cases, the mythology was not written down to provide a historical account of the founder's thought. It was written to foster and maintain a community. For the Johannine and Simonian communities, empirical history was not the standard of truth. Both groups intuited the greater truth of their founder through the secret workings of (his) divine spirit.

Therefore in our discussion of Simon's self-deification, it is appropriate to begin with *The Great Declaration*. Only this document gives us access to Simonian mythology in the language of the Simonians themselves. By laying the groundwork of Simonian mythology, we can gain a sense of why Simon was portrayed as a self-deifier in early catholic mythology.[14]

The Structure of Godhead

We begin with our longest extant quotation from *The Great Declaration*, a quote in which Simon reveals the basic scheme of his metaphysics (*Ref.* 6.18.2–7):

> To you, then, I speak what I speak and write what I write—this very writing. There are two offshoots of all the aeons, having neither beginning nor end. They are from a single root or power, namely invisible and incomprehensible Silence. (*Ref.* 6.18.2)

"Silence" here functions as Simon's primal Goddess, or at least as the primal source or "root" for Simon's two primary deities (called eternal beings or "aeons"). Simon immediately turns to discuss his two chief aeons:

> One of these aeons appears above: a Great Power, Mind of the universe, pervading all things, and male. The other is below: Thought, herself great, female, and generating all things. Hence they correspond to each other

> and form a pair. In the intervening space, they exhibit an immeasurable expanse of air, which has neither beginning nor end. (*Ref.* 6.18.3)

Just as in Johannine mythology, there is Beginning, God, and Word (John 1:1), so in Simonian metaphysics there is Silence, Mind, and Thought.[15]

From primal Silence come two divine figures: male and female. Both are called "great." One aeon, namely Mind, is higher; the other aeon is lower. She is the Thought, the creatrix, who emerges from Mind. Mind as the higher Power is also called Heaven, while Thought is called Earth (*Ref.* 6.13.1). Hence it makes sense for air to exist in between them.

"Simon" also calls the Great Power "Father." The Father originally existed before his Thought as an androgynous, Infinite Power, who was entirely one. "From this Infinite Power, Thought, who existed in the Father's oneness, came forth and there were two Powers" (*Ref.* 6.18.4).[16] Simon continues:

> Since, then, the Father himself, having advanced from himself, manifested to himself his own Thought, so also Thought who appeared did not make him.[17] But when she saw him, she hid the Father in herself—that is, his power—an androgynous power and thought. Thus they correspond to each other. This is because power does not at all differ from thought; they are one. Power is discovered from things above, while thought is discovered from things below. (*Ref.* 6.18.6)

Although separated from each other, Mind and Thought correspond closely. Both retain a measure of androgynous power. Both remain, as it were, two modulations of the same reality. Heaven (Mind) and Earth (Thought) are separated, but they remain united in holy matrimony. In reality, Mind and Thought, the male and the female, are one and inseparable. Only when looked at from two different angles (above, and below) are they distinguished (*Ref.* 6.18.7).

Two Powers in Heaven

Simon introduces yet other technical terms for Mind and Thought. He calls them the "Infinite Power" and the "Seventh Power," respectively. Again, these two Powers are one, but distinct. Simon imagines the Infinite Power as a kind of intelligent fire blazing through the universe, seeding the cosmos with light and energy. In simple terms, "Heaven" (or the Infinite Power) rains upon "Earth" (the Seventh Power, *Ref.* 6.13.1). From the seed emerges the "root of the universe." Simon refers to this root in what may in fact be the opening line of *The Great Declaration:*

> This is the letter of Declaration, of Voice, and of Name from the Thought of the Great and Infinite Power. Thus it will be sealed, hidden, veiled, and stored in the dwelling in which the root of the universe is established. (*Ref.* 6.9.4)

In other words, Simon's own *Declaration* gives voice to the Thought of Mind. Mind's Thought is incarnate in Simon's voice. Simon plays the role of the revealer, and what he reveals is the substance of cosmic secrets.

The Evolution of God in Humanity

One of these secrets is that the "dwelling" in which "the root of the universe is established" is the human being (*Ref.* 6.9.5). The divine root in human flesh is the invisible fire of God. It is reminiscent of the light of the Logos abiding in all human beings (John 1:4, 9).

Each part of the fire within human beings is intelligent (*Ref.* 6.11.1–12.1). The divine fire is intelligent because it is divine Thought. As noted above, Thought is also called "the Seventh Power." Seven typically represents perfection, but divine Thought is not yet perfected in human beings. In other words, the Seventh Power, or Thought, is planted within human beings in seed form. This Seventh Power grows, and eventually flowers into human consciousness.

Like the mustard seed, human consciousness starts off extremely small. It begins, so to speak, as a single geometrical point with no extension or dimensions. But as Simon promises in the *Declaration*, "the small will become great, and the great will be in an unchanging and infinite eternity, no longer subject to generation" (*Ref.* 6.14.6).

Another metaphor for the divine potential in humanity is the spark. The Seventh Power within humanity begins "as from the tiniest spark," which "will be vastly enlarged and grow, and become an infinite and unchanging power in an infinite and unchanging eternity, no longer subject to generation" (*Ref.* 6.17.7).

To explain this process of divine realization, Simon turns to Jewish (and Samaritan) scripture, and specifically the book of Genesis. In the beginning was God, or divine Mind (Gen 1:1). The Spirit of God hovering above the waters is the Seventh Power (Gen 1:2; *Ref.* 6.14.4–5). Human beings are made in the image of the Seventh Power (Gen 1:26; *Ref.* 6.14.5–6). This means that they are endowed with divine Thought.

But humans must also attain the divine likeness (Gen 1:26). Likeness to God is achieved by cultivating divine Thought in the human soul—in short, by the growth of human consciousness. When divine Thought, or the Seventh Power, attains completion in human consciousness, Thought is reunited with divine

Mind. The perfection of the Seventh Power is symbolized by the seventh day of creation, when God, as divine Mind, is fully reunited with Thought and rests in absolute union.

Humans are necessary to this process, since God's state of becoming and restoration is worked out in human consciousness. In this scheme, there is no essential difference between the dynamic evolution of God and God's evolution in the human self. The story of God's evolution is the story of human deification.

The root of the universe within human beings branches into six roots, all of which develop in the cosmos and are mirrored in the human being. Divine consciousness branches from mind and thought, to voice and name, to reasoning and conception (*Ref.* 6.12.2). Thought is the flowering of mind, name is the meaning of voice, and conception is the crystallization of reasoning. The growth is intellectual, representing a development from mind to various concrete forms of intellectual activity. Only in human consciousness can the growth of divine consciousness occur.

The One Who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand

In *The Great Declaration*, Simon refers to God as "the One Who Stood, Who Stands, and Who Will Stand" (*Ref.* 6.9.1; 6.18.4).[18] The three designations represent three phases of God's evolution. To quote the *Declaration*: God "stood above in the Unborn Power. He stands below in the flow of waters, born in an image. He will stand above alongside the blessed Infinite Power, if made in the likeness" (*Ref.* 6.17.1).

In other words, God has an eternal state, a state of becoming, and a state of restoration to divine similitude. The eternal state is Mind, while the state of becoming can be identified with Thought. Thought has two phases: she first exists in seed form, and then develops as the ripened fruit of human consciousness. Thought, temporarily separated from Mind, is sown in human beings. In humans, Thought then grows and matures until it attains full likeness to God and is reunited with Mind. The reunion of Thought and Mind thus also serves as the reunion of human intellects with their divine Father: the Great Power, or Mind.

Identification with God

The (re)union of human intellects and Mind is in fact an identification with Mind. According to the *Declaration*, "Whoever attains the likeness [to the Seventh Power] . . . will be in substance, in potential, in magnitude, in finished perfection one and the same as the Unborn and Infinite Power" (*Ref.* 6.12.3). In this theology, there is no closer union with God than oneness—and this sublime oneness is in fact an identification with God.

To sum up, there are two sides of God that correspond to two states of the human being. In Aristotelian terms, there is a God in actuality (called male and manifest), and a God in potentiality (called female, and hidden). From one viewpoint, God has never left his state of perfect repose in pure being. This is "He Who Stood," Mind, or the Infinite Power. From another point of view, God is in a process of constant evolution. God starts in the human being as the Seventh Power, though in seed form. The Seventh Power eventually attains fulfillment in human consciousness. These two sides of God—namely, the eternally completed and maturing God—are ultimately one (the Seventh Power), such that one aspect of God can say to the other, "I and you are one. What is before me is you. What is after you is I" (*Ref.* 6.17.2).

Importantly, since the Seventh Power or Thought attains its perfection in human consciousness, it is also the human who can say to God, "I and you are one. What is before me is you. What is after you is I." The God in potentiality is inside every human being. When God attains actuality, the human being is deified. God is developing in the human being; and in the course of divine evolution, human consciousness attains a divine level. In this scheme, deification means transcending this world of generation, becoming pure, unborn Spirit in all respects equal to the Infinite Power.

The Charge of Self-Deification

Strikingly, the author of the *Refutation* believed that Simon engineered the theology of the *Declaration* to deify himself (*Ref.* 6.14.1; 6.18.1). In fact, the charge of self-deification forms the centerpiece of this author's heresiological attack upon Simon. The nature and logic of this attack begs explanation.

The author of the *Refutation*, Mark Edwards observes, "has the preacher's way of telling another man's story: his method is to ruin it by improving it, to edify without probity till he amuses without design."[19] What is so amusing is the author of the *Refutation*'s introduction to *The Great Declaration*—a story about a Libyan named Apsethos.[20]

The Case of Apsethos

Apsethos yearned to be considered a god, and set his heart on it. He gathered a flock of talking parrots into a cage and taught them to squawk: "Apsethos is a god!" When his choir had practiced for some time, he threw open the cage and released the parrots in all directions. When the birds flew, "their squawk went out to all Libya, and their words spread as far as Greek territory" (*Ref.* 6.8.3).

The plan was ingenious. Birds in the ancient world were often seen as messengers of the gods, and sometimes the gods themselves came in avian form.[21] Ancient diviners looked at the path of birds in the sky to determine the will of the gods. But in this story, the birds themselves tell their tale. It is no surprise that the Libyans were thunderstruck when seemingly random parrots independently attested Apsethos's godhood. The Libyans were not disobedient to the divine will. They began to sacrifice to Apsethos as to a god.

But one of the clever Greeks deduced what had happened, and played the following trick. He re-caught many of the parrots and taught them to add a pregnant line to their message: "Apsethos, locking us up, forced us to say: 'Apsethos is a god!' " It is perhaps difficult to believe that parrots could memorize a message this long. (When an animal talks at this length, typically we enter the realm of fable.[22]) The present fable has a very real moral. When the Libyans hear the parrots' palinode, they all convene and burn Apsethos to ashes (*Ref.* 6.7.2–8.4).

Simon as Self-deifier?

With characteristic derision, the author of the *Refutation* claims that Apsethos was much more clever and moderate than the "fool" Simon. The author of the *Refutation* assumes that Simon himself is the "One Who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand" (*Ref.* 6.9.1), and thus by unfolding the wondrous process of divine evolution, Simon deifies himself (*Ref.* 6.14.1).

Nowhere in *The Great Declaration* does Simon refer to himself as the One Who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand. The designation refers throughout to God in the three phases of evolution (*Ref.* 6.12.2; 6.13.1; 6.18.4). In fact, nothing explicit in *The Great Declaration* supports Simon's personal claim to godhood. There is, to be sure, deification in the *Declaration*, but no indication that it was focused on or limited to Simon. If anything, Simon functions as a divine revealer who, like Christ, opens up the path of deification to others. As the author of the *Refutation* himself says, "There is, then, according to Simon, that blessed and incorruptible reality hidden *in every human being*—in potentiality, not in actuality—which is the One Who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand" (*Ref.* 6.17.1, emphasis added).

This general truth about God within is then applied specifically to Simon. Simon in particular manifests and embodies the One Who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand. The author of the *Refutation* explains, "Simon, though born and able to suffer when he was in potentiality, became unable to suffer and unborn when he was formed according to the likeness.[23] Thus becoming perfect, he departed from the first two powers (namely, heaven and earth)" (*Ref.* 6.18.1). In short, Simon goes beyond the world of death and decay when he is fully conformed to the likeness of God.

Again, nothing in the *Declaration* disproves that this kind of deification is not the general fate of all who are saved. But certainly for Simonians, Simon did form a special case. We might hypothesize that Simon is distinctive because he was the first, perhaps only one, to be fully assimilated to the evolving God. Since full assimilation to God, as expressly stated in the *Declaration* (*Ref.* 6.12.3), means identification with God, then in this way Simon attained deity. In this (very extended) sense, one could say that Simon deifies himself (i.e., presents a mythology in which he himself is implicitly identified with the Infinite Power). Historically, however, it is not Simon who writes the *Declaration*, but his followers who promote, like the writers of John, the deity of their founder. Thus at best what we have in the *Declaration* is a literary deification of Simon, not Simon's self-deification.

What can we infer about Simonian mythology from *The Great Declaration*? For Simonians, Simon was not only the revealer of God, but God's perfect manifestation. In Simon, the Seventh Power attained perfection first. Simon was thus the first human being to become pure Spirit who could exist above this world. He was the first to become equal to the Infinite and eternal Power, who was known as "He who Stood, Who Stands, and Who Will Stand." We know that Simonians attempted to assimilate themselves to the character of the Standing One, or eternal God.[24] Implicitly, then, they also attempted to conform themselves to Simon, the forerunner who first attained God's eternal rest, and who himself became the Standing One.

The Myth in Acts

We are now ready to turn to the report on Simon in Acts. As noted above, Acts is generally considered to be the earliest account of Simon. This may not be true. Critical scholarship dates Acts anywhere between the 80s to the 120s CE.[25] There is no compelling reason to think that *The Great Declaration* was not also composed during this period. The fact that Simon in *The Great Declaration* does not in fact call himself the Great or Infinite Power may even indicate that it is earlier than Acts (which does directly associate Simon with the Great Power). That is to say, Acts may represent a later phase of Simonian theology when the Great Power title is directly and unambiguously attached to Simon.

This later phase of mythology may already be represented in the gospel of John (thought to be composed in the 90s CE). As we saw in the last chapter, when the Jews accuse Jesus of self-deification, they call him a "Samaritan" (John 8:48). Now the only self-deifying Samaritan in Christian mythology is Simon. If Simon is clandestinely referred to in John, then we know that the myth of Simon as a self-deifier arose earlier than the second century, and quite possibly before the composition of Acts.

Self-deification and the Charge of Magic

In Acts, Simon's identification with the Great Power is polemically associated with magical feats. Simon appears in Samaria performing the acts of a "magus" (*mageuōn*, Acts 8:9), a term that can refer to a Persian priest, an independent provider of purifications and initiations, or simply a quack.[26] It is not difficult to see that the author of Acts has the latter meaning in mind.

We are not told what Simon actually did as a magus. Given what we know of ancient magi, such feats likely included healings, purifications, initiations, divination, and even raising the dead. To the Samaritans, Simon's feats were nothing short of astounding (*existanōn, exestakenai*, Acts 8:9, 11).

The wonder-working power of Simon is worth emphasis. In the gospels, it is Jesus who consistently astounds people. As a child in the temple, he amazes everyone who hears him (*existanto*, Luke 2:47). During Jesus's public ministry, the crowds are amazed by his healing of a paralyzed man (*existasthai*, Mark 2:12) and the raising of the synagogue ruler's daughter (*exestēsan*, Mark 5:42). The disciples are astounded at Jesus walking on water and his power over a storm (*existanto*, Mark 6:51).[27] This astonishment represents the persistent feeling that divinity is revealed in and through the wonder-worker.

The Samaritans were so astonished in Acts that they called Simon "the Great Power" (*Megalē Dunamis*, Acts 8:10).[28] A dispute still rages around this title. In the narrative, did it mean that Simon was viewed as the manifestation of a deity (called the Great Power or Mind referred to in *Ref.* 6.18.3), or did it simply mean that a magician was deified by a gullible crowd due to his wondrous works?[29] One suspects that the author of Acts believed the latter. Simonians themselves may have believed a version of the former.[30]

Historically speaking, however, it is misleading to starkly oppose a deified magician to an incarnate god.[31] The case of Jesus shows that both forms of deification could be applied simultaneously to one person. The gospel of Mark deifies Jesus as a wonder-worker; the gospel of John deifies Jesus as the incarnation of a creating and redeeming deity (the Logos). A similar dynamic and dialectical process of framing the divinity of Simon could have taken place among the Simonians.[32]

The author of Acts is clear that it is the Samaritans who call Simon the "Great Power," not Simon himself. Nevertheless, Acts is written in such a way that the reader infers that Simon applied the title to himself. At one moment, Simon claims that he is "somebody great" (*tina heauton megan*); in the next verse, Samaritans call Simon the "Great Power" (*Dunamis Megalē*) (Acts 8:9–10). Later heresiologists, taking the hint, almost universally affirm that Simon *called himself* "the Great Power."[33]

Modern scholars have, for different reasons, made the same inference. On form-critical grounds, they assert that the Samaritan claim "He is the Great

Power" (*houtos estin hē Dunamis Megalē*) corresponds to Simon's personal claim, "I am the Great Power" (*egō eimi hē Dunamis Megalē*).[34] Such a claim, though entirely speculative, is not impossible. Celsus asserts that self-deifiers were plentiful in Palestine.[35] Magicians in the extant *Greek Magical Papyri* sometimes claim a divine identity or a temporary immortalization.[36] Hence the historical Simon may have claimed divinity as he performed wondrous works in Samaria. What is more important, for our purposes, is that he does so in Christian myth.

Simon's "Conversion"

In the myth, Philip, one of the seven deacons (Acts 6:5), arrives on the stage, and Simon's life seems to change. Simon the "Great Power" (*Dunamis Megalē*) is himself amazed by the "great powers" (*dunameis megalas*) of Philip (Acts 8:13). As people once clung to Simon (*prosechō*, Acts 8:10–11), so they cling to Philip (*prosechō*, 8:6).

Narratively speaking, the author of Acts here uses a rhetorical technique called *synkrisis*, or comparison.[37] Simon is negatively compared with Philip, who manifests the "true" power of God. In effect, one miracle worker defeats another. In the narrative, Simon concedes defeat and readily submits to baptism. Initially, at least, no question mark is thrown against the validity of his baptism and the reality it represents (the forgiveness of sins). The author of Acts clearly says that Simon believed (*episteusen*) the gospel (Acts 8:13).[38]

The Pillar Apostles

After some time, the pillar apostles Peter and John descend from Jerusalem to supervise and legitimate the Samaritan mission. There is some suspicion here that the author of Acts invents this episode. It seems reasonable to believe that he had a tradition about Philip the deacon defeating Simon the Samaritan magus. The author of Acts then replaced Philip with Peter, one of the chief apostles, who was more qualified to put Simon in his place. (Philip conveniently reappears later in the chapter.) Introducing Peter and John allowed the umbrella of apostolic authority to extend over the Samaritan mission.[39]

The introduction of the chief apostles is not, however, without cost to the narrative. It puts a mysterious and apparently lengthy delay between the Samaritans' baptism and their reception of the Spirit. This is because the Spirit only comes (at least in this story) when the apostles lay their hands on the converts.[40] One might assume that Simon too received the Spirit through the apostles—though this is never explicitly said.[41]

Peter's Rebuke

With wide eyes, Simon witnesses the apostolic dispensing of the Spirit by the imposition of hands. He then eagerly asks to be a fellow dispenser. As a show of his commitment, he offers to pay money (Acts 8:17–19). The response of Peter is swift and harsh: "To hell with you and your money!" (8:20).[42] Peter's reply seems, frankly, hasty and perhaps even hypocritical. This same apostle recently oversaw the deaths of two Christians who failed to pay the church what they owed (5:1–11).[43]

Perhaps (the reader may suppose) Simon misunderstood spiritual realities because of his "magical" mentality. Such a misunderstanding, however, is no sure sign that Simon's faith was futile or feigned.[44] The immediate connection of laying on hands and the reception of the Spirit seemed to him (and to many modern readers) to work exactly like magic.[45] Indeed, this very passage betrays the blurry (probably useless) distinction between magic and miracle.

Peter's rebuke could well have ended at this point. Nevertheless, the apostle (or rather the author of Acts) adds a remark not demanded so much by the narrative as by the need to undercut Simon's authority (*exousia*). The chief apostle pronounces: "You do not have a part or share in this message!" (Acts 8:21).

This apodictic exclusion merits surprise. Why cannot Simon, after careful training, become a teacher and medium of the Spirit like, for instance, Paul? Paul had an even worse record prior to his conversion. At the beginning of this very chapter in Acts, we learn that Paul was a ruthless persecutor of the church and an accomplice in murder (Acts 8:1, 3). In spite of his past, Paul becomes a fully authorized Christian leader, dispenser of the Spirit, and the chief protagonist in the latter half of Acts.

Simon is not given the same chance. He is officiously excluded from the apostolic tribe, and not authorized to be a missionary.[46] Likely the author of Acts knows something of Simon's great authority in the later Simonian community. In the story, however, he presents Peter as offering the following rationale: Simon's "heart is not right before God" (Acts 8:21). How Peter suddenly knows Simon's heart is unclear. At any rate, the apostle's words are carefully crafted. They echo Psalm 77:37 (LXX), a verse that speaks of the refractory attitude of ancient Israelites. These sinners of old beheld God's miracles and rebelled, since "their heart was not right with him [i.e., God]."

But all hopes for Simon are not lost. Peter commands him to repent and asks the Lord to remove "the thought of his heart" (8:22).[47] "For I see," Peter adds, "that you are in the gall of bitterness and in a chain of injustice" (v. 23). The words are harsh, yet admittedly less harsh than Jesus's rebuke of Peter: "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mark 8:33; Matt 16:23). Stephen Haar argues that Peter's censure of Simon, "is neither a sentence of condemnation nor excommunication, but a rebuke . . . given in pious duty to a 'neighbor.' "[48] Haar is nevertheless aware that gall and bitterness are characteristic of the idolater in Deuteronomy 29:17 (LXX).[49]

In Acts, Simon is not unrepentant. He does not angrily stamp away, conniving to begin a competing Christian movement. Instead, he wails pathetically for apostolic prayer: "ask the Lord on my behalf that nothing of what you spoke overtake me!" (8:24). The apostles are Simon's mediators before God; Simon is in complete—even groveling—submission to them.[50] An important manuscript, Codex Bezae, even says that at the end of this episode, Simon could not stop weeping (*polla klaiōn ou dielimpanen*).[51] In this way, Simon resembles Peter, who "wept bitterly" after he had denied Jesus three times (Luke 22:62).

An Ambiguous Resolution

In sum, on the surface level, the author of Acts portrays a repentant, putatively Christian Simon, stiffly rebuked for his apostolic pretensions, and humbled—even humiliated—before the pillar apostles. On the level of allusion and inference, however, the legitimacy of Simon's conversion is subtly put into question. First, Simon is never explicitly said to receive the Holy Spirit. Intertextual echoes of ancient rebellion and idolatry reverberate behind the story. Although he blubbers pathetically, the reader does not know if Simon's heart is, or is made, right. And even though Simon begs, Peter and the apostles do not explicitly pray for him. In the end, fans and critics of Simon can (and do) draw very different conclusions from this story in Acts.[52]

On the question of Simon's self-deification, the same ambiguity lingers. It is never explicitly said that Simon claims to be God. It is the Samaritans who proclaim Simon to be the Great Power, a title which itself begs interpretation (Acts 8:10). One might nevertheless conclude that in Acts, Simon's self-promotion to divinity is strongly implied, or at least remains a reasonable inference.

Importantly, a similar ambiguity lingers in the case of Jesus's self-deification. It is uncertain, that is, whether the historical Jesus ever said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," or "I and the Father are one" (John 8:58; 10:30). Nevertheless, in John, his self-deification is made to seem obvious. The Fourth Gospel represents people worshiping Jesus and calling him G/god during his lifetime (John 9:38; 20:28). This relatively rapid deification of Jesus by his (Johannine) followers (in the 90s CE) indicates that an equally swift deification of Simon could have occurred around the same time. Divine claims (e.g., "I am the Great Power"), could have been put into Simon's mouth by the community that worshiped him.

It was likely due to the high view of Simon by the Simonian community that the author of Acts felt a pressing need to undercut Simon's authority. Simonians, as we shall see in later sources, were competing with other Christian groups in Palestine and probably in Rome. The fact that virtually "all" (*pantes*, Acts 8:10) Samaritans initially follow Simon subtly hints at the extent of Simon's influence in that area. In the end, one has the suspicion that the author of Acts knows more about the Simonian community than he reveals, and skillfully rewrites history to accord with his apologetic ends.

Justin Martyr

A new chapter on Simon's self-deification unfolds with Justin Martyr (mid-second century CE). After Jesus's ascension, Justin says, the *daimones* (or demons) advanced certain people who claimed to be gods (*legontas heautous einai theous*).[53] "Exhibit A" of self-deification is Simon.

"Simon's" Statue

Stunningly, Justin reports that Simon was being worshiped as God in Rome. He claims that Simon came to Rome, and so impressed the senate and people with his miracles that they honored him with a statue. Justin explicitly understands the statue (representing Simon himself) as a divine honor: Simon "was honored with a statue as are the other gods honored by you [Romans]."[54]

Simon's statue could be found, Justin reports, on an island in the Tiber with the inscription SIMONI DEO SANCTO: "To Simon, Sacred God."[55] The fact that the statue base was found in 1574, and actually reads SEMONI SANCO ("To Semo Sancus," a Sabine deity), does not immediately prove that Justin was a dunce or weaver of fictions.[56] Simonians at Rome may conceivably have identified this statue with their founder.[57]

The Primal God

Justin claims that *all* Samaritans (*pantes . . . Samareis*) and some from other ethnicities worship (*proskunousi*) Simon—not as some subordinate or intermediate deity—but as "the first God" (*ton prōton theon*),[58] who is (like Christ) "above every principality, authority and power."[59] This claim is unusual, since deified humans like Romulus, Heracles, and Jesus typically became subordinate gods, not the high God himself. Nevertheless, Justin's claim accords (though selectively) with Simonian theology. Simon manifests "He Who Stood" (the eternal one), namely Yahweh.

Nevertheless, Justin's report seems just as dependent upon Acts as on any Simonian tradition. As we saw, Acts says that Simon, prior to his conversion, stunned the nation (*ethnos*) of Samaritans, and that "all" (*pantes*) Samaritans declared that Simon was the Great Power (8:9–10). Justin uses very similar language: "virtually all (*pantes*) Samaritans" worship Simon.[60]

If Justin is reading Acts, Simon as the "first God" interprets Simon's title the "Great Power" (Acts 8:10). In other words, Simon is the Power in comparison to whom none is greater. At Rome, such a claim would have appeared ridiculous. The imperial capital had long assimilated foreign deities and deified figures who were subordinate to the Roman high God (Jupiter Optimus Maximus). But that a no-name Samaritan from some backwater village of Gitta in the corner of the empire was worshiped as the high God was laughable. Justin's apologetic point is that the Romans persecute his group of Christians for worshiping Jesus as a subordinate god (the Logos), but do not persecute Simonians for worshiping Simon as the high God.

Simonians in Rome?

In the mid-second century Justin is very concerned about Simonians. He does not say explicitly that there were Simonians in Rome, but it could be inferred from his report about "Simon's" statue in Rome, and from the fact that Justin (who lived in Rome) says that Simonians "still control those who are deceived" (*eti apatōmenous echousi*).[61] These alleged dupes would seem to refer to Simonians that Justin presently knows about. Since Justin is in Rome at the time, then likely the Simonians he knows are there as well. Why else would Justin demand that the emperors go to the trouble of tearing down "Simon's" statue?[62]

Apologetics

On the question of self-deification, Justin explicitly makes Simon a self-deifier in order to make him appear both boastful and demonically inspired.[63] Indeed, Justin portrays Simon's self-deification as something utterly bombastic: Simon claims to be the high God! Such a bald claim would at the very least make the Simonian movement look ridiculous. Justin may have even wanted to make the Simonians seem like a threat to Roman order. If Simon as the high God excluded Jupiter, then Simonians committed sacrilege and were subject to punishment by Jupiter's deputy on earth: the emperor.

Although it is not entirely clear, one of Justin's sources for Simon seems to be Acts. Yet Justin implicitly undercuts Acts by showing that Simon's story did not end with his baptism and conversion in Samaria. Instead, Justin reveals that Simon came to Rome, where he enjoyed immense influence and political prestige. This Simon, at least, was no craven convert left on the periphery of the empire. The Samaritans never converted to Philip's gospel; almost all of them continued to follow Simon. Simon continued to perform astounding wonders, and successively set up a religious movement in the imperial capital.

Irenaeus of Lyons

The account of Simon in Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (late second century CE), provides more detailed information about Simonian mythology.[64] *The Great Declaration* gives the sense that the separation of Thought from Mind is an entirely natural process. Thought, or the Seventh Power, descends into human beings, fully realizes herself as the divine likeness, and in the end reunites with Mind (the Great Power). At the same time, humans who provide a dwelling for Thought are deified by attaining a purely intellectual and spiritual state.

The Myth Becomes a Tragedy

In Irenaeus, the drama and violence of this story is heightened. The bishop reports that Thought (*Ennoia*) leapt away (*exsilientem*) from Mind and descended to the lower regions. Knowing the Father's will, she created angels and powers, who in turn created the world. Tragically, Thought herself was detained by these powers. The powers imprisoned Thought and subjected her to every form of outrage. Finally, Thought was shut up in a human body and successively reincarnated into women known to be abused and exploited by men. She was embodied in Helen, whose removal from Sparta became the cause (or excuse) for the Trojan War. Divine Thought finally ended up as a common prostitute—also called Helen—who was forced to sell her body in a Syrian brothel.[65]

For this reason, God the Father, embodied in Simon, descended to redeem Helen, and free her from her chains. Afterward, Simon offers salvation to human beings through the knowledge of who he is (*per suam agnitionem*).[66] Importantly, similar saving knowledge is revealed by Jesus in John (17:3).

Simon and Christ

Like Jesus, Simon suffered in Judea (apparently by crucifixion). Nevertheless he did not, Irenaeus says, truly experience pain. Technically it is impossible for a divine being to experience torment. Early Christians who believed that Jesus was G/god stated something similar: the man Jesus died, but the divine Logos remained without suffering.[67] The author of the *Refutation* offers additional Simonian reflection on this topic. In his potential state, Simon was truly born and able to suffer. But when he was conformed to the likeness (the Seventh Power), he was unable to suffer (*Ref.* 6.18.1).

Irenaeus depicts Simon as a descending and ascending God (cf. John 3:13). When Simon descends to rescue human beings, he assimilates himself to the intervening angelic powers until he appears as a human being. Epiphanius, writing in the late 470s CE, quotes an apparent Simonian source in which Simon says, "In each heaven I was transformed into the form of the beings in each level of heaven, so that I might escape the notice of my angelic powers and descend to my Thought."[68] A similar story was told about Jesus in the *Ascension of Isaiah* (early second century CE). In this text, Christ descends through all seven levels of heaven, taking the form of the angels in each heaven in order to pass by unnoticed.[69]

Irenaeus's report likely represents a more developed state of Simonian mythology. Simon appears as Christ, and, for the Simonians, *is* Christ. Irenaeus directly says that Simon appeared as the son of God among the Judeans. The saved put their hope in him, and Simon redeemed them by his grace (*secundum . . . ipsius gratiam*).[70]

Simon and the Trinity

But Simon is more than Christ. Sometime after his crucifixion, he offers a greater revelation of himself as the Father in Samaria. There, Simon proclaims that he is "the highest Power" (*sublimissimam Virtutem*), who is identified with the "Father over all" (*super omnia Pater*). Among the nations, sometime later, he appears as the Holy Spirit.[71]

These are fascinating developments. Is it possible to map them onto the theology of *The Great Declaration*? In *The Great Declaration*, Simon implicitly realizes himself as He Who Stood, Who Stands, and Who Will Stand. In Irenaeus, Simon is the Father (the God who stood in eternity past), the Son (who took his stand in Judea as Christ), and the Holy Spirit (who eternally will stand among the nations as the perfected God). It is likely that the theology of Simon Who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand preceded his identity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But Simon's identification with the Christian Trinity does not necessarily represent a later Christianization of Simonian theology.[72] Simonians were developing their trinitarian thought at the very same time as other Christians were. Thinking of God as three, or in three phases, was an early development, and it is likely that Simonians themselves contributed to the rich store of trinitarian reflection. They simply identified their Trinity with Simon.

Simonian Ritual

Irenaeus closes his report by speaking of Simonian ritual practice. He says that Simonians worship statues representing Simon as Zeus and Helen as Athena.

One must be clear that Simonian Christians are not said to worship Zeus and Athena per se. They worship Simon in the form of the high God (commonly known as Zeus). In turn, Athena was an appropriate representation of Simon's Thought, since she was born full-grown from Zeus's head.[73]

The Simonians, in their own view, did not worship mere human beings. Simon, like Jesus, is worshiped because he is true God who assumes human form. The author of the *Refutation* directly remarks, "If someone, catching sight of the statues of Simon and Helen, calls them 'Simon and Helen,' he is cast out as one ignorant of the mysteries" (*Ref.* 6.20.2).

Most of the preceding is new information that Irenaeus apparently derives from a lost Simonian source. Irenaeus indicates his use of source material when says that from the Simonians the gnostic movement began "as can be learned from their own assertions" (*ex ipsis assertionibus eorum*).[74]

Simon the First Gnostic

Irenaeus famously claims that all heresies have their origin from Simon (*Simon . . . ex quo universae haereses substiterunt*).[75] He also says that the multitude of gnostics arose from the Simonians.[76] Some scholars understand this view as Irenaeus's own invention.[77] Yet if Simonian thought developed early—or at least contemporaneously with Johannine thought—then it could indeed have influenced later gnostic theologians like Menander, Valentinus, and Basilides. We need not posit a single origin for gnostic thought (which is itself incredibly dynamic and flexible). Yet we should also not exclude the early and pervasive influence of Simonian thought on later Christian Gnosticism.

Simon and Helen

It is likely that in Simonian mythology Simon redeemed a prostitute in Syria and made her a companion in his travels. In the gospels, Jesus also traveled with women, one of them Mary Magdalene (later thought to be a prostitute).[78] Yet Simon's Helen represents more than a sinful woman. If she incarnates Thought, then according to *The Great Declaration*, she is also incarnated in *all* human beings (*Ref.* 6.17.1). This is the link between Simon's redemption of Helen and his redemption of humanity. Simon, or the Father, goes in search of Helen (his own Thought) trapped in *all human souls*.

This message of redemption is beautifully described in a tractate from the Nag Hammadi library called *The Exegesis of the Soul*. "While the soul was alone with the Father, she was a virgin and androgynous in form. When she fell down into a body and entered this life, she fell into the hands of many robbers."[79] Raped and abused, the soul elicits compassion from the Father on high. The "soul stirred, and she received the divine from the Father, that she might be renewed and returned to where she was at first."[80]

At the end of this tractate, the writer even quotes Homer's *Odyssey* 4.260–261, where Helen of Troy—symbol of the human soul—says: "[My heart] turned itself from me. It is to my house that I want to return."[81] Helen returns back to her home in Sparta, symbol of the soul's returns to the Father.[82]

Simon's companion Helen is thus a key figure in Simonian theology. Simon referred to his Helen as "the lost sheep."[83] He thereby alluded to a parable in which the Savior goes out to search for what was lost (Luke 15:6). In seeking Helen, the Savior illustrates his search for all human beings in whom Helen (i.e., Thought) is incarnate.

The author of the *Refutation* also reports that Simonians allegorized Helen with her torch (*Ref.* 6.19.1). He refers to the episode in which Helen sends light signals to the Greeks, allowing them to storm Troy.[84] We are not told the meaning of this allegory, but likely Simonians imagined Helen as Thought within humanity lighting the way to the Father, or Mind (again, compare John 1:4, 9).

Simon and Supersession

For Simonians, the revelation of Jesus Christ in Judea was not the highest revelation. This is because Jesus is not the highest manifestation of God. In his trial, Jesus reportedly said that he would sit at the right hand of "the Power" (i.e., God the Father) (Mark 14:62). After Jesus's departure, Simon arose as the "Great Power," or Father over all (Acts 8:10). Simonians apparently worshiped Simon as the Father or high God. In this way, Simon superseded Jesus.

There is a yet further supersession. In his farewell address, Jesus promised to bestow the Holy Spirit (John 16:7). After his departure, Simon came *as* the Holy Spirit.[85] In this way, Simon remained eternally present with his community. Once again, Simon trumped (the Johannine) Jesus, but only after absorbing the symbolic value of the divine Fullness.

Were the Simonians Christians?

This discussion raises an important sociohistorical (and religious) question: were the Simonians Christians? Despite their supersessionist theology, the Simonians did apparently consider themselves to be Christians. Justin Martyr wrote that Simon, Menander, and Marcion all called themselves (or are called) "Christians" (*christianoi kalountai*).[86] Origen also notes, "the only people who say these things about him [Simon] are Christians" (*christianoi* *d'eisin hoi tauta peri autou legontes*).[87] In context, the content of "these things" (*tauta*) is obscure. Origen immediately denies that Simon is divine (*theion*). In the overall passage, he attempts to undercut Simon's (and anyone else's) claim to be divine like Jesus. Those Christians who spoke of Simon's divinity were likely Simonians.

We know that ancient Christian groups vigorously competed with each another and that theology played a part in this competition. Second-century Christian leaders like Justin and Irenaeus were evidently threatened by Simonians—which suggests that the latter resembled Christians in practice and belief. The resemblances are still evident today. Simonians, like other Christians, appealed to Jewish scripture (primarily the Pentateuch). But they also appealed to gospel parables such as the lost sheep. They believed in a heavenly Savior or Christ figure who was crucified. They also apparently believed in a Trinitarian concept of God, and—like some Christians—saw the Trinity as the manifestation of a single divine figure. The fullest manifestation of this figure (called "the Father") appeared in their divine Savior, Simon.

The Acts of Peter

A work now called *The Acts of Peter* (ca. 200 CE) picks up the thread of Simon's self-deification and weaves it into a colorful romance.[88] In this story, Simon arrives as a miracle-worker in Aricia, south of Rome. There, Simon proclaims his own godhead by second-hand report. According to a group of anonymous Christians, he says "that he is the Great Power of God (*magnam virtutem dei*), and that without God he does nothing. Is he then himself the Christ?"[89]

In this myth, Simon as the Great Power is not the Father, but a Christ figure. Moreover, the Simon who supposedly deifies himself is strikingly humble. He admits that apart from God he can do nothing. Jesus makes similar rhetorical claims to reinforce his humility: "the son can do nothing from himself except what he sees the Father doing" (John 5:19, 30).

Self-deifying Christians

Strictly speaking, then, in this episode Simon does not deify himself. Instead, Roman Christians in the narrative construct him as a self-deifier. Throughout the story, it is these very Christians who are the gullible dispensers of deifying honors. They are portrayed as inviting Simon "with great acclamations," proclaiming to him, "Thou art God in Italy, thou art Savior of the Romans!"[90]

Before these Christians, Simon makes a bold claim in a surprisingly "soft voice": tomorrow around one 'o'clock "you shall see me," he says, "flying over the city gate in the form in which you see me."[91] The next day, bystanders behold "in the distance a cloud of dust" in the sky, "like a smoke gleaming with light rays and threatening signs."[92]

The epiphany resembles the arrival of Yahweh seen by Ezekiel. As the ancient prophet looked, "a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually" (Ezek 1:4). In the cloud appeared a vast dome, and above it was a throne, "and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form" (Ezek 1:26; cf. Exod 19:9). In *The Acts of Peter*, Simon suddenly appears inside the gate, encircled by people, "while they all worshipped him and realized that it was he who had been seen by them the day before."[93] Simon arrives in Yahweh's epiphanic splendor—and virtually all Christians in Rome genuflect.

Peter

Nevertheless, a worthy opponent is chosen for Simon: the very Peter who opposed him in Acts. In fact, Peter is portrayed as recalling his encounter with Simon in Samaria. The apostle fails to mention Simon's baptism and Christian faith, but remembers well how he rebuked him. In this account, Peter's rebuke is not intended to save a young Christian soul; it is meant as a curse with no opportunity for repentance: "[W]e cursed you (*malediximus te*) (saying): 'Do you think you can tempt us to wish for possession of money?' "[94]

Given the charge of Simon's self-deification, it is ironic that Peter himself is repeatedly made the object of deifying honors. The ship captain who conveys the apostle to Rome addresses him: "I hardly know you, whether you are god or human."[95] When Peter arrives in Rome, a bevy of devotees fall at his feet, including Christians like Ariston.[96] Later, a whole crowd of people who see Peter make a dog speak, bow down to him.[97] A mixed crowd of people, after Peter's stunt of a triple resurrection, "venerated him as a god."[98] Not least of all, the Christian senator Marcellus clasps Peter's feet in obeisance.[99] Marcellus later calls Peter, "the holy one of God," a title of Christ in the gospels.[100] The worship of Peter cannot be explained away as the practice of mere "pagans." Christians like Ariston and Marcellus lead the pack of devotees.

It was Marcellus who was previously responsible for hosting Simon and erecting the famous (though fictive) statue to him in Rome. This time the honorary inscription more clearly reads: "To Simon, the young god."[101]

In *The Acts of Peter*, however, Simon is not actually deified, but demonized. Indeed, Simon is directly called "that inconstant demon (*daemonio*),"[102] and condemned in the most horrifying way. He is kicked out of Marcellus's house only after the slaves beat him and drench his head with urine and feces.[103] When he hobbles to Peter's quarters for an audience, the apostle makes a seven-month old baby proclaim that Simon's father is the devil.[104]

Spectaculum

Finally there is a great showdown between Simon and Peter in the Julian Forum. A carnivalesque feeling fills the air as the people of Rome, bored of their bread and circuses, gather to behold what seemed in their eyes the greatest contest of magic. The price of entry to the "show" (*spectaculum*) is a piece of gold—though Peter is naturally unconcerned about money.[105] The coins are gleaned from the many blue-blooded senators and officials who fill the stands.[106]

One of these blue-bloods, the prefect Agrippa, rises as umpire to the contest. He generously offers one of his slaves to be killed and raised from the dead—though there was already a corpse on hand. Needless to say, Peter wins the day, since Simon has only the power of a half-resurrection—making a dead man twitch, open his eyes, and bow in his general direction.[107] The point is polemical, and applicable to all wonder-workers who raised the dead: they could only resuscitate people doomed to die twice.

Ascent

In the end, Simon resolves upon the ultimate proof of divinity in the ancient world: an ascent to heaven.[108] He declares:

> Men of Rome, at present you think that Peter has overpowered me as if he was stronger, and so that you instead pay attention to him. You are deceived. For tomorrow, when I have left you utterly profane and impious people, I will fly up to God, whose power I am, though enfeebled. If then you have fallen, behold I am the Standing One (*ho Hestōs*). And I am going up to my Father and will say to him, "Even me, your son who stands forever, they desired to overthrow; but I did not consent to them, and am returning to myself!"[109]

Finally we have an unambiguous scene of self-deification, although the Great Power himself strangely admits of weakness (cf. 2 Cor 12:10). Here also we learn that Simon's famous title "the Standing One" does not mean that he thinks himself to be the high God. Rather, he is the son of God the Father. Nevertheless, Simon's mysterious return to himself may signify that Father and son are somehow one (cf. John 10:30).

The next day, the ever-present mob assembles on the Sacred Way to behold what they think is another marvel—a flight through the air. Predictably, the gadfly Peter is warned in a vision and arrives to oppose Simon. Looking down on Peter from a "high place," Simon declares that, "I, by ascending, will show to all this crowd what manner of being I am!" Amazingly, word becomes deed; Simon becomes airborne, and zooms over Rome's temples and tombs.

Death

But Peter prays this imprecation: "Speed on your grace, Lord; and let him fall down from above and be crippled, though not die. Rather let him be disabled and break his leg in three places!" Like a shot bird, Simon drops. After his predictable triple fracture, the bystanders promptly stone him.[110] One can see in Simon the headlong fall of Lucifer; but in his sufferings—and eventual death—one might glimpse Christ in his passion.

The cruelty of the apostolic persecutor is striking. Other Christian texts take additional delight in the death of Simon, and make Peter its more immediate cause. In the *Martyrdom of Peter and Paul*, the chief apostle likewise prays for Simon's fall. When Simon hits the ground, he instantly splits into four pieces.[111]

The Pseudo-Clementine Homilies

The myth of Simon's self-deification continues in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (an early fourth century CE Christian novel).[112] Here again Simon appears as the archenemy of Peter—in fact his forerunner in the mission to the Gentiles. Again we read the (by now) standard accusations against Simon: he is a magician, slanderer, and minister of evil. When Simon asks Peter to explain the origin of the devil, Peter accuses him of being more evil than the author of evil himself.[113]

Simon's Backstory

The *Homilies* provide more information about Simon's background. We find out that he is the son of Antony and Rachel. Like Jesus, Simon was originally a disciple of John the Baptist.[114] Simon, not Jesus, was recognized as John's most approved disciple.[115] But when John died, Simon was studying abroad in Egypt, so his competitor Dositheus took charge of the group.

When Simon returned, he feigned friendship with Dositheus but soon began to slander him behind his back. At a group meeting, Dositheus publicly confronted Simon and attacked him with a magic rod like that of Moses.[116] But the rod passed through Simon's body as if his flesh were made of smoke. Terrified, Dositheus cried out: "If you are the Standing One, I also shall worship you."[117] When Simon cried out, "I AM!" Dositheus fell at Simon's feet.[118]

This myth of self-deification strongly resonates with the gospel of John. The predicateless "I AM!" as a claim to divinity is characteristic of the Johannine Jesus (e.g., John 8:28, 58). In John 19:5, Jesus's "I AM!" actually brings people to the ground. In John, moreover, people once doubtful about Jesus are depicted as worshiping him (20:28). That Jesus is in himself invulnerable is revealed in his trial and arrest, wherein the Savior says that only by his and the Father's will could injury come to him (John 18–19; cf. Matt 26:53).[119]

In the *Homilies*, the story about Simon's confrontation with Dositheus is reported by one of Simon's opponents. This opponent, named Aquila, was—along with his twin brother, Niketas—a childhood friend of Simon. But the twins later turned against their friend and joined Peter.

It is Aquila who also reports that after his tour of Egypt, Simon "was elated and wanted to be considered the highest power of even the very God who created the world."[120] In early Simonian mythology, Thought generates the world.[121] In later Simonian mythology, angels create it.[122] The author of the *Homilies* is evidently not aiming at perfect accuracy. Agreeing with the *Acts of Peter*, he states that sometimes Simon "also hints that he is the Christ, whom he calls the Standing One."[123]

Simon's Miracles

The miracles of Simon astound even the narrator of the novel, a character called Clement of Rome. Clement hears from eyewitnesses that Simon makes statues walk, rolls himself on the fire without being burned, makes loaves out of stones, becomes a serpent and a goat; makes himself two-faced or changes himself into gold; opens gates that are locked tight; and melts iron. At banquets, Simon produces images of every form. In his house, he makes dishes carry food with no waiters being seen.[124]

It is sometimes pointed out that such miracles are not openly beneficial, and thus mere tricks. There is a problem with this argument, however, since in the *Acts of Peter*, Peter performs very similar stunts. He makes a dog speak, a smoked fish swim, and a seven-month old baby speak with the voice of a grown man.[125] Jesus himself performed some nonbeneficial miracles, such as the cursing of the fig tree and walking on water (Mark 6:48; 11:13–14). One might argue, furthermore, that all of Simon's miracles, like those of Jesus, had a reasonable goal: to prove his divinity. In the *Recognitions*, Aquila, who lost his faith in Simon, still earnestly asks, "who would not think that he [Simon] was a god come down from heaven for the salvation of humankind?"[126]

Simon Spreads His Gospel

In the *Homilies*, Simon spreads his gospel throughout Syria. All along the Levantine coast, from Caesarea to Tyre to Sidon to Beirut to Byblos to Tripolis to Laodicea to Antioch, Peter is Simon's hound closely nipping at his heels, affording him no rest.[127] Simon usually avoids confrontation with Peter, but there are two great disputations that occur in Caesarea and Laodicea.[128] Simon is made a mouthpiece for everything the author of the *Homilies* fears: Marcionite theology, varieties of polytheism, and, not least of all, Paulinism.[129]

The bases of Simon's arguments are verses from the Hebrew Bible and from the lips of Jesus himself. Repeatedly, Peter meets Simon's biblical arguments with dialectical maneuvers,[130] evasive questioning about Simon's sincerity,[131] along with an occasional ad hominem attack (as we have seen, Simon is more evil than the devil).[132]

Peter secretly acknowledges before his disciples that the Bible has false passages woven into it, but he deliberately conceals his belief from the crowds.[133] Nevertheless Simon's argument forces Peter to publically admit that scriptural texts that speak ill of God and do not agree with creation are "false" (*pseudeis*).[134]

During these disputes, Simon ironically accuses Peter of self-deification. Peter, he says, produces superhuman miracles to seem like a god himself before the crowds.[135] In the narrative, Peter smiles at the charge and boldly responds, "Men, I admit that I can do, God-willing, what these people say. In addition I am prepared, if you aren't convinced about what I say, to overturn your city from top to bottom."[136] The comment aims at humor, but also reveals Peter's own high view of himself.

Just as Peter attempts to deflect attention toward God, the people fall on their knees before him.[137] His syllogistic attacks on Simon incite cheers.[138] People run to see Peter as he enters a city in order to gratify him.[139] Peter's disciples call him *kyrios*, a flexible term of respect, but also a frequent title for Jesus himself.[140]

Although his friend Faustus declares Peter the winner in the final debate, Simon refuses to give up.[141] He changes Faustus's appearance to look like his own.[142] For tactical purposes, Peter impels Faustus to retain Simon's visage. Ironically, then, a second Simon resides in Peter's closest entourage.[143] In this way the story comes to a close.

Conclusion

In hostile sources, Simon morphs from a Samaritan magician-become-Christian to a deified hero to a self-deifying magician who acts as the archenemy of the apostles and false Christ. So great the threat, so many the transmutations! It is uncertain—in fact unlikely—that any of these metamorphoses describe a historical Simon. Instead, the various myths of Simon constitute discursive practices whereby early catholic writers increasingly defined Simonians and other Christians as foreign and demonic. In later literature, Simon, like Proteus, would continue to be mythically transmogrified in various ways, fitted to the molds of the church's ever-changing enemies.[144]

Like Simon who gave Faustus his visage, Christians constructed Simon as a mask that they could put on the face of the enemy within. These enemies included competing miracle-workers (cast as magicians), a great variety of gnostic Christians, Marcionites, and Paulinists. In the end, every heretical notion of every time and clime could cling to Simon, who embodied all the "evil" of these groups and so helped early catholics to cope with it.

By making Simon a self-deifier, early catholics reenvisioned the rebel myth as occurring in their own primeval (church) history. In the beginning, in the very age of the apostles, the chaos of Simon was neutralized—just as Yahweh tamed Leviathan of old. Thus all future Christian "heresies" could also, in theory, be neutralized when traced back to the craven convert in Acts.

The mystery of Simon—why he could not repent, why the apostles cursed him, why he must be a reprobate and a megalomaniac—could only be explained by Simon's league with the devil. Lucifer, the original self-deifier, increasingly becomes the model for Simon as a character in Christian myth. "[E]very one of Simon's characteristics," writes Susan Garrett, "—his use of magic, his self-deification, his attraction of the people, his secretly sinful heart, his attempt to procure divine authority, and even his submission when condemned—is a stereotyped feature of contemporaneous portrayals of Satan or those who belong to Satan's lot."[145]

In the end, evil is its own explanation, and defines the good. There must need be heresies, as Paul, later confounded with Simon, knew (1 Cor 11:19). Light needs darkness, and truth needs error in order to define itself. Christianity needs a threat, an "other," a cursed one, a reprobate—to explain the good it brings into the world.

The root and fount of heresies is self-deification. It is the aim of a madman. For only a madman could say what Simon (according to Jerome) proclaimed: "I am the Word of God, I am beautiful, I am the Paraclete, I am omnipotent, I am all that God is!"[146] Self-deification was the first sin, the ultimate sin, the most violent and terrifying act a human could perform—to *break boundaries* that should not be broken, and to claim authority that one should not have. Simon becomes the first Christian boundary-breaker and transgressor, and so reveals, as if in a dark mirror, the dangers of falling from faith. When social and doctrinal boundaries are broken, one ends up with a shattered leg, a broken body.

Yet the differences between Simon and Simon Peter, or even Simon and Christ, are not ontological; they are a construction of human thought. The majority Christian party celebrates the triumph of good in one man's deification (Jesus), and the destruction of evil in another man's death (Simon). In early catholic mythmaking, one man became a god, the other a demon. Divinization is ever paired with demonization.

The seemingly black and white quality of these Christian myths ensures that in reading them there is both profit and delight. The imaginative murder of Simon at the hands of the chief apostle symbolized the death of all Christianity's enemies, real or imagined. To paraphrase the author of the *Refutation*: strike the first head of the hydra, and all will perish (*Ref.* 5.11.1).

But we know from Greek myth that when one head is struck, others multiply. Simon—or rather all the nonnormative Christians Simon came to represent—remains an ever-present threat to Christianity. This snake-like threat—ever changing its skin—is well illustrated in the Clementine *Homilies.* This Christian novel has no proper ending. Simon continues his career preaching his gospel from city to city. Although stopped at every turn, the god ever young proves in the end to be unstoppable—an ever-present enemy both outside Peter's circle and within.

Indeed, such hostile mythology contains the logic of its own subversion. In the *Homilies*, Simon does not follow Peter. Just the reverse: Peter's gospel follows the good news of Simon. In this myth, the "alien" gospel came first, traveling from city to city. The "orthodox" gospel ends up being depicted as a polemical response. The myth thus ironically reveals what may actually be historical: what was later deemed Christian "heresy" is not derivative at all, but coeval with—and even prior to—traditions subsequently deemed apostolic.

It is always a temptation to allow later hostile myths of Simon to supplant the Simonians' own mythology of their founder. This mythology tells a different story about Simon. Here he is not a megalomaniacal self-deifier, but the revealer of divine truth. He reveals that the world is structured toward human deification. Divine Thought inhabits every human heart. But Thought is trapped and abused by the powers of this world, and imprisoned in flesh. Simon comes to redeem his Thought. First he came as Christ crucified in Judea. Then in Samaria he provided the ultimate revelation of himself as the Father. Presently, Simon abides among the nations—and in his community—as the Holy Spirit. In this sense, Simon is He Who Stood, Who Stands, and Who Will Stand: he sums up all three phases of God's existence. In this supremely exalted state, Simon is rightly worshiped as the high God.

The myth in Acts was in a sense right: Simon's followers did identify him with the Great Power. But what the author of Acts and later heresiologists depicted as a mistake—something worthy to be ridiculed and condemned—Simonians upheld as inspired truth. In the end, Simon's opponents could not without latent hypocrisy say that Simon's self-deification was evil—for in this case, Jesus himself would be guilty of the same charge. The question is not whether self-deification is evil or good, but which self-deifier is defended as the actual G/god?

To be sure, Simonian mythographers tried to supersede Jesus's mythology by calling Simon the Father. Yet the depiction of Simon as the Father is not so different from the claim of the Johannine Christ. A reader of John 14:10 ("He who has seen me has seen the Father") or John 10:30 ("I and the Father are one") might also conclude that Jesus claimed to be the Father in flesh. In fact, shortly after Irenaeus, we hear of a group of Christians in Asia Minor, Rome, and North Africa who believed that Son and Father were one being in two different modes.[147] God the Father, when he appeared in flesh, became Son. It is possible that Simon's followers upheld a similar modalistic theology.

In the end, Simon is an antichrist not because he was *against* Christ, but because—for one Christian community at least—he appeared *in the place of* Christ. This is why even today Christians are threatened by Simon. But in critical scholarship one must lay aside the old patterns of thinking naturalized by normative theology. Simon and Jesus became self-deifiers because they represented the same Christ figure who descends into this world, proclaims his own divinity, and suffers the deadly consequences. In both cases, the self-deifier ironically tells the hidden truth and, in the community of his followers, is experienced as "the Great Power of God."

6

"I Became Divine."

ALLOGENES AND GNOSTIC SELF-DEIFICATION

> *As the God developed in me, I thought he was a part of my self. I thought that my "I" included him and therefore I took him for my thought. But I also considered that my thoughts were part of my "I." Thus I entered into my thoughts, and into the thinking about the God, in that I took him for a part of my self.*
>
> CARL JUNG[1]

Introduction

All the pride and pathology characteristically associated with gnostic self-deification has, in this study, been recognized as a mythic construction. Based on this recognition, we are finally in a position to redescribe what gnostic deification might actually look like.[2]

For our purposes, deification means that a human comes to possess a divine status by sharing in qualities that, in the ancient Mediterranean world, constituted a divine identity. These qualities typically include immortality and superhuman power, yet also vast knowledge and extraordinary virtue. Recent work on deification in gnostic sources has focused on angelification,[3] assimilation to God,[4] and ecstatic vision.[5]

What needs further attention, I propose, is the self-empowered or self-engineered aspect of gnostic forms of deification. Gnostics put extraordinary emphasis on self-knowledge and self-realization. They assimilated themselves to God, to be sure, but God was not always viewed as entirely different from the self. Many gnostics experienced God as a greater or higher Self. Some of them viewed themselves as consubstantial with this higher Self, as having a divine element—a spark that belonged to a greater divine fire.

In order to highlight this intense focus on the self, in this chapter I redescribe gnostic deification as "self-deification." Such a redescription will no doubt be controversial, and for good reason. Heresiologists used the language of self-deification as a cudgel: so-called gnostics deified themselves and were thus arrogant rebels against God. Nevertheless, using the language of gnostic self-deification need not replicate heresiological discourse. Just as scholars are now in the process of vigorously redescribing Gnosticism, they have the freedom and power to redefine and redescribe deification with a new meaning and framework.

Here self-deification simply means "deification *effected by the self*," where the self is not, or not solely identified with the human ego. By using this terminology, it is not implied that this form of deification involves any kind of prideful self-exaltation. In fact, pride involves a false understanding of the self in which the ego takes precedence. The gnostic's transcendence of the ego makes pride nothing short of nonsensical.

A worthy model for self-deification is in fact Simon as he speaks in *The Great Declaration*. By accessing his own mind as God's image, Simon attains a glimpse of the divine Mind. By knowing himself as mind, he sees, as through a mirror, the divine archetype of his mind and his own identity with it. He discovers God as other—but no longer other; he discovers a form of God in himself and as himself.

This chapter focuses not on Simon, however, but on Allogenes. Allogenes is the ancient patriarch depicted in the treatise named after him in the Nag Hammadi library (NHC XI,3). In Allogenes's intellectual journey, he combines a set of elements that make his deification a model experience. Through a disciplined practice of self-knowledge, he comes to realize his own divine nature and identity with the highest manifestation of God, called "Intellect" or (more mysteriously) "Barbelo."

Yet before we explore the experience of Allogenes, we take a step back to understand the broader cultural dynamics of selfhood in Mediterranean culture.

A "Culture of the Self"

In his lectures at the Collège de France (1981–1982), Michel Foucault spoke about a culture of the self developing in the first and second centuries CE.[6] He used the Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades I* as a point of entry. In this text, self-knowledge is the beginning of philosophy, and the self is exclusively identified with the soul. Self-knowledge, Foucault asserted, was the chief gnostic form of self-care. Such knowledge provided access to truth, in particular the truth of one's divine nature and destiny.[7]

Some ancient gnostics proposed a distinctive relationship between a lower, immanent self, and a higher, divine Self. Assimilation to (or integration into) one's higher Self may come "in the flash of one tremulous glance,"[8] but in most cases the cultivation of one's divine self is a lifelong process. It is a process of recollection: remembering who one truly is and becoming what one recalls. Out of the self's own reflexive awareness of its own divinity, the process of deification occurs.

Gnostic "technologies of the self" support contemplative, ethical, and ritual acts not of self-renunciation (since the flesh is not typically viewed as the true self), but of self-realization. These practices grow out of the recognition of one's own inward divinity, and are means to an end. The self realizes itself as (true) Self. The self—or rather the divine Self—is finalized. It becomes—or rather always was—the final goal of assimilation to God.

Although Foucault did not discuss any gnostic texts at length, his insights illuminate the materials found in the Nag Hammadi library. These texts—though fragmentary in some cases, and not in their original tongue—still give us the best chance of hearing ancient gnostics in their own voice. In this library, those who serve as models of salvation are not megalomaniacs fixated on their own claims to deity. They are depicted, generally speaking, as ancient patriarchs or apostles earnestly seeking for spiritual truth, radically open to finding it in other (extracosmic) worlds and in themselves.

In short, the paradigm gnostics in the Nag Hammadi library are depicted more like the Johannine Jesus than the Irenaean Simon. (Indeed, the paradigm gnostic in many Nag Hammadi texts is Jesus.) Like Jesus, gnostics know that they are not rebels against the high God, but are God's children. They come into this world already divine. As gods in embryo, they often find themselves alienated from a hostile culture and its structures. They are, and sometimes announce themselves to be, lights in the world, one with God in their inner self. They know their origin and destiny and are capable of attaining a vision of God. Finally, at the end of their earthly lives, they soar beyond the skies.

Foucault defined salvation in Hellenistic and Roman philosophy as "the vigilant, continuous, and completed form of the relationship to self closed in on itself. One saves oneself for the self, one is saved by the self, one saves oneself in order to arrive at nothing other than oneself . . . the self is the agent, object, instrument, and end of salvation."[9] This focus on the self, somewhat rhetorically exaggerated here, applies well to gnostic soteriology. It is this focus on the self (or rather the divine Self) that makes the language of self-deification possible.

One must state clearly: this focus on the S/self does not undermine the role of divine aid, the Savior, communal ritual, and moral behavior in the process of salvation. All these elements are involved. None of them, however, undermine the pivotal role of the S/self, the practices of self-care and of self-realization that allow one to speak of gnostic self-deification.

The Three Moments

Here it is argued that gnostic self-deification is realized in three "moments." First, the gnostic is incarnated with an innate divine core. Whatever exactly it is (corporeal or incorporeal, cognitive or suprarational), the inner core is of the same substance as the divine—or rather, the same substance as the mediate form of divinity. The mediate form of divinity is the immanent pole of divinity, often spoken of as a child or emanation of the primal (unknown) deity.[10]

Second, gnostics engage in practices of reflexivity that enable them to develop and realize their divine core. They engage, in other words, in a peculiar "technology of the self," wherein the real self gradually realizes itself as the inner, divine Self through practices of self-knowing. These practices—which are both moral and ritual, communal and individual—serve as the instrumental causes of salvation.

The third moment of self-deification is identification with, in most cases, a mediate deity. This figure can be thought of as the primary cause of deification. The mediate deity awakens the true self to its inward divinity and allows it to begin the process of self-knowledge and self-realization.

But the mediate deity is also in some sense the goal of self-deification. That is to say, the end of deification is often identification with the mediate deity, who is the same reality as the self, albeit a higher and purer form. In ancient gnostic myths, the mediate deity is often represented as external to the self. But the externality of the higher Self is only a necessity of the lower self's embodied, historical existence. Throughout life, gnostics labor to "make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside" (*Gos. Thom.* 22:4). They realize, in other words, that the mediate deity is the true Self, and therefore not ultimately "other" at all.

These three moments, then, make possible the language of self-deification: (1) the presence of divinity in the self; (2) ritual, moral, and contemplative practices of S/self-recognition; and (3) identification with a higher divine Self.

In the sections that follow, I flesh out these three moments of self-deification with the help of brief examples.

Innate Divinity

The foundation of gnostic self-deification is the presence of a dynamic divine element in the self, what is often called "the divine spark."[11] In modern terms, the spark is the true or ideal self. It is different from a person's physical frame, and in most cases it is different from one's (lower) soul as well (the part of the soul that focuses on the management of the physical body).

The divine spark is pure gift, like existence itself. It corresponds to the theological idea of election, and in fact makes election more concrete. Humans, whether it be all of them or a portion of them, have an infinite natural value due to the divine element woven into them at creation. The divine spark and not anything external (whether righteous deeds or pretty looks) is what makes the gnostic already divine, at least potentially.

Inward divinity does not lie as a static lump within the self. It is progressively intensified through the transformation of consciousness.[12] Initially, the spark remains in a latent or a potential state—like a glowing ember needing to be fanned into flame.[13] Through cognitive, ethical, and ritual practices of self-cultivation, it is increasingly illuminated, enflamed, until finally released—as sparks fly upward (Job 5:7).

Ancient philosophers—Platonists in particular—conceived of the divine element in intellectualist terms. The divine core is *nous*—commonly translated as "mind" or "intellect." Other rational and cognitive metaphors were used to speak of the divine or most divine portion of humanity: *dianoia* (thought), *phronēsis* (wisdom), and *logos* (reason). These basic intellectual endowments make possible the richness of *theōria*—vision or contemplation. Through the discipline of *theōria*, said Aristotle (speaking Platonically), people can immortalize themselves.[14]

In his myth of creation, Plato (ca. 429–347 BCE) depicts the divine mind as an immortal seed sown within humans by the Demiurge, or creator god.[15] This immortal mind is the most divine part of the human being. It is also the most intimate.[16] In a famous passage, the most sovereign form (*eidos*) of the soul is called the *daimōn*, or guardian divinity, which each person has as a friendly guide and "roommate" (*sunoikon*) within.[17]

Following Plato, the Stoic Chrysippus (third century BCE) called this internal god a *daimōn*.[18] The theory was developed by Posidonius (early first century BCE), who spoke of "the divinity (*daimōn*) in oneself, which is akin and has a similar nature to the one which governs the whole universe."[19] In the first century CE, Seneca referred to a "holy spirit" (*sacer . . . spiritus*) dwelling within as a guardian (*custos*).[20] A century later, the philosopher Epictetus announced that God presented to each person an unsleeping guardian *daimōn*.[21]

Plutarch, a contemporary of Epictetus, approvingly cited Menander's saying that "our mind (*nous*) is god (*ho theos*)."[22] In his *On the Genius of Socrates*, Plutarch tells the story of Timarchus, who, buried in the sacred cave of the god Trophonius, spoke with his own divine mind.[23] It told him that part of the mind is not dragged down in the varied concerns of the soul, but bobs like a buoy above the head. This higher self is a divinity (*daimōn*) that is released at death and soars above the moon.[24]

These and like ideas were adopted and adapted by contemporary Jews and Christians. The apostle Paul wrote of the divine Christ formed within the believer like a fetus—one organism with its mother (Gal 4:19). Christ dwells in the Christian as spirit (*pneuma*)—identical to the spirit of God (Rom 8:9). Christians collectively are the temple of God, and in this temple, God's *pneuma* dwells (1 Cor 3:16). The *pneuma* gradually dominates bodily desires and renews the "inner person" or *nous* within (2 Cor 4:16; Rom 12:2). After death, the self, released from flesh, rises to God in spirit form (1 Cor 15:39–52).[25]

The gospel of John speaks of Christ as the Logos enlightening every human coming into the world (1:9). Developing this discourse, Justin Martyr asserts that the seeds of the Logos (*sperma tou Logou*) were sown into human beings.[26] Later, Clement of Alexandria remarks, "in all human beings generally, but especially in those who spend their time in learned discussions, there has been instilled a divine effluence (*aporroia theïkē*)."[27] In his *Stromateis*, Clement implicitly compares the divine portion of the soul to the Holy Spirit (*to hagion pneuma*).[28] The Logos builds in human beings a temple so as to establish God in human beings.[29] There, within, the Logos too abides.[30]

Historically, then, when gnostic writers spoke of inward divinity, they were participants in and cocreators of a well-known discourse. Like the philosophers, gnostics could refer to the divine element as mind (*nous*). *The Teachings of Silvanus* refer directly to "the divine mind (*nous*)" that human beings have from God.[31] The ancient matriarch Norea is given "the first mind (*nous*)," later identified with "the mind (*nous*) of the Father," and "the great mind ([*no*]*us*) of the Invisible One."[32]

Yet gnostics went beyond intellectualist understandings of the divine core. In their poetic and narrative universes, they had an amazing array of metaphors to describe it: seed,[33] (drop of) light,[34] spark,[35] word,[36] power,[37] name,[38] pearl,[39] inner human,[40] breath,[41] and so on. Each metaphor expressed something distinctive about inward divinity: how it is integrated into the self, how it operates in human development, and how it attains fulfillment.

Many of the metaphors are biblical. The divine breath is breathed into the first human in Genesis 2:7. The seed, representing the word of God, is sown in a famous parable (Mark 4:3–9). The pearl is tossed among pigs (Matt 7:6).[42] Paul spoke of humans inhabited by divine spirit (*pneuma*, Rom 8:9).

Some of these same images have philosophical correlates. For Plato, the creator sows the seeds of intellect.[43] The Platonic dialogue *Axiochus* speaks of a "divine spirit (*theion . . . pneuma*) in the soul."[44] Stoics thought of the indwelling divinity as *pneuma*—a kind of rational, fiery breath.[45]

Reflexivity

In Gnostic sources, there is a constant dialectic between the divine core and one's divine destiny. It resembles the dialectic we see in Plato between the ideas of divine kinship (*suggeneia*) and assimilation to God (*homoiōsis theōi*).[46] Humans have a natural ("genetic") kinship with God; at the same time, they are called to be more like God in a long—and often arduous—process of growth.

Indeed, one's pregiven likeness to God makes additional assimilation to God possible. If the eye were not sun-like, it could never see the sun.[47] Likewise, if the mind were not akin by nature to the Good, it could never intuit the Good, the Beautiful, and all that is perfect and eternal. In its power of recognizing the eternal, the soul bears within itself the surest proof that it is eternal, as well as the chance to realize that eternity.[48]

The road to realization is the road of reflexivity, of self-knowledge. "Know thyself," attributed to one of the seven sages, was one of the most famous sayings in the ancient world.[49] Carved on the ancient temple of Apollo at Delphi, its meaning was transformed by Platonists beginning in the fourth century BCE. In the Archaic and Classical periods, "Know thyself" was taken to mean "know your (social and ontological) place," that is "know that you are not immortal."[50] The aristocratic politicians and ambassadors who visited the oracle at Delphi were thus encouraged to "think soundly or soberly" (*sōphronein*) and not seize undue power.[51] Plato was aware of this ancient meaning of the phrase, employing it in his dialogue *Charmides* and elsewhere.[52]

Yet in the Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades I*, the maxim underwent a transformation.[53] In an epiphanic moment, Socrates takes "Know thyself" to mean, "know thy true self—the soul." In the soul is a place where wisdom is born. This part of the soul—the seat of knowledge and thought—is divine and resembles God.[54] The one who gazes at this divine part, as if in a mirror, comes to grasp "all that is divine—mind and thinking."[55] God himself, in fact, is the best mirror for the soul, and he, as if an archetype, reveals its true divinity.[56] The meaning of the Delphic maxim thus shifted from, "Know that you are human," to "Know that you are divine."[57]

In later antiquity, "Know that you are divine" became a kind of gnostic manifesto. In the *Gospel of Thomas* Jesus says, "When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father."[58] Likewise, "When you produce that [which is] in you, what you have will save you.' "[59] God is still the savior in this model; but God is within. Salvation is the realization of what is already within; it is self-realization. The spark of remembrance is lit by the sayings of Jesus, but the glowing ember of the divine self is already there, waiting to blaze forth.

Gnostic practices of reflexivity are often spoken of poetically. "Knock on your inner self as upon a door," state the *Teachings of Silvanus*, "and walk within yourself as on a straight road."[60] A certain *Gospel of Philip* is quoted as saying, "The Lord revealed to me what my soul must say on its ascent to heaven, and how it must answer each of the powers on high: 'I recognized myself (*epegnōn emautēn*), and gathered myself from every quarter . . . For I am one of those on high.' "[61]

In a similar fashion, the *Testimony of Truth* (*NHC* IX,3) speaks of the ideal gnostics:

> They asked [what they have been] bound with, [and how they] might properly [release themselves.] And [they came to know] themselves, [(as to) who they are,] or rather, where they are [now,] and what is the [place in] which they will rest from their senselessness, [arriving] at knowledge. [These] Christ will transfer to [the heights] since they have . . . advanced to knowledge . . . [he has come to] know [the Son of the Human,] that [is, he has come to] know himself. This is the perfect life, that] a person know [himself] by means of the All.[62]

Once knowledge of the true self occurs, so does spiritual resurrection (the "transfer to the heights"). In short, arriving at self-knowledge means coming to know one's true nature. One's self is not separate from mediate divinity (in this case, the Son of the Human). One's self *is* the mediate deity in embryonic form.

A master image of reflexivity is the mirror. In the *Alcibiades*, one does not know oneself by oneself. One needs to be in dialogic contact with a guide who serves as the mirror for the self. Socrates uses the example of the eye looking into another person's pupil and seeing itself. In other words, the eye looks into the very source of vision, and thereby best knows itself.

"Behold, the Lord is our mirror," sings the Odist (*Odes Sol.* 13:1), "open (your) eyes and see them in him." In *The Acts of John*, Jesus says to his disciples, "I am a mirror to you who know me . . . Now if you follow my dance, see yourself in me who am speaking."[63] The archetype of the self's divinity is the mediate god (variously conceived). By gazing at this god, one sees the true pattern of one's self.

The Finalized Self

The mediate deity may come to the self as "other," but this deity also comes as the fullest manifestation of the self. The Savior is the mediate god to whom one assimilates. But since the mediate deity is also the higher Self, the gnostic assimilates not to something alien, but to his or her true Self.

Assimilation to the mediate deity begins, according to one text, with a sense of mutual indwelling. In the Valentinian tractate *The Gospel of Truth*, the saved "were joyful in this discovery, and he [the mediate deity] found them within himself and they found him within themselves."[64] When the mediate deity comes to earth, spiritual persons instantly recognize in him something of their true self.

In fact, the spirituals make up the body of the mediate god (a common Pauline image). Here "body" amounts to self. In this sense, the spirituals are consubstantial with the mediate divinity. They constitute the self of the Savior.[65] Thus when they run to the Savior, they run to themselves. But there is more. As with Simon, Valentinian Christians identify with the fullness of the trinitarian Godhead: "You saw Spirit, you became Spirit. You saw Christ, you became Christ. You saw [the Father, you] shall become Father."[66]

In some cases, the mediate deity is indistinguishable from the gnostic's own mind. Seth speaks to his divine Father Geradamas: "you are my mind, O my Father."[67] The mediate deity is revealed as a second Self. He or she does not need to be found without, but within. As the savior says in the *Second Discourse of Great Seth*: "I am Christ, Son of Humanity, one from you who is within you."[68]

Yet the identity between self and Savior can be even more radical. Epiphanius quotes a visionary encounter that he read in the *Gospel of Eve*. It begins, "I stood upon a high mountain and saw a tall man and another short one. And I heard as it were the sound of thunder and drew near to hear." A voice (of thunder?) addresses the narrator personally and says, "I am you and you are I (*egō su kai su egō*), and wherever you are, there I am. I am sown in all people. Wherever you want to gather me, in gathering me, you gather yourself."[69]

In a beautiful passage in *Pistis Sophia*, Christ promises that the saved are now, even while in the world, superior to angels, archangels, luminaries, and even gods. The saved person will be a ruler or king with Christ in his kingdom. In a rising crescendo of promises, Christ solemnly announces: "And truly I say to you: that person is I and I am that person.[70] This promise is repeated in slightly different wording three times. The last promise serves as a culmination: "Every person who will receive mysteries in the Ineffable will be on my left and my right [in the kingdom]. I am they and they are I."[71]

Summary

To sum up, these three elements make possible the language of gnostic self-deification: (1) the presence of divinity in the self, (2) reflexive practices of self-knowledge or self-recognition, and (3) integration into a higher Self represented by a mediate deity. This deity can descend to earth, or the gnostic can ascend with divine aid. The gnostic typically ascends in ecstatic contemplation, while permanent ascent must await the separation of soul and body at death.

We now turn to an in-depth examination of Allogenes, a model gnostic, to demonstrate how the three moments of self-deification play out.

Allogenes

The treatise *Allogenes* was composed probably in the third century CE by a philosophical gnostic group awed by the upper echelons of divinity. Apparently known to Plotinus's school in Rome,[72] *Allogenes* was translated from Greek, and circulated in Coptic manuscripts up and down the Nile.[73] The sole existing copy of the text is the fragmentary third treatise of the eleventh Nag Hammadi codex.[74]

Allogenes is the main character in his eponymous book. Throughout, he is and represents the ideal gnostic, superior to philosophers and holy men. Due to his superhuman lifespan, Allogenes is likely a literary representation of an antediluvian patriarch. His injunction to bury his book is an apocalyptic motif characteristic of ancient patriarchs, including Seth.[75] Seth was the third son of Adam, who in Genesis 4:25 (LXX) is called "a different seed" (*sperma heteron*). This different seed may in fact be Allogenes himself, whose name literally means "one from a different race."[76]

Whoever exactly he is, Allogenes is symbolically what his name signifies: a "Foreigner" or "Alien." He is the patriarch of those who consider themselves alien to this world, the elect race of gnostics. Reading *Allogenes* is a practice of identifying with its hero, the consummate "other" who is destined to transcend the world through a contemplative practice of self-transformation.

Literary Setting

The treatise itself is an apocalypse in two parts: (1) the revelation of the angel Youel in five discourses, and (2) Allogenes's own ascent to behold the mysteries of the Godhead.[77] Importantly, Allogenes's upward climb seems to be entirely internalized. It is an ascent (or descent) within himself, requiring (at least a temporary) deification, resulting in a peak experience of the God beyond both divinity and cognition.[78]

Allogenes shares features with three other gnostic treatises, usually characterized as "Platonizing Sethian": *Zostrianos, Marsanes*, and *The Three Steles of Seth*.[79] All four treatises are deeply informed by Neoplatonism, share an interest in the upper levels of divinity, and represent an individual or group as making a contemplative or meditative ascent to the intelligible realm. The character Zostrianos is especially useful to compare with Allogenes, and appears in the discussion below.[80]

The Five Discourses

Since the introduction of *Allogenes* has not survived, the reader is thrown into the text overhearing Youel's numinous discourse about God. Early on, Youel tells Allogenes that she has provided him with a guardian called "mind" (*nous*).[81] This mind is the power that exists within Allogenes. It is apparently a name for his divine core. The fact that it is called a "guardian" (*pirefareh*) is reminiscent of the Stoic use of *daimōn* we saw above.[82] Stoics identified the human mind with this *daimōn*. In turn, Allogenes's inward power is said to derive from "the Triply-Powered One."[83]

The identity of the Triply-Powered One is disputed. It might simply be a name for the highest deity, called "the Invisible Spirit." Nevertheless, as John Turner argues, this being seems also to be a hypostasis of the high God mediating the generation of Barbelo (divine Intellect par excellence).[84] Barbelo herself is differentiated into three levels of deity: Being, Life, and Mind, and so can be thought of as Triply Powered.[85]

Introducing the second discourse, Youel informs Allogenes that the Father (or high God) clothed him with a great power (*qom*) before he was incarnated.[86] The power seems to be another reference to Allogenes's divine core, likely identical with his previously mentioned guardian mind. This identification is supported by the fact Allogenes's mind is called the "power (*tiqom*) which exists in you."[87]

Zostrianos, at the beginning of his journey, also recognizes "the power (*tiqom*) residing within me (*etšo[o]p ᵉnhēt*)." This inward power "possessed total light."[88] Light is often descriptive of intellect.[89] Zostrianos is later told, "the (kind of) person that is saved is the one who seeks himself and (who searches) his intellect . . . Oh how much power (*qom*) that person has!"[90]

After Youel's second discourse, Allogenes "took flight."[91] He turns to himself and sees "the light that [surrounded] me and the good that was in me, and I became divine (*aeiᵉrnoute*)."[92] This is Allogenes's major claim to divinity in the book. Through a process of self-realization, Allogenes temporarily transcends the limits of mortality. He requires external revelation to begin the process, but his deification is nonetheless the development of his inward potential ("the good that was in me"). Through the practice of self-reflexivity, he recognizes his divine core and—apparently by that very recognition—realizes his own divine, purely intellectual state.

A parallel statement in *Zostrianos* sheds light on Allogenes's experience:

> [T]his type (of person) is saved who can pass through [them] all; [he becomes] them all. Whenever he [wishes], he again parts from all these matters and withdraws into himself (*anakhōri[n e]rof maua[af]*); for he becomes divine (*ša[fš]ōpe [n]nou[te]*), having withdrawn (*anakhō[ri]n*) into God.[93]

What Zostrianos "passes through" are apparently the different levels of divine reality. The journey, however, is an internal one. Withdrawal into one's own divine mind is equivalent to withdrawing into God (the ultimate Mind). Since God is found within the self and is the Self, deification is a form of self-realization.

In the context of her fifth revelatory discourse, Youel exhorts Allogenes: "If you [seek with perfect] seeking, [then] you shall know the [good that is] in you, then [you shall know yourself] as well, as one who [derives from] the God who truly [preexists]."[94] Derivation from God and having God within are not mutually exclusive. Seeking is in part the seeking of the self—the inward good. It is, or results in, self-knowledge, and is appropriate to the nature of Allogenes.

Youel promises Allogenes a final revelation after one hundred years. To sweeten the delay, she offers the following incentive: "When [you receive] a conception [of that One, then] you [are filled with] the Logos [to completion]. And then [you become divine] and [you become perfect]."[95] Here knowledge of God is the means of deification. When one knows God, one is filled with God, and specifically a mediate god called Logos. Christian authors like Clement also spoke of being filled with the Logos.[96] Such filling results in deification, which is equated with the perfection of one's being.

Humility

At the end of her speech, Youel adds an important remark. "Whenever one comes to one's own nature, one is humbled. For incorporeal natures do not have a share of any greatness since they have the capacity such that they are in every place and are not in any place, being greater than any greatness; and they are humbler than any smallness."[97] Gnostic deification, in other words, does not result in pride and self-exaltation. Contrary to what the heresy hunters claimed, self-deifying gnostics were not megalomaniacs. They knew that one is not greater than what one knows. In fact, "greatness" (or magnitude) has no meaning when one recognizes one's incorporeal, intellectual self that is outside of space and time.[98]

Allogenes is himself a model of humility. He admits of weakness, and regularly accepts strength from on high.[99] Although he rejoices in his revelations, he does not boast about them. Overwhelmed and overawed, he fears going beyond appropriate teaching.[100] When the revelations come to an end, he obediently begins contemplative practices of self-preparation. For a full century, he says, "I took counsel with myself . . . For I rejoiced greatly in myself, existing in a great light and upon a blessed path."[101]

Ascent

When the time elapsed, Allogenes was seized by "the eternal light."[102] Instead of his flesh, he finds himself in another "garment"—perhaps a body of light or noetic vehicle.[103] In a "pure place" he sees the entities he was told about a century before.[104] All the realities that he learned about from external revelation are replicated internally in his own experience. The structures of Godhead slowly unfold before—or within—him.

Even in this exalted state, Allogenes stands resting upon his own knowledge.[105] This information hints that, though he has soared beyond the universe, Allogenes has not exited his own mind. Such an interpretation does not deny the experiential reality of Allogenes's ascent; it merely recognizes that his journey was not spatial. It is *his own knowledge* that grants Allogenes the stability of divinity. Once again, it is the reflexive practice of knowing what one knows that actualizes inward transformation.

Allogenes beholds the heavenly mysteries by means of his "blessedness"—that in which he knows himself as he truly is.[106] Blessedness, according to Turner, refers both to Allogenes's perception of his innate divinity and to his reception of Mentality, a mediate form of divine Intellect that Allogenes can behold outside of himself.[107] In terms of his journey, Allogenes is standing on the lowest level of Intellect. He is himself divine mind, and stands on, or in, the greater divine Mind. In short, we have a conceptual blend of internal and external divinity, of mind within and Mind without which are being realized as one.[108]

Suddenly, multiple divine powers (called Luminaries) address our hero:

> O Allogenes, behold your Blessedness, how silently it abides, by which you know your proper self, and seeking yourself, ascend to the Vitality that you will see moving![109]

Allogenes can behold his own Blessedness (or mind) as if it were outside of him. But the Blessedness is his own, and allows him to know himself. He ascends by seeking himself, his own mind, while at the same time seeing Mentality without. Normally the inner workings of one's own subjectivity are invisible to the self. But when mind is objectified and externalized in Mentality, one can clearly see the deeper structures of the self. The Blessedness of Mentality is always there, silently abiding in the infinite spaces of Allogenes's mind. His future ascent to Vitality is in fact a realization of the life he already has within.

As the luminaries speak to Allogenes, they refer to a "pattern (*tupos*) that exists in you." Yet it also "exists in all these"—the other self-born divine beings in the intelligible world.[110] The more that Allogenes knows himself and his companions, the more he realizes that he shares a similar (intelligible) form. In his ascent, he is being fashioned into the (intelligible) likeness of those on the same journey. As he rises onto the level of Being, he will cease to be differentiated from them. His individual consciousness will be expanded into the single, collective, and divine consciousness of Intellect.[111]

Instead of seeing anything in the initial revelation, Allogenes only hears "that blessedness by which I knew myself as <I> am."[112] Divine reality seems to hit him from outside in audible form, but once again it awakens the deepest knowledge of himself. Through self-knowledge, he ascends—or rather internally withdraws (*anakhōri*)—to the higher levels of divinity.[113]

The Primary Revelation

Finally, Allogenes is ready for the highest, "primary" revelation.[114] He withdraws into Vitality, and then swiftly takes his stand upon the highest level of Intellect (Being itself).[115] He sees "the God that surpasses perfection and the Triply-powered One that exists in them all."[116] But even this vision is also a vision of himself. Before he sees anything, Allogenes testifies, "After I had received an eternal strength, I came to understand what exists in me, and (*m^{e}n*) the Triply-powered."[117]

Turner translates the second phrase: "I knew that [which] exists in me, even (*m^{e}n*) the Triple-Powered One."[118] This translation indicates that Allogenes's inward deity is somehow identical to the Triply-Powered One itself.[119] If accepted, Turner's interpretation strengthens a point observed earlier: that in the highest realms, internal and external divinity become indistinguishable.[120] In the vision of God, one becomes what one sees. Allogenes can see deity because the deity is within him as his true Self. At the height of his ecstatic ascent, his self has morphed with the divine Self—or its highest manifestation.

When it comes to the supreme, Unknowable deity, however, silence and awe win out. Although the highest divinity is "in all those that exist," it also "encompasses them all, since it surpasses them all."[121] Allogenes cannot become one with the primal God, who is technically beyond being and divinity. Nevertheless, he hears an apophatic sermon about the Unknowable God, leading him to an experience of learned ignorance and silent awe.

Back on Earth

When his inward ascent ends, Allogenes joyfully reveals the mysteries to a disciple. The fact that the mysteries were proclaimed "in my presence inside me (*^{e}nhēt*)" once again indicates that the ascent was an inward, intellectual exploration of the S/self.[122]

Oddly, Allogenes's practice of self-preparation does not end after all his exalted visions. Once again, he takes up a position in reference to himself: "I stood in myself preparing myself."[123] Thus from beginning to end, Allogenes emphasizes that he attains deifying vision through reflexive practices of self-knowledge and contemplation.

Zostrianos has a slightly different experience. After his ascent, he preaches to the children of Seth: "Awaken your godhood in God, and empower your sinless elect soul."[124] This is a striking statement of self-empowered salvation and of self-deification. Naturally, Zostrianos does not exclude divine aid. He has himself turned into a kind of savior figure and revealer. He immediately reveals that the divine Father invites and awaits the elect.[125] Nevertheless, Zostrianos still preaches a gospel in which salvation starts with the self. Since the self ultimately refers to the transcendent Self—who is simultaneously other and identical to the immanent self—salvation equally starts "in God."

Summary

In sum, all three elements of self-deification are present in *Allogenes*: (1) innate divinity (the guardian mind, the power, the inner good), (2) reflexivity (contemplative practices of seeking and knowing the self), and (3) identification with a mediate deity (Intellect). In the end, Allogenes attains the highest level of Intellect, and in the process becomes undifferentiated from Intellect and all the beings within it.

It is true that Allogenes needs the revelation of several deities in the divine hierarchy. At the highest level of Intellect, however, Allogenes realizes himself as ontologically identical to these divine beings. The revelation—represented as external to Allogenes—actually unfolds within him. The apocalyptic vision is in fact an inward dialogue, a dialogue with the self: Allogenes's divine mind recollects and activates its own knowledge. The mediate deity Intellect/Barbelo in her various forms comes to Allogenes as if from outside. But she was always within him as his true Self.

This is why gnostic deification is self-deification: it is a matter of self-fashioning, self-realization, and self-creation. The internal divine "I" meets the transcendent Ego at a variety of levels, and they successively merge into a single divine Self. This single Self in this case is Intellect, the reflection of the high God (or Invisible Spirit). Only at the highest level beyond Being does apophaticism wash away words, knowledge, and Allogenes himself.

Conclusion

Gnostic self-deification, though focused on the self, does not at all remove the primacy of God. Indeed, it assumes the most radical assimilation to God in perhaps all of ancient thought.

It is the high God himself who eternally gazes at himself in a luminous mirror of self-knowledge to produce an image, a Mind equal to himself. We find this mythic theme in *The Secret Book of John*:

> He [the Father] is the one who beholds himself alone in the light surrounding him, which is the spring of living water, and bestows all the aeons. He reflects on his image in every way, sees it in the spring of the Spirit, and becomes enamored of his luminous water, in the spring of pure luminous water surrounding him. His thought became a reality, and She who appeared in his presence in the splendor of his light came forth. She is the first power who preceded everything and came forth from his mind as the Forethought.[126]

The high God's archetypal self-reflexive act is a kind of self-realization that makes possible the creation of everything else. All that exists is ultimately a multiply refracted projection of God's Self, a Self who has taken on her own autonomous life. The primal emanations of Barbelo are the first deities that cast images which in turn become secondary and tertiary deities. Our world is the shadow of these gods (or rather of one, erring god). Humans find themselves in this shadow, though their hearts more directly mirror the transcendent Father. The way that they return to God is through an act of continuous, spiral-like reflexivity very much like God's own.

The two kinds of self-knowing are inversely related. The Invisible Spirit knows himself. This self-knowledge constitutes the unfolding of the universe. Humanity's self-knowledge begins the process of refolding back into God. The consciousness of God, when embedded in human beings, has the potential to know itself and return to and into the divine. This return results in the ultimate (infinite) expansion of the Self and restoration of the divine Self.

In gnostic salvation, the mediate deity functions as both the divine Other and the Self. The human self is displaced onto this perfect Other. In this way, arrogance is annulled. In fact, it is not even a possibility. The resources of the lower self are necessary, but not sufficient. The higher Self comes down to fill the gap. Initially, the lower self is passive, and the higher active. The two work in tandem—but in the end, it is one work (cf. John 5:17). There is a synergy between the self and God, with the implicit suggestion that the self overlaps with the divine in some conceptually undefined way. Thus there is articulated both a need for external aid and a radical self-empowerment, which are not mutually exclusive.

Gnostic self-deification is self-deification not because the immanent self by itself completes the work of salvation, but because the reflexive process reveals that the self includes the divine Other. This divine Other is integrated into the self (and vice versa) to the point of identity. This reflexive process of identification with the divine Other qualifies as self-deification because the Other is also the greater Self. The mediate deity comes as divine Other, but in the process of revelation, a gradual "de-othering" of deity occurs. Realizing oneself means becoming an "other" to the world while simultaneously making the divine Other the S/self.

Yet difference is not completely destroyed. The self is not utterly absorbed into the high God (who, strictly speaking, is beyond divinity). Turner speaks of "an annihilation of the self in its complete coalescence with the supreme One."[127] In many cases, it is more fitting to speak of the ultimate realization of the self as the greater Self, the true Self, the divine Self. This Self is typically a version of Intellect (or the Barbelo aeon), the highest level of God serving as the immediate reflection of the primal, unknowable God beyond God. In this case, one's Selfhood is not annihilated, even if one bursts far beyond the bounds of individual consciousness.

In the end, there is nothing selfish about this form of deification. Those who practice it are not focused on themselves as themselves, but on realizing themselves as part of a higher, divine Self. One of the problems of human existence is the will to belong to oneself, of willful self-determination leading to individuation, which in itself makes union with God impossible. Allogenes literally loses his (lower) self in his vision. He begins to know himself as the expression of God's own supreme and eternal self-knowledge. In this vision, the high God remains primary, as the one who gives power to all, who surpasses all.[128]

In the end, Gnostic self-deification is a radical form of self-fashioning and self-creation. Clement of Alexandria wrote that the gnostic, assimilated to God, "forms and creates himself" (*heauton ktizei kai dēmiourgei*).[129] Language analogous to self-creation can be found in *Allogenes*. The hero comes to recognize himself as one from the self-generated world, himself self-generated.[130] The model gnostic has a divine Mother. What She fashions, She fashions as the individuated expression of her Self. Through contemplation, gnostics climb back into the womb of their Mother, their source of life and rest, and are reborn on a higher plane into a higher Self.

With some justification, Michel Foucault never abandoned his belief that a person's "true self" was in fact a chimera. Nevertheless, late in his career, he was able to write, "From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art."[131] This inner process of self-creation—of self-beautification—is exactly what gnostic self-deification is all about.

Conclusion

THE MANY MYTHS OF SELF-DEIFICATION

Every man would like to be God, if it were possible; some few find it difficult to admit the impossibility.

BERTRAND RUSSELL[1]

One must become divine to become human; by reaching for the ultimately divine realm from one's limbo in Eden one thrusts oneself into reality, further away from divinity. Yet is this passage not inevitable?

SUSAN NIDITCH[2]

AS DOCUMENTED IN this study, myths of self-deification follow a basic typology. In what can be called the locative type, the self-deifier is put in his place: the dark pit of the underworld. In the utopian type, by contrast, the self-deifier rises—even from the grave—and ascends to the stars.[3] In the first type, the soaring antihero slams against the vaulted roof of heaven and cannot break through. In the second, the hero, though persecuted on earth, finally glides through heaven's gate. In the first kind of self-deification, the action is coded as transgression; in the second, it is deemed transcendence. Practically speaking, however, the act of self-deification (claiming to be a god, or God) remains in both cases threateningly similar.

In a locative religious context, the myth of the self-deifier often serves a moralistic purpose: prideful self-assertion is evil and cannot succeed. The locative reading of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, for instance, indicates that a human, even one who is two-thirds divine, cannot attain divinity (i.e., immortality). In a utopian reading, however, the self-deifier becomes a model of transcendence and self-realization. Utnapishtim, who was not divine, survives the Deluge and is immortalized.[4]

The myths of self-deification discussed in this book are all either Jewish or Christian, but they follow this same typology. In short, the locative model fits what in the introduction was called the rebel type, whereas the utopian model describes the fate of the self-deifying hero.

Keep Your Place: The Self-deifier as Rebel

The rebel myths of Helel and Adam were first recorded by Judeans in the Babylonian and Persian periods. It was an age of world empires and absolute monarchs. The vast power of imperial kings meant that they approached the status of deity, and, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, actually became gods. Typically, however, rulers posed as viceroys and representatives of an imperial high God.

Judean mythology was no exception to this pattern. Jews allowed human agents to serve as representatives of Yahweh. Nebuchadnezzar is, in one account, Yahweh's "servant" (Jer 27:6). Cyrus of Persia is even Yahweh's "anointed" (or "messiah") (Isa 45:1). Some Jews yearned for their own native king (or messiah) to be Yahweh's earthly viceroy.

Jewish mythmakers also recorded and sacralized stories about a royal figure who tried to attack and demote Yahweh (or his agent). In these myths, the attacker wants to be equal or superior to Yahweh. The rebel poses not as Yahweh's anointed, but as Yahweh himself, or as a God greater than Yahweh. The self-deifier thus introduces grave instability into the cosmic kingdom. For the upholders of this kingdom, the self-deifier must be put down just like any political revolutionary. The self-deifier's fall reinforces the stability of the cosmos, and the glory of Israel's invisible King.

Self-deifiers haunt both Jewish and Greek mythology, but in different ways. In Greek myth they are, to be sure, portrayed as rebels. Theoretically, however, a new god could be born and overthrow the current regime (as Zeus overthrew Kronos). In Jewish mythology, which reflects some political arrangements in the east, divine power is more centralized and more absolute. The divine overlord is theoretically not subject to a coup d'état. Consequently, self-deifiers play the role of both rebels and fools. In a dualistic cosmos, they become symbols of ultimate evil and disorder.

Thus the locative type of self-deifier mythology functioned as an exercise in monotheistic conditioning. The mythology lifted the Jewish imagination onto a plane of mythic history in which their deity alone reigned supreme. The Judeans' dominant myth of history was a grand narrative that portrayed their local deity as emperor over all gods and human potentates. The divine emperor sets a definite time for history. Within this timeframe, Yahweh himself raises up rulers to punish and purge his favored, though sinful, people.

These punishers threaten to destroy the nation, yet do not imperil the emperor himself. Human kings, even self-deifying ones, are portrayed as ephemeral, petty officials in a vast imperial bureaucracy. Though they roar like monsters, they are in fact pipsqueaks and tools—falling stars that flash only briefly. In this overarching myth of history, the overseeing Lord loses none of his claim to prestige. Indeed, the mythic plane of history is the divine emperor's playground where he exercises sovereign control.

In short, the locative type of self-deifier myth fits into larger, grander myths of early Jewish and Christian theodicy that legitimate Yahweh and the inexorability of his divine rule. Self-deifier myths present an exciting narrative twist in the sacred story of Yahweh's government—since someone actually dares to oppose it. Unfortunately (for dramatic suspense at least), the victor in this battle is determined at the outset. The self-deifier is continually sacrificed on the altar of Yahweh's superiority. Almost all self-deifications result in demotions and demonizations.

Subversion

Nevertheless, the rebel type of self-deification indicates that not all is well in Yahweh's imperial government. Some of his subjects hold him to be a tyrant, and one wonders if they are not misled. If Yahweh was so good and just, why would Helel/Lucifer wish to rebel at all? Lucifer became jealous, perhaps, of Yahweh's absolute power. But if Yahweh was willing to share this power in the first place, perhaps jealousy might not have arisen in the divine choir.

Lucifer's unsuccessful coup raises a larger question: why is radical inequality built into Yahweh's cosmic kingdom? Why must Yahweh be king and everyone else a subject? Self-deification is a power grab. But the power grab is made necessary by the inherent and inflexible hierarchy of divine government. One has to come face to face with a being who has all the power in the universe and will never relinquish it. All beings in comparison to him are nothing and—in later Christian theology—actually made from nothing. It may be true that God is love (to use Christian language). But if so, why does he reserve all the power for himself—doling out privileges only to those who submit to him? As long as there is absolute monarchy in heaven, there is the potential for tyranny on earth. The very structure of radical inequality above justifies social inequalities below. The very structure of monotheism (or divine monarchy) invokes revolt.

The Christian myth of Lucifer/Satan shows that the possibility for revolt exists even at the highest levels of the heavenly hierarchy. One of the greatest archangels rebelled, and was hurled like lightning from heaven. Yet though he is fallen, and knows his fiery fate, he keeps up the fight. If Lucifer is a fool, he is at least courageous. As a rebel, he fights against celestial tyranny and domination. The dominant religious ideology constantly repeats that true freedom is found in submission. Lucifer offers a new definition of freedom and a new understanding of godhood.

When the self-deifier becomes Adam, the mythic ancestor of human beings, the human desire for divinity is seen as natural—or is, rather, naturalized. In this case, the desire for divinity is merely the attempt to recover the original state of the primal human in Eden. The first human is in fact the first god-human or human god. Whether or not Adam gloried in his divine wisdom and power, his recognition of his own divinity is, in Ezekiel 28, coded as transgression. "I am divine" (*anî ʾel*) is effectively made into the claim: "I am El (the high God)." In essence, Ezekiel tries to portray human divinity as itself a sinful state, rather than the state of perfection and sanctity in paradise. In the prophet's retelling, the human god is executed by swords, turned into ash, and dissolved into nothingness.

But the very myth that Ezekiel relates preserves the memory of a different tale, one in which Adam is not a monster, but a gorgeous angel. He is a hybrid, to be sure (humanly divine and divinely human), but his hybridity is, as it were, the jeweled setting of his beauty.

The idea that Yahweh resents Adam's divinity, or is threatened by it, is a frankly disturbing development in Judean mythology during and after the Exile. In essence, the jealous Yahweh is the god conformed to human deformity—assimilated, that is, to a negative human emotion. By his jealousy, and his edict to execute Adam, Yahweh risks becoming the true tyrant, the god conformed to the ancient Near Eastern despot desperate to centralize and absolutize his own power—ready to devalue and destroy human life should it get in his way.[5]

Christian gnostics exposed the injustice of Yahweh's absolute power. They read Jewish scripture without the expected piety. They knew that the way Yahweh creates and maintains his rule was by issuing his own self-deifying edicts: "I, even I am he. There is no God besides me" (Deut 32:39). "I am God, and there is no other!" (Isa 45:22). According to the Bible itself, then, Yahweh is the primordial self-deifier. In mythic time, he proclaims his deity prior to the prince of Tyre, prior to Adam—prior to Lucifer himself. Yahweh's primordial claim to deity was thought to disrupt the like claims of other divinities in ancient Israel and abroad. In Jewish scripture, Yahweh admits that he is jealous of these other gods, but does his best to construct—often by mere fiat—a mythic universe in which his opponents are reduced to powerless idols (Exod 20:5; Isa 41:29).

Yahweh's openly self-deifying claims and jealous defense of his glory were emphasized by gnostics who attempted to reveal the true nature of this deity. Gnostic mythographers reversed the valence of Yahweh's monotheistic boast in order to unveil what was (in their view) a superior (Platonic) monotheism. For them, there was one unjealous, unknowable, incorporeal high God outside of space and time. Far beneath him, the Jewish god (dubbed "Yaldabaoth") is transformed into an arbitrary, arrogant self-deifier. The truly satanic rebel, in this model, is not Lucifer, but the one who threw him down.

From their point of view, gnostics did not subvert the story of Yahweh. Rather, they told his true story. He *is* a tyrant, or so they believed. Millennia of pious readings cannot hide Yahweh's jealous ferocity, his heavy-handed rhetoric of violence, and lust for dominion. Myths of Yahweh, which their votaries tried to cure by all the medicines of allegory and metaphor, had to be cut from the corpus of sacred mythology.

Self-deification and Monotheism

The gnostic versions of the rebel pattern show that the myths of monotheism and of self-deification are closely intertwined. The God who claims absolute power and glory is himself a self-deifier destined to fall. For a time, he may attempt to distinguish between his divinity and the humanity (or mortality) of his competitors, but his own desire for glory shows that he is (in Nietzsche's phrase) "human, all too human."

In sum, although some myths of self-deification legitimate Jewish and Christian monotheism, others expose its flaws. Monotheism is based on a boast, a boast in a particular god's sole power to dispose with the world, the gods, and history itself as he pleases. The boast belongs to one who plays the part of a divine emperor. His votaries are meant to believe that he is in control—even as they face repeated exile and defeat. Logically, the self-deifying lord and his community demonize other instances of self-deification in an attempt to separate good (their regime) from evil (that of others). But it does not work. The very myth that supports Yahweh's power can be inverted to prove his weakness.

Personal Utopia: The Self-deifier as Hero

Nevertheless, the self-deifier is not always a rebel against divine power. In Jewish and Christian myth, there have been some who claimed to be divine and were not enemies of God. Far from falling into hell, they were exalted to heaven.

A vivid, if controversial, example of self-deification is Jesus in the gospel of John. This Jesus repeatedly claims to be divine in Yahweh's very temple, taking over elements of Yahweh's own hegemonic, monotheistic discourse. Jesus is above the Law, prior to the first ancestor of the Jews, and superior to Judaism itself. He is the final judge of the dead who has life "in himself." He declares, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58).

In doing so, Jesus boldly assumes Yahweh's name and character—but no trap door to hell opens up. There is no meteoric fall or burning to ashes. The only shout of rebuke comes from the Jews in the story, Yahweh's (apparently former) people, who are generally depicted as blind and evil-minded. After Jesus is "exalted" on the cross, he eventually rises to God. The Jewish leaders try to kill him for equalizing himself with God. But Jesus is not a rebel against Yahweh; he is Yahweh's son. In the myth, Yahweh himself testifies to the legitimacy of Jesus's self-deification by raising him from the dead.

Just as self-deification is original to human "history" (in the myth of Adam), it is endemic to Christian history as well. Early catholic heresy hunters knew that they competed with a social "other" that arose (according to their own mythology) simultaneous to their movements: Christian gnostics. These gnostics, mythically symbolized in the convert Simon of Samaria, did not arise later than the apostles, but contemporaneously with them. The gnostic stories of Christ and his salvation were thus—even in Christian myth—admitted to be as old as the earliest catholic variants. Thus early catholics could not fully neutralize the gnostic threat with the argument from chronology (i.e., that falsehood must postdate truth).

To supplement their apologetic arsenal, early catholic theologians traced a gnostic genealogy, a stemma of darkness, back to Simon (now depicted as a pseudo-apostle) who recapitulated the original (Adamic) sin of self-deification. Out of this sin arose all other evils afflicting Christianity, evils which in fact represented the myths and practices of competing Christian groups from the second to the fourth centuries CE. Thus self-deification became a tool of "othering," a way for some Christians to separate and sanctify their own movements by demonizing others.

In gnostic writings themselves, however, the self-deifier is not a rebel, but a child of a nonjealous, super-divine deity who calls the self into the highest form of union with the divine. Jesus is very much a model here, and in many gnostic texts, he reveals the secret of self-deification as one who has already accomplished the goal. Divinity is not "wholly other" to humanity; it is within. The notion of inward divinity, rooted largely in philosophical developments, flows smoothly from Pauline and Johannine theology. The story of the divine spark is a myth found in the earliest forms of Christian discourse. In the development of this myth, self-deification is coded as freedom, as ascent from lower world structures, and as the ultimate S/self-realization.

Self-deification and Society

When we inquire into the overall meaning of ancient self-deification mythology, we are confronted with an important fact: there is no overall meaning. A myth, writes Wendy Doniger, is "a narrative that makes possible any number of ideas but does not commit itself to any single one. A myth is like a gun for hire, a mercenary soldier: it can be made to fight for anyone."[6] Some self-deification myths are cautionary tales warning people not to arrogantly exceed the limits of "human nature." Others encourage people to reject the static boundary between humanity and divinity and realize their own godhood within. Some myths support the overall claims of monotheism: Yahweh cannot be conquered. In others, monotheism is mocked as the lie of a jealous tyrant. In still others, monotheism is continually deferred through the construction of an unknown God who ungrudgingly bestows his divinity.

It must be pointed out, however, that even the utopian type of self-deification tends to support the ultimate transcendence of a primal God. The unknown God exalts humans to the mediate level of divinity. That is to say, deified persons typically remain on a level below primal deity. Transcendence is surely achieved (humans become gods), but it is a relative transcendence. Self-deification, when performed by the hero, does not replace the high God. Even in the myth, the ultimate alterity of the first Principle (sometimes said to be beyond being and divinity) is preserved.

Even if there is no overall meaning of the myths, however, we can still make some general remarks about their social and political functions. Religion, writes Pierre Bourdieu, consecrates by "contributing to the *symbolic manipulation of aspirations*, which tends to ensure the adjustment of actual hopes to objective possibilities." Religion can produce a sense of objectivity, he says, "only by producing *the misrecognition of the limits* of the knowledge that makes it possible."[7] Myth, although Bourdieu does not mention it here, is perhaps the main (or most adaptable) ideological tool to achieve consecration. It "represents the most archaic form of universe-maintenance, as indeed it represents the most archaic form of legitimation generally."[8] In short, myths structure what humans conceive of as possible. They bestow a sense of nature, and of what constitutes human and divine nature in particular.

Most ancient religious specialists (notably those tied to established social hierarchies) had an interest in proving the impossibility of self-deification. They preached that it was against human nature, because they viewed it as disruptive to human society. Self-deifiers are typically independent of the religious systems that they inhabit. They act as if the source of spiritual power and transcendence comes from themselves, not the rites and practices of the majority religion. Indeed, self-deifiers even put themselves above the old deities that tend to hold religious systems together. Consequently, self-deifiers prove to be highly dangerous to religions that regulate and consecrate cosmic and social structures. For the priests and purveyors of these religions, self-deification is constructed as not only evil but also insane and ontologically impossible.

Still, new possibilities for thought regularly open up—often in times of social and political crisis. New religious entrepreneurs accrue a measure of symbolic capital by announcing that, in a new mythic universe, the ideologically impossible is in fact the concealed reality. Sometimes these religious entrepreneurs offer a myth of self-deification, or even appear as self-deifiers themselves. Self-deifiers can announce the death of previous symbolic systems (e.g., the religion of Yahweh = Yaldabaoth is deemed a wicked lie). Others radically adapt and integrate themselves into these older symbolic systems ("I am a god, because I am son of God"). Either strategy will have success based on concrete social and political conditions, which will in part determine how quickly the novel and unthinkable can be established as natural fact.

In short, myths of self-deification, like many myths, can support either the status quo or what David Tracy calls the "fluxus quo" (i.e., revolution).[9] To have a revolution, writes Bruce Lincoln, a religion of resistance "must successfully articulate a new theory of political legitimacy, which denies the right of the dominant fraction to occupy its privileged position."[10]

Myth is the most ancient, and most seductive kind of theory. Myths are relatively simple stories that everyone in principle can understand. On the one hand, a self-deification myth might justify the ways of God to men. On the other hand, God himself might be exposed as a jealous tyrant and rebel against the true God. The general rule is, one always sides with the greater power, whose identity and character empower and represent the people who imagine him.

In the end, self-deification mythology—whatever its type—is a means of communal self-preservation. The mythology helps its purveyors to write themselves into the sacred history of God's ultimate triumph. In some cases, the group identifies with the community persecuted by the rebellious self-deifier. When the self-deifier is sacrificed, his blood serves as the glue binding a group together. Those who drink his blood affirm their own power over their enemies past and present. When, on the other hand, the group identifies with the self-deifier, they envision themselves as sharing in his or her exalted destiny. When identified with these ideal persons (for instance, Allogenes), members of the community experience the profound sentiments of their own eternal significance. Their minds soar to imagine their transcendent identity.

In both cases, the mythmaking group "is transposed onto a cosmic plane and made majestically independent of the vicissitudes of individual existence."[11] The group begins to see itself as an eternal elect community—as undying, indeed, as the divinity it worships. By both condemning and selectively affirming the self-deifier, the group engages in practices of self-preservation and self-legitimation that merge into social forms of self-deification.

When one individual exalts himself over established hierarchies, the group is threatened. But when the whole community shares the benefits of its own discursive self-deification, it conceals the reality of this deification from itself. Similarly, when a group displaces its own deification onto a figure in a myth, its self-deifying activities are veiled from both insiders and outsiders. It is Jesus—not his church—who is exalted (to use a common example). But their destinies are intertwined. Jesus is the soteriological blueprint for the elect, their forerunner, their model. As he sits enthroned in heaven, the chosen are already proleptically enthroned with him (Eph 2:6). They are, in Pauline language, already "in" him, and make up his body or self.

The question of why individuals or communities imagine a self-deifier is in part psychological: humans (especially in a scientific and technological age) are constantly testing their perceived limits. The self-deifier is fundamentally a boundary crosser. Unlawful crossing is coded as transgression, whereas lawful crossing becomes transcendence. The self-deifier is, generally speaking, either made a demon or a hero. There is, due to emotional polarization, no state in-between. He is either perceived as a threat to the community or as a template for a new kind of community. There is typically no progression from one pole to another—just unceasing oscillation. This eternal back-and-forth, or wheel of inversion is the story that ironically has no beginning in human history or projected end, but only a middle—our present in which story and counterstory are painted in the bright colors of human values.

Self-deification Today

These sociopolitical functions of self-deification myths indicate that they have not outlived their use. Even today, most westerners are culturally familiar with the rebel pattern of self-deification. This pattern has allowed self-deification to become a metaphor of the self-serving display of one's own honors. This form of self-deification is still widely viewed as an ugly practice, chiefly of athletes and politicians—though occasionally of academics. (One might argue that the hidden transcript of the curriculum vitae, like the *Res gestae* of the emperor Augustus, is self-deification—a fact that we all willfully misrecognize.) Fortunately, the need for reelection humbles the pride of politicians, and athletes are laid low by swift-running old age. As for academics, the arduous process of finding employment, fielding criticism, and attaining tenure drains the pomp out of nearly every circumstance.

There is no form of self-deification that is morally and politically "safe." The desire for transcendence (even with divine aid) is always dangerous to society because it involves one person or group claiming a (radically) higher status than another. Theism (and monotheism in particular) means that hierarchy is built into the cosmos, and thus willed by God (who has the most to lose from the "*coup*" of secularization). Rigid hierarchies justified by theistic ontology invite self-deifying rebellion on the part of the dominated who have not benefited from the rule of a single, all-powerful (need one say male) God.

If self-deification is a radical form of self-preservation, then the desire for deity is a common, if repressed, human aspiration. It is part of advanced human cognition, perhaps, for people to exaggerate their own importance or significance in the interests of building and dwelling in a stable symbolic universe that benefits them. Humans *will* to be told that they are necessary, loved, and destined for an eternal, meaningful existence. Constructing this ultimate significance does, in a sense, make humanity long-lived, or at least increases the chances for the human race to survive.

If we believe, with Bertrand Russell (cited in the epigraph), that deification is everyone's real (if repressed) desire, how should we tell our self-deification myths (new and old)? Myths of fallen self-deifiers remain useful means of humbling those puffed up by power and wealth. For those in more lowly stations, myths of self-deification can be crafted as a source of hope. The story of a self-deifying figure (such as Jesus) who humbly unites the divine and human is still incredibly powerful for many people today. The fact that few ever attain the fully divine status of Jesus (let alone his Father) remains an important control on spiritual and social ambition. Myths in which the true deity inhabits every human heart are also worth telling, especially for those wishing to ontologically ground a sense of universal human value.

If self-deification is going to thrive in modern mythology, it cannot be reserved for the few. In his book *The Rebel*, Albert Camus observed, "It no longer suffices for the rebel to declare himself God or to look to his own salvation by adopting a certain attitude of mind. The species must be deified, as Nietzsche attempted to do, and his ideal of the superman must be adopted so as to assure salvation for all."[12]

Today, the self-deifier need not be considered a superman at all—indeed, this idea is in fact harmful in most cases. The self-deifier can and should be a savior, as long as the "self" is viewed expansively as the human community. The self of Jesus, to use Christian myth, is the body of the church destined to become like him.

Most westerners today, inculcated with both monotheistic habits of thought and democratic sensibilities, would likely agree with what Camus called the "only original rule of life today: to learn to live and to die, and, in order to be a [hu]man, to refuse to be a god."[13] Others, awed by fantastic technologies and myths of human potential, are comfortable with the idea that exceptional humans, if not humanity in general, can, by a fruitful union of imagination and technology, make themselves divine.[14]

In *The Rebel*, Camus wrote, “nothing can discourage the appetite for divinity in the heart of man. Others have come and are still to come who . . . claim to terminate history. The divinity of man is still on the march, and will only be worthy of adoration at the end of time. This apocalypse must be promoted and despite the fact that there is no God.”[15] As one can observe, atheism hardly makes deification irrelevant. It has only aided the continued (if slow) displacement of monotheism in western culture. This displacement allows for a resurgence of deification mythology in our own times.

Still, Camus’s remarks require significant amendment. First, theism and even monotheism are perfectly compatible with deification.[16] Doubtful indeed is the notion that humanity will ever be without God(s). It is even more doubtful that it will ever be worthy of adoration—even if our history lasts another million years. One thing is needful, and worthy of assent: no Overman is welcome now. We must accept and cherish our humanness before we fathom becoming gods.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Wayne Meeks, "The Divine Agent and His Counterfeit in Philo and the Fourth Gospel," in *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 43–67 (43).
2. Roland Boer, *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 143.
3. Milton Rokeach, *The Three Christs of Ypsilanti: A Psychological Study* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 7–8 (with the names of the patients omitted).
4. Rokeach, *Three Christs*, 56–57.
5. Rokeach, *Three Christs*, 132.
6. Slightly better results are recorded in Sidney Rosen, ed., *My Voice Will Go with You: The Teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), 201–2. See further Marvin Goldwert, "The Messiah Complex in Schizophrenia," *Psychological Reports* 73 (1993): 331–35; Michael M. Vardy and Barbara M. Kaplan, "Christ/Messiah Delusions Revisited: Toward an Anthropological Definition of Religious Delusions," *Psychoanalytic Review* 95 (2008): 473–87.
7. Otto Weinreich, *Menekrates Zeus und Salmoneus: Religionsgeschichtliche Studien zur Psychopathologie des Gottmenschentums in Antike und Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933), 90.
8. Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 7.289a–b.
9. *Suda*, s.v. Μενεκράτης.
10. Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 7.289c.
11. Plutarch, *Ages.* 21.5.
12. Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 7.289d–e.

13. Weinreich, *Menekrates*, 5. For this etymology of Ζῆν, cf. Ps.-Aristotle's *Mund.* 401a14–15.
14. Weinreich, *Menekrates*, 8.
15. On Menecrates, see further Lionel J. Sanders, "Dionysius I of Syracuse and the Origins of the Ruler Cult," *Historia* 40 (1991): 275–87 (277–78); Marco Frenschkowski, "Jesus, ein jüdischer Messias: Religionswissenschaftliche Bemerkungen zum millenaristischen und messianischen Referenzrahmen der Jesusbewegung," in *Kommunikation über Grenzen: Kongressband des XIII. Europäischen Kongresses für Theologie, 21.–25. September 2008 in Wien*, ed. Friedrich Schweitzer (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2009), 409–29 (410–12); H. S. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology*, RGRW 173 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 439–44.
16. Ps.-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.7.3–4; cf. Ovid, *Met.* 650–749; Hyginus, *Fab.* 65.
17. Ps.-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.9.7; Vergil, *Aen.* 6.585–94; Hyginus, *Fab.* 61. Cf. Allodius in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Rom. ant.* 1.71.3.
18. Pramit Chaudhuri, *The War with God: Theomachy in Roman Imperial Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
19. Homer, *Il.* 5.395–96.
20. Vergil, *Aen.* 7.648; 8.7.
21. Statius, *Theb.* 9.546–50.
22. Stephanie Dalley, ed., *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 249–74 (tablets IV–VII). See further Debra Scoggins Ballentine, *The Conflict Myth and the Biblical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 30–39.
23. Hesiod, *Theog.* 617–735; Ps.-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.1.1–1.2.1. See further Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 85–89; Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 44–48.
24. Hesiod, *Theog.* 823–80; Ps.-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.6.3. See further Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 48–51; Daniel Ogden, *Drakōn: Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 69–80.
25. Hesiod, *Theog.* 180–86, 954; Ps.-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.6.1–2. See further Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 445–54; Ogden, *Drakōn*, 82–86.
26. Homer, *Od.* 11.306–20; Ps.-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.7.4; Hyginus, *Fab.* 28. See further Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 170–71.
27. Homer, *Il.* 7.155–202; Hesiod, *Theog.* 325; Pindar, *Isth.* 7.42–48. See further Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 313–16; Martin L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164–65.
28. One of the few scholars who have studied rebel mythology in its ancient Near Eastern setting is Hugh R. Page (*The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion: A Study of Its Reflexes in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature*, VTSup 65 [Leiden: Brill, 1996]). Page

constructs a macromyth of the cosmic rebel from a variety of Ugaritic and Hebrew texts. He believes that his macromyth actually existed as a common ancestor of later retellings. His approach is somewhat like an evolutionary biologist who studies the skeletons of several species, and tries to reconstruct the bones of its common ancestor. We do not possess the bones of the most ancient cosmic rebel myth. But neither do we do need them to see the structure of the myth and its variants.

29. For hero myths, see further Robert A. Segal, "The Life of King Saul as Myth," in Dexter E. CallenderJr., ed., *Myth and Scripture: Contemporary Perspectives on Religion, Language, and Imagination*, RBS 78 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 245–74.
30. For a comprehensive study, see Emma Stafford, *Herakles* (London: Routledge, 2012).
31. Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 1.4–16; Plutarch, *Rom.* 13–29.
32. For biblical mythology, see Robert A. Oden Jr., *The Bible without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); Vincent L. Wimbush, ed., *The Bible and the American Myth: A Symposium on the Bible and Constructions of Meaning* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1999); William G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals*, 2d ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 107–112; Richard G. Walsh, *Mapping Myths of Biblical Interpretation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 89–132; Burton L. Mack, *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic, and Legacy* (New York: Continuum, 2001); Giovanni Garbini, *Myth and History in the Bible*, trans. Chiara Peri, JSOTSS 362 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003); Nick Wyatt, *The Mythic Mind: Essays on Cosmology and Religion in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature* (London: Equinox, 2005), 151–88; Wyatt, "The Mythic Mind Revisited: Myth and History, or Myth versus History, a Continuing Problem in Biblical Studies," *SJOT* 22 (2008): 161–75; Dirk J. Human, ed. *Psalms and Mythology*, LHBOTS 462 (London: T&T Clark, 2007); Dexter Callender Jr., "Mythology and Biblical Interpretation," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.26–35; Stevan J. Kraftchick, "Recast, Reclaim, Reject: Myth and Validity," in Callender, ed., *Myth and Scripture*; Ballentine, *Conflict Myth*.
33. See further Peter Munz, "History and Myth," *Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1956): 1–16; Albert Henrichs, "Demythologizing the Past, Mythicizing the Present: Myth, History, and the Supernatural at the Dawn of the Hellenistic Period," in *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, ed. Richard Buxton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 223–48; Joseph Mali, *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern Historiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1–35.
34. There is no one competing title that brings together the themes and figures discussed in this proposal. Perhaps the closest is Donald E. Gowan's *When Man Becomes God: Humanism and Hybris in the Old Testament* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1975). But Gowan's book (now dated), is a theological study that paid scant attention to the social implications, mythological import, and rhetorical functions of

self-deification. Gowan limited himself to canonical texts, and could not escape the temptation of moralizing.

35. Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 147, italics removed.
36. Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), esp. 79–107.
37. Claude Lévi-Strauss, quoted in Hans H. Penner, "You Don't Read a Myth for Information," in *Radical Interpretation in Religion*, ed. Nancy K. Frankenberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 153–70 (167).
38. Bruce Lincoln, *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars: Critical Explorations in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 55.
39. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 11.
40. Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: SUNY, 2001), 32.
41. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 93–95, 123.
42. Doniger, *Implied Spider*, 2.
43. Lincoln, *Gods and Demons*, 55.
44. Burton L. Mack, "Social Formation," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (London: Cassell, 2000), 283–96 (292).
45. McCutcheon, *Critics*, 31.

CHAPTER 1

1. Some scholars are now dating this Adam myth (found in Genesis 2–3) to the Persian period (i.e., after Judah's exile to Babylon). See, for example, Jean-Louis Ska, "Genesis 2–3: Some Fundamental Questions," in *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and Its Reception History*, eds. Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg, FAT 2/34 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1–27 (16–20). Cf. Konrad Schmid in the same volume, "Loss of Immortality? Hermeneutical Aspects of Genesis 2–3 and Its Early Reception," 58–78 (65). For a different perspective, see Madhavi Nevader, "Creating a *Deus non creator:* Divine Sovereignty and Creation in Ezekiel," in *The God Ezekiel Creates*, eds. Paul M. Joyce and Dalit Rom-Shiloni (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 55–70 (59–60).
2. For the relation between Ezek 28 and Gen 2, see further Markus Saur, *Der Tyroszyklus des Ezechielbuches*, BZAW 386 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 317–22.
3. In this chapter I assume the existence of a historical prophet Ezekiel, fully realizing that our access to Ezekiel depends almost entirely on the literary construction in the book that shares his name (Matthijs J. de Jong, "Ezekiel as a Literary Figure and the Quest for the Historical Prophet," in *The Book of Ezekiel and Its Influence*, eds. Henk Jan de Jonge and Johannes Tromp [Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007], 1–16).

It is possible that Ezekiel and/or the editors of his book wove an Adam myth entirely from the threads of their metaphorical imagination. This seems to be the view of Carol Newsom, "A Maker of Metaphor—Ezekiel's Oracles against Tyre," *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 151–64 (160). Nevertheless, Ezekiel's rhetorical use of metaphor would be all the more powerful if he appealed to a traditional story whose existence was widely conceded. See G. A. Cooke, "The Paradise Story of Ezekiel XXVIII," in his *Old Testament Essays* (London: C. Griffin, 1927), 37–45 (39–40); John L. McKenzie, "Mythological Allusions in Ezekiel 28.12–18," *JBL* 75 (1956): 322–27 (327); Anthony J. Williams, "A Mythological Background of Ezekiel 28.12–19?" *BTB* (1976): 49–61 (51–54).

4. For Ezekiel's priestly identity, see Marvin Sweeney, *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, FAT 45 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 125–43.
5. The dating depends on Menander of Ephesus, quoted in Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.21. Cf. *Ant.* 11.1; 10.228.8. See further Martin Alonso Corral, *Ezekiel's Oracles against Tyre: Historical Reality and Motivations*, Biblica et Orientalia 46 (Rome: Pontifical Institute, 2002), 168, 173, 178; D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 27–28.
6. For alternative datings, see Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 41–50.
7. The first oracle is directed toward the "prince" (נגיד) of Tyre, while the second is sung over its king (מלך). The terms are paralleled elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Ps 76:13), and are both translated by ἄρχων in the LXX. See further Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 572.
8. See further H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre from the Beginning of the Second Millennium B.C.E. until the Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C.E.*, 2d ed. (Jerusalem: Ben-Gurion University, 1997), 324–32.
9. David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 154. "The same may be said concerning Ezekiel's prophecies of Egypt's downfall and punishment in Ezek 29–32: Nebuchadnezzar never conquered Egypt" (Marvin A. Sweeney, "Myth and History in Ezekiel's Oracle Concerning Tyre (Ezekiel 26–28)," in Callender, ed., *Myth and Scripture*, 142).
10. See further C. L. Crouch, "Ezekiel's Oracles against the Nations in Light of a Royal Ideology of Warfare," *JBL* 130:3 (2011): 473–92; Terry Clark, *I Will Be King over You: The Rhetoric of Divine Kingship in the Book of Ezekiel* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2014).
11. Greg Goering, "Proleptic Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word: Ezekiel's Dirges over Tyre and Its Ruler," *JSOT* 36 (2012): 483–505. On the composition of the Tyrian oracles, see Sweeney, "Myth and History," in Callender, ed., *Myth and Scripture*, 129–35.
12. See further T. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 347, who

dates the LXX version prior to the MT. K. L. Wong covers the important differences between the LXX and MT in the judgment oracle ("The Prince of Tyre in the Masoretic and Septuagint Texts of Ezekiel 28,1–10," in *Interpreting Translation: Studies on the LXX and Ezekiel in Honour of Johan Lust*, eds. F. García Martínez and M. Vervenne [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005], 447–61).

13. Danel is the major figure in the Ugaritic Aqhat narrative. His presence indicates that Ezekiel was able to recall and reformulate previous myth.
14. Adam says both, "I am'*ēl*" (v. 2) and "I am *ĕlôhîm*" (v. 9). I render the first, "I am god," and the second, "I am a god." The word *ĕlôhîm*, as Knud Jeppesen points out, does not necessarily designate the singular, high God. As an isolated word, it "is either someone's god . . . or it is used in an adjective meaning ['I am divine']" ("You are a Cherub, but no god!" *SJOT* 5 [1991]: 83–94 [86]). In the LXX, both אל in v. 2 and אלֹהים in v. 9 are translated as θεός.
15. The killer (הרגך, singular in the MT) is apparently Yahweh, the subject of הרג in Exod 4:23; Isa 14:30; 27:1; Amos 2:3.
16. For the persistence of myth in the Hebrew Bible, see Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 102–11; Roland Boer, *Political Myth* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Avigdor Shinan and Yair Zakovitch, *From Gods to God: How the Bible Debunked, Suppressed, or Changed Ancient Myths and Legends*, trans. Valerie Zakovitch (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2012); Dexter E. Callender, ed., *Myth and Scripture*.
17. Emending MT's חוֹתֵם to חוֹתָם and תכנית to תבנית (cf. Stordalen, *Echoes*, 337; Hector Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre: The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11–19 in Antiquity*, Jewish and Christian Perspectives 20 [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 151–52). With Dexter Callender, I read חוֹתָם and תבנית in apposition, similar to צלם and דמות in Gen 1:26 ("The Primal Human in Ezekiel and the Image of God," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2000], 175–94 [188–89]). See further Dexter Callender, *Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000], 91–97. Silviu N. Bunta sees חתם as representing a passive participle, and translates it: "imprinted of (by) the pattern" ("Yhwh's Cultic Statue after 597/586 B.C.E.: A Linguistic and Theological Reinterpretation of Ezekiel 28:12," *CBQ* 69 [2007]: 222–41 [224–29]). Bunta understands the Adamic figure as Yahweh's cult statue: like God but not God (240–41). The distinction is unnecessarily dichotomous. The myth presumes that Adam's likeness to God constitutes his divinity. As Bunta remarks, it was a "common ancient Near Eastern conception" to view the king as theomorphic and equal to God (241).
18. The LXX lists twelve stones taken from Exod 28:17–20; 36:17–21 to conform this figure to the Jewish high priest (see further Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King*, 155–56). Stordalen argues that the LXX version is original (*Echoes*, 339).

19. MT reads מָלוּ, "they filled"; but the second person singular forms in the rest of the sentence indicate an original מלאת, the ת falling out due to haplography with the following תוכך.
20. Reading חָלַל III. ("pollute, defile, profane"). The LXX translator evidently understood חלל I. ("to bore/pierce") in a passive form, rendering it ἐτραυματίσθης ("you were wounded"). See further Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King*, 104.
21. See further Katzenstein, *History of Tyre*, 323.
22. There is no essential difference between a singular cherub and the (more common) plural cherubim. The two forms are used interchangeably (2 Sam 22:11 = Ps 18:11; Ezek 9:3; 10:4, 7).
23. In Job 15:8, the first human (אדם הראישון) is said to be privy to the secrets of the divine council.
24. Julius Morgenstern, "The King-god among the Western Semites and the Meaning of Epiphanes," *VT* 10 [1960]: 138–97 [154, n.1].
25. Ezek 21:35 MT (English versions, 21:30). See further Stordalen, *Echoes*, 340.
26. Daphna Arbel goes beyond the evidence when she states that the use of ברא in Ezekiel 28 "distinguishes this being from divine beings and posits that this being is essentially human" ("'Seal of Resemblance, Full of Wisdom and Perfect in Beauty': The Enoch/Metatron Narrative of *3 Enoch* and Ezekiel 28," *HTR* 98 [2005]: 121–42 [128]). For creation (or lack thereof) in Ezekiel, see David L. Petersen, "Creation and Hierarchy in Ezekiel: Methodological Perspectives and Theological Prospects," in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality*, eds. Stephen L. Cook and Corrine L. Patton, SBLSS 31 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004), 169–78; Nevader, "Creating," 61–62.
27. Cf. Homer, *Od.* 15.415. See further Maria Eugenia Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West: Politics, Colonies and Trade*, trans. Marty Turton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 77–118.
28. Tertullian, *Marc.* 2.10.3. Cf. Luke 10:18.
29. Tertullian, *Marc.* 2.10.4.
30. Origen, *Cels.* 6.44 (cherubim are depicted with wings in Ezek 1). Elsewhere Origen interprets the prince of Tyre to be the city's angelic representative (*Princ.* 1.5.4, though cf. 1.8.3; *Hom. Ezech.* 13.1–2). See also Jerome, *In Hiezechielem IX, xxviii* (Glorie, CCSL 75:386–87).
31. For Patristic interpretations of Ezek 28, see further Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King*, 41–79.
32. J. van Seters makes the extreme (and mistaken) claim that "there is nothing in this oracle [Ezek 28:12–19] to suggest that he [the figure spoken of] is divine or that he is the first man" ("The Creation of Man and the Creation of the King" *ZAW* 101 [1989]: 333–42 [337]).
33. The fact that the cherub is "stretched out and overshadowing" recalls the cherubim who stretch their wings over the ark in the Holy of Holies (1 Kgs 6:27). In Ezek 1–3, 8–11, Cherubim are closely associated with Yahweh as porters of his throne.

Here also they appear to be huge creatures with their wings stretched out (1:23). See further Friedhelm Hartenstein, "Cherubim and Seraphim in the Bible and in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Sources," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception*, eds. Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schöpflin, DCLS [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007], 155–88). Dale Launderville notes that cherubim, when disassociated from a supreme God, can be rebellious or violent ("Ezekiel's Cherub: A Promising Symbol or a Dangerous Idol?" *CBQ* 65 [2003]: 165–83 [171–72]).

34. μετὰ τοῦ χερουβ. The LXX translator understood the rare form of the masculine pronoun את as a preposition meaning "with." He was followed by Symmachus. For sources, see further Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King*, 160–61; cf. 198–99; Johan Lust, "The King/Prince of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:11–19 in Hebrew and in Greek," in *Textual Criticism and Dead Sea Scrolls. Studies in Honour of Julio Trebolle Barrera*, eds. Andrés Piquer Otero and Pablo A. Torijano Morales, JSJSup (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 223–34 (227–28).
35. James E. Miller, "The Maelaek of Tyre," *ZAW* 105 (1993): 497–501 (497).
36. Gen 3:24. Cf. Greenburg, *Ezekiel*, 590–91.
37. 2 En 30:11, long recension (*OTP* 1.152).
38. *Apoc. Adam* 1:3 (*OTP* 1.712).
39. כאחד ממלאכי השרת (tractate *Beshallaḥ* VII in Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, 2d ed., 2 vols. [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004], 1.164).
40. Gary A. Anderson and Michael E. Stone, *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 2d ed., EJL 17 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 16E, emphasis added.
41. James Barr, "'Thou art the Cherub' Ezekiel 28.14 and the Post-Ezekiel Understanding of Genesis 2-3," in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp*, ed. E. C. Ulrich et al., JSOTSup 140 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 213–23. He is followed by Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-historical Study of Genesis 2-3* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 86–7; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 2.112–13.
42. Barr ("Thou art the Cherub," 220), Miller ("Maelaek," 497–98), and Stephen L. Cook ("Cosmos, *Kabod*, and Cherub: Ontological and Epistemological Hierarchy in Ezekiel" in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World*, 179–98 [190]) perpetuate this dichotomy. Patmore states that the Masoretes used vowel pointing identifying Adam with the cherub in order to avoid calling him a god (*Adam, Satan, and the King*, 14). This interpretive move was possible in a time when angels were no longer viewed as part of the divine world. For angels as divinities, see M. David Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology*, BZNW 187 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 245–48, 266–70.
43. Hermann Gunkel called him "a kind of demigod" (*Genesis Translated and Interpreted*, trans. Mark E. Biddle [Macon, Mercer University Press, 1997], 34). Cf. Geo Widengren, "Early Hebrew Myths and Their Interpretation," in *Myth, Ritual,*

and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel, ed. S. H. Hooke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), 149–203 (165–66); Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 271–72.

44. For wisdom as a divine attribute, see, for example, Genesis 3:22. Wisdom herself was something of a Hebrew goddess (Prov 8:22–36). For the beauty of Yahweh, see Ps 27:4; Isa 28:4; 33:17; Zech 9:17.
45. Richard J. Clifford identifies the fire stones with the stars as members of the divine council (*The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972], 173). Walther Zimmerli suggests that they are "creatures of light, either the stars or the originators of the powerful flashes of lightning" (*Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, eds. Paul Hanson and Leonard Jay Greenspoon, trans. James D. Martin [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 93). Page proposes astral deities (*Myth of Cosmic Rebellion*, 149). The bodies of the cherubim in Ezekiel 1 look like "burning coals of fire" (1:13; cf. 10:2). For the fire stones in a cultic setting, cf. Isa 6:6. See further Callender, *Adam in Myth*, 112–19.
46. On this rendering, see Greenburg, *Ezekiel*, 584; Hector M. Patmore, "Adam or Satan? The Identity of the King of Tyre in Late Antiquity," in *After Ezekiel: Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet*, eds. Andrew Mein and Paul M. Joyce (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 59–70 (60); Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King*, 201.
47. Note that in verse 13, the MT joins גן and אלהים (גן־אלֹהים) so that we read it as "garden of god." This connecting sign does not appear between קדש and אלהים in v. 14. To be sure, מהר אלֹהים in v. 16 means "from the mountain of God." But it is not a parallel, as it lacks קדש.
48. A far more common expression is simply "holy mountain," often with a pronoun suffix, as in Ezekiel 20:40: "On my holy mountain" (בהר קדשי). See further Patmore, "Did the Masoretes Get It Wrong? The Vocalization and Accentuation of Ezekiel xxviii 12–19," *VT* 58 (2008): 245–57 (252). Patmore cites the following texts as examples: Ps 2:6; 3:5; 15:1; 43:3; 48:2; 99:9; Isa 11:9; 26:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20; Jer 31:23; Dan 9:16; 11:45; Joel 2:1; 3:21; Obad 1:16; Zeph 3:11; Zech 8:3.
49. This order of the verbs is followed by the New American Standard Version, the English Standard Version, and the New King James Version.
50. Kalman Yaron calls this reading "the only possible reading of the verse without alteration of MT." But he could not believe that Ezekiel would have written "You were a god" because it was a "heathen idea" ("The Dirge over the King of Tyre," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 3 [1964]: 28–57 [29–30]).
51. For the Deuteronomistic editing of Genesis 2–3, see Mettinger, *Eden Narrative*, 49–58, 63–64.
52. Marvin Pope speculated that *El* in Ezekiel 28:2 referred to the Phoenician high God (*El in the Ugaritic Texts*, VTSup 2 [Leiden: Brill, 1955], 98). He is followed by

Paul E. Fitzpatrick, *The Disarmament of God: Ezekiel 38–39 in Its Mythic Context*, CBQMS 37 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 2004), 143–45.

53. The speculations of Julius Morgenstern are to be taken with more than a pound of salt ("King-god," 152–56). Corinne Bonnet points to evidence of deified dead kings, and speculates that Melqart might be one of them (*Melqart: Cultes et mythes de l'Héraclès Tyrien en Méditerranée*, Studia Phoenicia VIII [Leuven: Peeters; 1998], 419–29). She claims that the king of Tyre in Ezek 28:11–19 represents Melqart (43–46). This insight is taken up by Markus Saur, "Ezekiel 26–28 and the History of Tyre," *SJOT* 24 (2010): 208–21 (216–20).
54. Shoving into a pit was mentioned in an earlier oracle against Tyre (Ezek 26:20). Here the word for pit (בור) is the same as what we find in Isa 14:15. Cf. also Ezek 32:18 (an oracle against Egypt). Helel is also thrust (השלכת) from his grave and, like Adam in Ezekiel 28:7, attacked by swords (Isa 14:19).
55. καὶ ἤγαγέν σε τὸ χερουβ ἐκ μέσου λίθων πυρίνων ("and the cherub drove you from the midst of the fiery stones").
56. Between the cherubim in Ezekiel 1 are burning coals (v. 13; cf. 10:2). Morgenstern relates the internal combustion and ashy end of the primal human to the death of the phoenix (associated with Phoenicia) ("King-god," 154).
57. For the association of אפר and עפר, see Ezek 27:30; Gen 18:27; Job 30:19; 42:6.
58. Robert P. Gordon traces the theme of dying gods in "The Gods Must Die: A Theme in Isaiah and Beyond," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. Michaël N. van der Meer et al. (Leiden: Boston, 2010), 45–62.
59. Cf. Isa 31:3; Num 23:19.
60. Patmore suggests that the Masoretes punctuated Ezekiel 28:14 so as to avoid the reading "you were a god" because it confirmed the self-deifying boast of the ruler in v. 2 ("Did the Masoretes," 256).
61. Ellen Davis argues that Ezekiel tried to subvert the mythology he inherited because the mythic symbols were tied to the identities of the nations he was attacking. He attacked the mythological self-representations of the nations because he viewed them as delusional and sinful ("'And Pharaoh Will Change His Mind . . .' [Ezekiel 32:31]: Dismantling Mythical Discourse," in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs*, eds. C. Seitz and K. Green-McCreight [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 224–39). Davis does not sufficiently take into account that it is *Ezekiel*'s representation of the "pagan mind" that Ezekiel attacks. For modern interpreters who identify with Ezekiel's theological trajectory, the prophet's rhetoric has become reality. For further criticism of Davis's approach, see Crouch, "Ezekiel's Oracles," 475, n. 11.
62. Patmore, "Did the Masoretes," 253.
63. Corral studies the reasons for the prophetic tirades against Tyre and opts for a primarily economic motivation (*Ezekiel's Oracles*, 142–68, 175–77).

64. Ezek 28:2, 6 (ותתן לבך כלב אלֹהים). The Revised Standard Version of the Bible, as Mettinger points out, seems to have captured the right sense: "though you consider yourself as wise as a god" (*Eden Narrative*, 91). Polemics against self-claimed wisdom are staple in the Hebrew Bible (see, e.g., Prov 3:7; 26:12; Isa 5:21; Jer 9:23).
65. Hartenstein notes that cherubim are representations of power ("Cherubim and Seraphim," 161).
66. Yvonne Sherwood, "'Tongue-Lashing' or a Prophetic Aesthetics of Violation: An Analysis of Prophetic Structures That Reverberate Beyond the Biblical World," in *The Aesthetics of Violence in the Prophets*, eds. Julia M. O'Brien and Chris Franke, LHBOTS 517 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 88–111 (88).
67. In the paradigmatic case of the Exodus, Yahweh also destroyed Pharaoh in order to gain glory for himself (Exod 14:4, 17–18).
68. Sweeney, "Myth and History," in Callender, ed., *Myth and Scripture*, 131.
69. See further Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 149.
70. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 149.
71. Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism*, trans. Robert Savage (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 8–30.
72. The misery of the first humans is emphasized in Latin *L.A.E.* 1–24.
73. S. E. Robinson, "Testament of Adam," in *OTP* 1.994. For the dating, see *OTP* 1.990.
74. Cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 39:1–3; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; Col 3:1.

CHAPTER 2

1. Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 19, 21.
2. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Scott Elledge, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 1.40–43.
3. See the proposal of Jonathan A. Goldstein, "The Metamorphosis of Isaiah 13:2–14:27," in *For a Later Generation: The Transformation of Tradition in Israel, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, eds. Randal A. Argall, Beverly A. Bow, and Rodney A. Werline (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 78–88.
4. The redacted introduction to Isaiah 14 (vv. 1–4a) contains themes from Second Isaiah: (1) the promise of restoration and the end of harsh service (cf. Isa 40:2), (2) the return of comfort and affirmation of election (Isa 40:1), (3) Israel rules her former captors (Isa 47), and (4) aliens cleave to the house of Jacob (Isa 45:14–17). Ulrich F. Berges locates the insertion of Isaiah 14 "in a period after the action of Xerxes against Babylon in the year 482" (*The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition and Final Form*, trans. Millard C. Lind [Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012], 141). See further Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 83–92.
5. For Bellerophon, see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 313–16. For the reconstruction of the myth of Helel, see Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval*

Era and the Eschaton, trans. K. William Whitney (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 90–91.

6. Both Greek and Latin translations of Helel (*Heosphoros, Lucifer*) support an astral interpretation. See further John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* JSOTSS 265 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 167–71.
7. P. C. Craigie, "Helel, Athtar and Phaethon (Jes 14 12–15)," *ZAW* 85 (1973): 223–25; N. Wyatt, "The Hollow Crown: Ambivalent Elements in West Semitic Royal Ideology," *UF* 18 (1986): 421–36; Day, *Yahweh*, 171–75.
8. See the comments of Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Volume I: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU* 1.1–1.2, VTSup 55 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1.248–50. Michael S. Heiser vigorously argues that Athtar's takeover of the earth constitutes a rebellion against El ("The Mythological Provenance of Isa. XIV 12–15: A Reconsideration of the Ugaritic Material," *VT* 51 [2001]: 354–69). Klaas Spronk states that there is no reason why Athtar would be called Helel ("Shining one") in Isaiah 14. He takes Helel to be an epithet, not a divine name ("Down with Helel! The Assumed Mythological Background of Isa. 14.12," in "*Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf*" [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998], 717–26 [719, 725]).
9. Hesiod, *Theog.* 984–87.
10. Ovid, *Met.* 2.215–16 (*cumque suis totas populis incendia gentis/in cinerem vertunt*). For earlier versions of the myth of Phaethon, see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 31–34; James Diggle, *Euripides: Phaethon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 3–32. Fragments of Euripides's play *Phaethon* are translated by Christopher Collard and Martin Cropp, *Euripides: Fragments. Oedipus–Chrysippus*, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 323–67.
11. Callimachus, *Epigram* 56. Cf. LXX Isa 14:12: πῶς ἐξέπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὁ ἑωσφόρος ὁ πρωὶ ἀνατέλων. See further Forsyth, *Old Enemy*, 130–33; J. C. Poirier, "An Illuminating Parallel to Isaiah XIV 12," *VT* 49 (1999): 371–89 (379). Other proposals for the "original" identity of Helel prove indecisive. William R. Gallagher argues that Helel is identical to the Mesopotamian god Enlil/Illil ("On the Identity of Hêlēl ben Šahar of Is. 14:12-15," UF, 26 [1994]: 131–46). Matthias Albani points to royal catasterism as the most relevant background ("Heil und Ewigkeit: Das Spottlied vom Aufstieg und Fall des 'Sohnes der Morgenröte' (Jes 14,12ff.) und sein königsideologischer Hintergrund," in *Mensch und König: Studien zur Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*, eds. Angelika Berlejung and Raik Heckl [New York: Herder, 2008], 141–56). R. Mark Shipp cites a number of parallels from ritual texts and myths of the third and second millennium BCE (*Of Dead Kings and Dirges: Myth and Meaning in Isaiah 14:4b–21* [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2002], 67–128).
12. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, WBC 24, 2d ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 261. See further Shipp, *Of Dead Kings*, 34–46; Nissim Amzallag, "The Cryptic Meaning of the Isaiah 14 *Māšāl*," *JBL* 131:4 (2012): 643–62 (643–45).
13. Gale A. Yee, "The Anatomy of Biblical Parody: The Dirge Form in 2 Samuel 1 and Isaiah 14," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 565–86 (574).

14. See further Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 51.
15. John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah the Eighth-century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 231.
16. Miklós Köszeghy argues that late Assyrian kings showed a tendency toward self-deification ("Hybris und Prophetie: Erwägungen zum Hintergrund von Jesaja XIV 12–15," *VT* 44 [1994]: 549–54). See further Shipp, *Of Dead Kings*, 158–63; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 232–33. Percy van Keulen reviews all the options and suggests that the figure is not any one individual but "the Assyrian king as a *typus*" ("On the Identity of the Anonymous Ruler in Isaiah 14:4b–21," in van der Meer, ed., *Isaiah in Context*, 109–24 [122]).
17. Page, *Cosmic Rebellion*, 138.
18. For the identification of Helel with Nebuchadnezzar, see Day, *Yahweh*, 181–83. David Stephen Vanderhooft notes that the title "king of Babylon" occurs 132 times in the Hebrew Bible, "and of these 118 refer to Nebuchadnezzar. Thus the title 'king of Babylon,' when it is not further qualified, usually refers to Nebuchadnezzar, who was the 'king of Babylon' par excellence in biblical tradition" (*The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, HSM 59 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999], 29).
19. William W. Hallo, *The Context of Scripture Volume II: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 310.
20. Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan*. 2.15. Jerome and John Chrysostom also accuse the king of desiring to be worshiped through the statue (John Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 131).
21. *Shirata* 8 (on Ex 15:11) (Lauterbach, *Mekhilta* 1.208).
22. Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King*, 27.
23. *Shirata* 8 (Lauterbach, *Mekhilta* 1.208). In *Shirata* 2 (Lauterbach, *Mekhilta* 1.179–81), Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and the prince of Tyre (among others) are brought up as those punished by means of the very things of which they were proud. Patmore shows how the Christian fathers and the rabbis both consistently linked Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, and opines that the influence (if any) flows from rabbinic sources (*Adam, Satan and the King*, 76).
24. Jonathan Stökl presents a nuanced picture of Nebuchadnezzar, whose reputation as a tyrant and destroyer of Jerusalem began in the Persian period ("Nebuchadnezzar: History, Memory, and Myth-Making in the Persian Period," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination*, eds. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud ben Zvi [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 257–69). Cf. Ronald H. Sack, "Nebuchadnezzar II and the Old Testament: History versus Ideology," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, eds. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 221–33.

25. For the meaning of the temple in ancient Israel, see Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 89–184.
26. See further Stefan Beyerle, “The ‘God of Heaven’ in Persian and Hellenistic Times,” in *Other Worlds and Their Relation to This World: Early Jewish and Ancient Christian Traditions*, eds. Tobias Nicklas, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 17–36.
27. Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 51–52.
28. The verses in Isaiah 14:21–24 are widely thought to be added by later editors, and are not discussed here.
29. The reading מרהבה is restored from the Isaiah Scroll (1QIs^{a}) found at Qumran (Donald W. Parry and Elisha Qimron, *The Great Isaiah Scroll, 1QIsa^{a}: A New Edition*, STDJ 32 [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 25). It is reflected in the Greek versions of Symmachus, Theodotion, the Syriac Bible, and the Targums.
30. See further Ballentine, *Conflict Motif*, 103–4.
31. See further Chris A. Franke, “Reversal of Fortune in the Ancient Near East: A Study of the Babylon Oracles in the Book of Isaiah,” in *New Visions of Isaiah*, eds. Roy Melugin and Marvin Sweeney, JSOTSS 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 104–23 (120–21).
32. Yee, “Anatomy,” 576.
33. On trees as metaphors, see Shipp, *Of Dead Kings*, 147–48.
34. Historically, Nebuchadnezzar boasted about exporting cedars from Lebanon. See the Wadi-Brisa Inscription in *ANET*^{3}, 307.
35. For emendations to this line, see Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 46.
36. See further Saul M. Olyan, “Was the ‘King of Babylon’ Buried before His Corpse Was Exposed? Some Thoughts on Isa 14,19,” *ZAW* 118 (2006): 423–26.
37. *Leviticus Rabbah* 18.2 in H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah* (London: Soncino, 1939), 4.229; cf. *Abot de Rabbi Nathan* 17.37 in Anthony J. Saldarini, *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan (Abot de Rabbi Nathan Version B)* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 117–18.
38. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar*, 114.
39. The LXX uses νεκρός (“corpse”) as an apparent equivalent of נצר. Friedrich Schwally proposed כנפל (“like an aborted fetus”) for MT’s כנצר (“Miscellen,” *ZAW* 11 [1891]: 258). This reading has the support of Symmachus (ἔκτρωμα) and the Targums. It is followed by Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 46 (cf. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 259). William L. Holladay preferred emending כנצר to כנעל (“like decayed matter”) reflected in the ἰχώρ of Aquila’s translation (“Text, Structure, and Irony in the Poem on the Fall of the Tyrant, Isaiah 14,” *CBQ* 61 [1999]: 633–45 [638]).
40. Willem A. M. Beuken, “A Song of Gratitude and a Song of Malicious Delight,” in *Das Manna fällt auch heute noch: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theologie des Alten Ersten Testaments. FS für Erich Zenger* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 96–114 (102).
41. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar*, 3.
42. *ANET*^{3}, 307.

43. See further Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 34–97, 177–81; P. N. Hunt, "Mount Saphon in Myth and Fact," in *Phoenicia and the Bible*, ed. E Lipiński, Studia Phoenicia XI (Leuven: Peeters, 1991), 103–16; Wyatt, *Mythic Mind*, 102–24.
44. Ps 48:2. Here the NRSV, along with most English versions, translates Zaphon as "north." For the meaning and identification of Zaphon, see Day, *Yahweh*, 107–16, esp. 110–11.
45. See further Seth Erlandsson, *The Burden of Babylon: A Study of Isa 13:2–14:23*, trans. George G. Houser (Lund: Gleerup, 1970), 154–59.
46. See further, Day, *Yahweh*, 183–84.
47. Text in Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar*, 99. Cf. Nebuchadnezzar's prayers in Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, 2d ed. (Bethesda: CDL, 1996), 2.726–29.
48. In a clay cylinder inscription found at Larsa, Nebuchadnezzar calls himself "the humble one, the submissive one, the pious one, the worshiper of the Lord of lords [Marduk]" (Hallo, *The Context of Scripture II*, 309).
49. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar*, 100.
50. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar*, 101.
51. An Akkadian prophetic text (the *Uruk Prophecy*), probably referring to Nebuchadnezzar and his son, says that these kings, "will exercise rulership like gods" (Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar*, 95; cf. Ronald H. Sack, *Images of Nebuchadnezzar: The Emergence of a Legend*, 2d ed. [Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2004], 110–11). Mesopotamian kings, with the exception of extraordinary figures like Naram-Sin (2254–2218 BCE) and Shulgi (2029–1982 BCE), were not viewed as gods per se. They were mediators between the divine and human realms. It was their office, not their person, that was divine (Peter Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria," in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, eds. Gary Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, BJS 346 [Providence: Brown University Press, 2006], 152–88 [esp. 184–88]; Jerrold S. Cooper, "Divine Kingship in Mesopotamia: A Fleeting Phenomenon," in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, ed. Nicole Brisch, Oriental Institute Seminars 4 [Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008], 261–65).
52. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), esp. the chart on 198.
53. Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 24.
54. For the contrast between Zion and Babylon, see Willem A. M. Beuken, "Major Interchanges in the Book of Isaiah Subservient to Its Umbrella Theme: The Establishment of Yhwh's Sovereign Rule at Mt. Zion (Chs. 12–13; 27–28; 39–40; 55–56)," in *The Book of Isaiah: Enduring Questions Answered Anew. Essays Honoring Joseph Blenkinsopp*, eds. Richard J. Bautch and J. Todd Hibbard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 113–32 (116–18).

55. See further Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For a brief account, see Susan R. Garrett, *No Ordinary Angel: Celestial Spirits and Christian Claims about Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 115–22. Jürgen U. Kalms briefly traces the reception history of Isaiah 14 in *Der Sturz des Gottesfeindes: Traditionsgeschichtliche Studien zu Apokalypse 12*, WMANT 93 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 200–203.
56. See further F. I. Andersen, "2 Enoch," in *OTP* 1.94–97; Christfried Böttrich, *Das slavische Henochbuch*, Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit V/7 [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995], 812–13; Andrei Orlov, *Dark Mirrors: Azazel and Satanael in Early Jewish Demonology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 86.
57. 2 En 29:4–5 (*OTP* 1.148, long recension, trans. Anderson). Jean-Daniel Kaestli understands this passage as a Christian interpolation ("Le Mythe de la chute de Satan et la question du milieu d'origine de la *Vie d'Adam et Eve*," in *Early Christian Voices In Texts, Traditions, and Symbols: Essays in Honor of François Bovon*, eds. David H. Warren, Ann Graham Brock, and David W. Pao, BibInt 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 341–54. Cf. Forsyth, *Old Enemy*, 242–47.
58. *PG* 6.1592–93. The fragment comes from a collection of John, patriarch of Antioch.
59. Recall also that Nebuchadnezzar is an Assyrian in the book of Judith. Origen also thinks of Nebuchadnezzar as an Assyrian (*Hom. Num.* 11.4.3).
60. Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.17.8–9.
61. Cf. Hebrews 1:6.
62. Latin *L.A.E.* 15:3 in Jean-Pierre Pettorelli and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, eds. *Vita Latina Adae et Evae*, CCSA 18 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 310.
63. Latin *L.A.E.* 16:1–2. Latin, Armenian, and Georgian versions of the tale are translated by Gary Anderson and Michael Stone, eds., *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 2d ed. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 15–18. See further Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 25–40.
64. Origen, *Princ.* 1.5.5; cf. Origen, *Hom. Ezech.* 1.3.7. See further Gerald Bostock, "Satan—Origen's Forgotten Doctrine," in *Origeniana Decima: Origen as Writer: Papers of the 10th International Origen Congress*, eds. Sylwia Kaczmarek and Henryk Pietras (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 109–23.
65. Origen, *Hom. Num.* 12.4.4. J.-M. Rosenstiehl quotes two (undated) Coptic magical texts wherein Satan deifies himself. "Satan, the devil is the one who strikes the earth with his scepter against the living God, saying, 'I too am a god!' " In another text, he cries out, "I am the one who flew to heaven, crying out from there: 'Eloï eï èlemas, I also am a god!' " ("La chute de l'ange: Origines et développement d'une légende; Ses attestations dans la littérature Copte," in *Écritures et traditions dans*

la littérature Copte: Journée d'études Coptes, Strassbourg 28 mai 1982, Cahiers de la Bibliotéque Copte 1 [Louven: Peeters, 1983], 37–60 [40]).

66. Origen, *Hom. Num.* 12.4.4.
67. Methodius, *Res.* 1.37.5–6.
68. Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 7.16 (328a–330a).
69. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 6.13.
70. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 36.5.
71. In context, because God cannot exist near darkness.
72. For the text I use the edition of C. Moreschini and D. A. Sykes, *Poemata Arcana* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1997), 30. Cf. Gregory's *Carmina theologica* 1.7 (PG 37:443.56–66); *Carmina historica* 1.45 (PG 37:1376.325–50)
73. Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs* 14, translated by Richard Norris, RGRW 13 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2012), 447.
74. Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 3.7.
75. Augustine, *Gen litt.* 11.16.
76. Augustine, *Gen litt.* 11.19.
77. Augustine, *Gen litt.* 11.23; cf. 11.13; *Civ.* 11.13.
78. In general, God did not create some angels entirely blessed, for they lacked foreknowledge of their eternal continuance in blessedness (Augustine, *Civ.* 11.11, 13). Isaiah 14:12–15 better applies, Augustine asserts, to the devil's "body." Augustine learned from Tyconius, a fourth-century African exegete, that just as Christ has a body, so does the devil (*Tyconius: The Book of Rules*, trans. William S. Babcock, Text and Translations 31 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989]). The devil's body consists of "the multitude of the godless," and, in particular, Christian apostates (Augustine, *Gen litt.* 11.24).
79. Augustine, *Gen litt.* 11.14.
80. For the primacy of envy, see Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.24.3–4; *Epid.* 16. For the jealousy of the devil, see Jean-Marc Vercruysse, "Les Pères de l'Église et la chute de l'ange (Lucifer d'après *Is 14* et *Ez* 28)," *RevScRel* 75 (2001): 147–74 (163–66).
81. Augustine, *Gen litt.* 11.15.

CHAPTER 3

1. Garbini, *Myth and History*, 131.
2. Several verses from Exodus and Second Isaiah were appealed to, sometimes in free citation. For an attempt to systematize the references, see Steve Johnston, "Le mythe gnostique du blasphème de l'Archonte," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: Histoire des religions et approaches contemporaines. Actes du colloque international réuni à Paris*, eds. M. Jean-Pierre Mahé, M. Paul-Hubert Poirier, and Madeleine Scopello (Paris: AIBL, 2010), 177–201, esp. the charts on 199–200.
3. For example, Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.9.2.

4. Nils A. Dahl, “The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish Traditions in Gnostic Revolt,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. Bentley Layton, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 2.689–712 (690).
5. For allegory as exculpation, see the emperor Julian, *Against the Galileans* 1.75a–94a.
6. The meaning of the name “Yaldabaoth” is disputed. Some understand it to derive from an Aramaic conglomerate meaning “child of chaos.” Gershom Scholem argued for the meaning “begetter of (S)abaoth” (“Yaldabaoth Revisited,” in *Mélanges d’histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974], 405–21). Matthew Black preferred “the son of Shame” (“An Aramaic Etymology for Jaldabaoth?” in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson*, eds. A. H. B. Logan and A. J. M. Wedderburn [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983], 69–72 [71]). The name could also condense four appellations for the Jewish god: Iao-El-Adonai-Sabaoth (Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence*, NHMS 68 [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 105).
7. *Secret Book of John* (NHC II,1) 11.16–18. See further Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 47–49.
8. R. McL. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem: A Study of the Relations between Hellenistic Judaism and the Gnostic Heresy* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1958), 190–91; Francis T. Fallon, *The Enthronement of Sabaoth: Jewish Elements in Gnostic Creation Myths*, NHS 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 26–29; Birger Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, 37–38, 48. Jacque van der Vliet, “The Coptic Gnostic Texts as Christian Apocryphal Literature,” in *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit: Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses Münster, 20.–26. Juli*, eds. Stephen Emmel et al., 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1999), 1.553–62 (esp. 557–60).
9. Dahl, “Arrogant Archon,” 702–3, cf. 705–6. Indeed, it is probable that Yaldabaoth’s designation as an “abortion” goes back to an understanding of Isaiah 14:19 attested in the Jewish Targums and the Greek translation of Symmachus, who translated כנצר as ὡς ἔκτρωμα (“like an abortion/miscarriage”).
10. Yaldabaoth’s name “Samael” was a common name for the devil in the second and third centuries CE (*Asc. Isa.* 2:1–2; 7:9).
11. For NHC II in the context of Coptic Christianity, see Lance Jenott, “Recovering Adam’s Lost Glory: Nag Hammadi Codex II in Its Egyptian Monastic Environment,” in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity*, eds. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz, TSAJ 155 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 222–36.
12. On Ophite mythology, see Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 41–188. Rasimus characterizes *Orig. World* as purely Ophite, *Hyp. Arch.* as Ophite and Barbeloite, and *Ap. John* as combining Ophite, Barbeloite, and Sethite mythologies. See esp. figure 4 in *Paradise Reconsidered*, 62.
13. These are not the only texts that feature the monotheistic boast of the creator. The boast also occurs on the lips of the Valentinian creator in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.5.4; 2.9.2, and the ruler called “Yaldabaoth” by the Ophites (*Haer.* 1.30.6). Cf. also

[Hippolytus], *Refutation* 6.33; 7.25.3; Ps.-Clement, *Rec.* 2.57.3; *Disc. Seth* (NHC VII,2) 64.20–26.

14. The edition used here is that of Michael Waldstein and Frederick Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices NHC II,1; NHC III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2*, NHMS 33 (Leiden: Brill, 1995). For an introduction to *Ap. John*, see esp. Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1–24.
15. For example, John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, BCNH Études 6 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 136–41; Birger Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 63–64. Pearson later states programmatically: "Any Christian elements that are to be found in Gnostic mythology are purely secondary" (132).
16. Admittedly, this issue is hotly contested. For the Christian nature of *Ap. John*, see Gerhard Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, NHMS 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 20–28. Cf. Michael Waldstein, "The Primal Triad in the *Apocryphon of John*," in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years*, eds. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire, NHMS 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 154–87 (174–75); Alistair H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* (London: T&T Clark, 1996), 182–83, 283, and Christoph Markschies's attempt to reintegrate gnostic thought into second-century ecclesial and theological history (*Gnosis und Christentum* [Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2009], 34–82).
17. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 9.25–10.8.
18. Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 726b, 727a–b, 729a, 732a, 765b, 775a. See further Richard Smith, "Sex Education in Gnostic Schools," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 345–60 (345–46).
19. The ancient Greek goddess Hera, when she wanted to imitate Zeus by having a child of her own, produced the lame god Hephaestus (a god of fire, like Yaldabaoth) (Hesiod, *Theog.* 927–928; cf. Homer, *Il.* 18.395–397; Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.20.3; Hyginus, *Fab.* 166; Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 74–76). Disgusted with her imperfect child, Hera grabbed him by the foot and swung him from Olympus (Homer, *Il.* 18.395 [cf. 1.590]; *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 316–321. In another version of the story, Hera self-produced the monster Typhon, elsewhere described as having a hundred snake heads growing from his shoulders, each with fiery eyes (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 305–309; 332–355; cf. Homer, *Il.* 2.782–783; Aeschylus, *Prom.* 351–372; Pindar, *Pyth.* 1.15–28; Ps.-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.6.3; Antoninus Liberalis, *Met.* 28; Ovid, *Met.* 5.321–358; Hesiod, *Theog.* 824–829).
20. *Ap. John* [NHC II,1] 10.9. See further Howard Jackson, *The Lion Becomes Man: The Gnostic Leontomorphic Creator and the Platonic Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 13–174 (esp. 34–39).
21. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 10.11.
22. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 10.14–21.

23. See further M. David Litwa, "The God 'Human' and Human Gods: Models of Deification in Irenaeus and the Apocryphon of John," *ZAC* 18 (2014): 70–94 (80–82).
24. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 11.11–15.
25. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 10.21–25; 11.35–12.3.
26. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 10.28–11.7.
27. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 11.8–10.
28. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 11.24–12.6.
29. Cf. [Hippolytus], *Ref.* 5.14.2; 5.16.2–3 (Peratai).
30. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 12.3–5.
31. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 12.14–25.
32. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 12.6–8.
33. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 11.20–21. Cf. Isa 45:5–6, 18, 21; 46:9. The Hebrew Bible itself uses the phrase "I am, there is no other" as parody (Isa 47:10; cf. *Asc. Isa.* 4.6–8; 10.13).
34. *Ap. John* 3.7–16. On the primal god, see further Waldstein, "Primal Triad," 154–87; Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions*, 108–16.
35. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 5.6–11.
36. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 5.11–9.24. On the divine world, see further King, *Secret Revelation*, 85–88.
37. *Ap. John* [NHC II,1] 11.18; 12.9–10.
38. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 3.8 ("On the Apostate"), trans. Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Penguin, 1954), 294.
39. ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲛⲕ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲉϥⲕⲱϩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲕⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲁⲓ̈ (*Ap. John* [NHC II,1] 13.8–9). Cf. Exod 20:5.
40. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 13.9–13.
41. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 13.28–30.
42. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 14.14–15.
43. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 14.24–26 (for the light, cf. Gen 1:3).
44. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 14.27–34.
45. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 15.2–4 (cf. Gen 1:26).
46. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 15.5–19.12.
47. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 17.32–19.8.
48. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 19.13–15.
49. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 19.23–25.
50. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 19.32–33.
51. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 19.34–20.9.
52. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 20.28–30.
53. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 20.14–24; 25.14–16.
54. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 20.35–21.9.
55. ⲡⲥⲡⲏⲗⲁⲓⲟⲛ (*Ap. John* [NHC II,1] 21.10). Cf. Plato, *Resp.*, 7.514a–515c.
56. *Ap. John* [NHC II,1] 21.12.

57. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 21.12–17.
58. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 21.17–29.
59. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 22.18–28.
60. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 22.29–36.
61. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 23.8–14. Jesus, who is telling the story, depicts Eve as an incarnation of Wisdom (23.20–22).
62. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 22.9; 23.26–27. See further István Czachesz, "The Eagle on the Tree: A Homeric Motif in Jewish and Christian Literature," in *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome: Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst*, eds. Florentino García Martínez and G. P. Luttikhuizen (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 87–99; Tuomas Rasimus, "Imperial Propaganda in Paradise? Christ as Eagle in the Apocryphon of John," in *Hidden Truths from Eden: Esoteric Readings of Genesis 1–3*, eds. Caroline Vander Stichele and Susanne Scholz, SBLSS 76 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 29–54.
63. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 24.1–2.
64. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 24.15–18.
65. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 28.12–15, 21–28.
66. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 28.32–29.15. On flood traditions, see Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions*, 97–107.
67. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 29.16–30.11.
68. The text of *The Reality of the Rulers* used here is Bentley Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 Together with XIII.2*, Brit. Lib. Or.4926(1) and P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, 2 vols., NHS 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1.220–59. The date of composition is probably third century CE (ibid., 221–22). Cf. Ursula Ulrich Kaiser, *Der Hypostase der Archonten (Nag-Hammadi-Codex II,4)*, TUGAL 156 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 16. On the Christian character of the treatise, see Nathaniel Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice-Regency in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 125–26.
69. ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲗⲁⲁⲩ [ⲁϫⲛ̄ⲧ] (*Hyp. Arch.* [NHC II,4] 86.30–31). The declaration is taken from Isa 46:9, cf. Isa 44:6; 45:6; Deut 4:35.
70. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 86.27–29.
71. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 86.31–32.
72. For the name "Incorruptibility," Mary Rose D'Angelo calls attention to 1 Cor 15:42 (cf. 50, 54), where one can translate ἐγείρεται ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ as "He [Adam] is raised by Incorruptibility" ("Response to 'Pursuing the Spiritual Eve,' in *Images of the Feminine*, ed., King, 207–10). Incorruptibility is both a spiritual being and the dwelling of the virginal Spirit (Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *The Nature of the Archons: A Study in the Soteriology of a Gnostic Treatise from Nag Hammadi (CG II, 4)*, StOR 12 [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985], 44–47).
73. Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 151–53. The "blind god" may be a play on words of the Coptic translation of Isaiah 46:9 (Roger Aubrey Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons: The Coptic Text with Translation and Commentary* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970], 53).

74. Note that in *Asc. Isa.* 4:6, it is Beliar (a name of the devil, 2 Cor 6:15), who claims to be the only god.
75. 3 Bar. 4:8; 9:7. In Targum Ps.-Jonathan 4:1, Sammael has sex with Eve to produce Cain (Michael Maher, ed., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 1B [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992], 31). See further Bernard Barc, "Samaèl-Saklas-Yaldabaôth," 136–38.
76. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 87.12–20; cf. 1 Cor 2:14. The lower ontological status of the archons and their resulting foolishness is a point emphasized by Gilhus, *Nature of the Archons*, 37–43.
77. See further Gilhus, *Nature of the Archons*, 51.
78. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 87.33–88.4.
79. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 88.4–9.
80. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 88.14.
81. Adamant is descriptive of heaven in Homer, *Il.* 17.425; *Od.* 15.329. The figure of Adamas ("the adamantine one" or the heavenly Adam) appears in a variety of Gnostic sources (e.g., [Hippolytus], *Ref.* 5.8.2 [Naassenes]; *Orig. World* [NHC II,5] 108.20–25; *Gos. Eg.* [NHC III,2] 49.8–10, cf. *Gos. Eg.* [NHC IV,2] 61.8–11; *Steles Seth* [NHC VII,5] 118.26; *Norea* [NHC IX,2] 27.26; 28.29–30).
82. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 88.33–89.2.
83. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 89.14–17; cf. Gen 3:20.
84. See Ovid, *Met.* 1.450–567, with the comments of Karen L. King, "Ridicule and Rape, Rule and Rebellion: The Hypostasis of the Archons," in *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World in Honor of James M. Robinson*, eds. James E. Goehring, et al. (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1990), 3–24 (12–16). See further Birger Pearson, "She Became a Tree: A Note to *CG* II,4: 89.25–26," *HTR* 69 (1976): 413–15.
85. The phantom Helen appears first in Stesichorus's palinode (Plato, *Phaedr.* 243a). She is rationalized by Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.112–120, and presumed in Euripides's play *Helen*. See further Norman Austin, *Helen of Troy and Her Shameless Phantom* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 90–136.
86. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 89.33–90.10.
87. Josephus, *Ant.* 1.41. Cf. Irenaeus, *Epid.* 16; *L.A.E.* 11:3.
88. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 90.19–91.11.
89. On Norea, see NHC IX,2 *Norea*; Birger A. Pearson, "Revisiting Norea," in King, ed., *Images of the Feminine*, 265–75; Anne McGuire, "Virginity and Subversion: Norea against the Powers in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*," in ibid., 239–58; R. Leicht, "Gnostic Myth in Jewish Garb: Niriyah (Norea), Noah's Bride," *JJS* 51 (2000): 133–40; Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 269–71, 277–81. On the alternation of Norea with Orea, see Kaiser, *Hypostase*, 277, n. 544.
90. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 92.21–26, trans. Marvin Meyer.
91. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 93.11–13.
92. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 94.16–17.
93. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 94.19–33; cf. Gen 1:3.

94. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 94.34–35. The ruler is called "Authades" in *Hyp. Arch.* 90.29–30; 92.27; 94.17, a name signifying self-willed and stubborn arrogance. Cf. *Ap. John* (NHC II.1) 13.27; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29.4.
95. Cf. 1 En 10:4–5. For the imprisonment of the Titans, see Hesiod, *Theog.* 720–729; Bullard, *Hypostasis*, 109.
96. On Sabaoth's repentance, see Bullard, *Hypostasis*, 110–12. According to Jean Magne, Sabaoth is the rehabilitation of the Jewish god who "becomes the model for those who are capable of conversion, i.e. those who are psychics like himself" (*From Christianity to Gnosis and from Gnosis to Christianity: An Itinerary through the Texts to and from the Tree of Paradise*, trans. A. F. W. Armstrong [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993], 118). Cf. Louis Painchaud, *L'écrit sans titre: Traité sur l'origine du monde (NH II, 5 et XIII, 2 et Brit. Lib. Or. 4926[1])*, BCNH (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 301–3.
97. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 95.14–34. For the figure of Sabaoth, see further Fallon, *Enthronement*, 25–132; Ithamar Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism: Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 196–200, 215–20; Deutsch, *Guardians*, 126–31.
98. Dan 4:27–28 of the Old Greek translation. Here I employ the translation (modified) and versification of John Collins, *Daniel*, 211.
99. Dan 4:30b. The punishment with whips, as Collins notes, is "reminiscent of the punishment of Azazel," a demonic angel in 1 En 10:4 (Collins, *Daniel*, 229).
100. King Nebuchadnezzar's later repentance (vv. 30c–34c) also has some features structurally similar to the repentance of Sabaoth.
101. *L.A.E.* 11.3; 12–17; 3 Bar. 4.8; 2 En. 3.3. See further Gilhus, *Nature of the Archons*, 41; James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 121–24.
102. *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,4) 97.10–13.
103. The text used here is that of Bentley Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, 2.12–135. *Orig. World* is preserved in full in NHC II,5, fragmentarily in NCH XIII,2 with additional fragments in a manuscript of the British library (Or.4926[1]). It probably dates from the late third or early fourth century CE. The place of writing is most likely Egypt, which in the text is called "God's paradise." See further Hans-Gebhard Bethge, "Introduction," in Layton, ed. *Nag Hammadi Codex II.2–7*, 2.13; Painchaud, *L'écrit*, 1–121.
104. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 97.24–30.
105. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 100.5–10.
106. Hans-Martin Schenke understood the phrase *νεανίσκε διαπέρα* to go back to the Aramaic ילדא בעוט (noted by Painchaud, *L'écrit*, 265). Painchaud also considers the combination of the Hebrew בוא ("to go") or עבר ("to cross") with the suffix *-oth* (often used in magic) (*L'écrit*, 265). See also Scholem, "Jaldabaoth," 413–14.

107. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 100.13–14, 23–24.
108. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 100.28–29.
109. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 100.29–101.9.
110. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 102.11–24.
111. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 103.11–12.
112. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 103.17–29.
113. The appearance of the image of humankind is the refutation of the creator's blasphemy. Yaldabaoth uses this image to control a higher deity, but humanity becomes the instrument of his own destruction.
114. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 105.32–106.6.
115. *Orig. World* [NHC II,5] 105.21; 105.19–20.
116. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 105.26–31. See further Painchaud, *L'écrite*, 324.
117. *Orig. World*, 107.24; cf. 108.7.
118. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 107.35–108.5.
119. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 108.3–25.
120. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 112.25–26.
121. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 112.34–113.1.
122. *Orig. World* [NHC II,5] 113.10.
123. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 114.24 –115.11.
124. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 115.15–23.
125. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 115.30–118.25.
126. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 118.33–119.6.
127. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 119.13–18.
128. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 119.19–120.12. This seems to be a statement borrowed from Marcionite theology.
129. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 120.38–121.27.
130. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 121.27–35.
131. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 123.4–15.
132. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 126.25–26.
133. *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 126.20–127.1.
134. See further Andrew Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah: Re-evaluating Prophetic Ethics and Divine Justice*, BibInt 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 193–99; Michael Williams, "The Demonizing of the Demiurge: The Innovation of Gnostic Myth," in *Innovation in Religious Traditions: Essays in the Interpretation of Religious Change*, eds. Michael A. Williams, Collett Cox, and Martin S. Jaffee, *RelSoc* 31 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), 73–107 (86–91).
135. Plato, *Tim.* 29e; cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.24.2: *invidia enim aliena est a deo* ("jealousy is alien to God"). See further Willem Cornelis van Unnik, "Der Neid in der Paradiesgeschichte nach einigen gnostischen Texten," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig*, ed. M. Krause (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 120–32. F. G. Herrmann, "φθόνος in the world of Plato's *Timaeus*," in *Envy,*

Spite and Jealousy: The Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greece, eds. David Konstan and N. Keith Rutter (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 53–83.

136. The disagreement centers on the place of the creator. In early catholic Christianity, the creator is the high God, while in gnostic Christianity, he is a subordinate, demonic figure.
137. See further Painchaud (*L'écrit*, 289, 303–7), who argues that the allusions to Revelation serve to identify Sabaoth with the Beast in Revelation 13.
138. See further Bullard, *Hypostasis*, 50–51; Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, "The Demonic Demiurge in Gnostic Mythology," in *The Fall of the Angels*, ed. Christoph Auffarth and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, TBN 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 148–60 (149).
139. See further John Dillon, "Monotheism in the Gnostic Tradition," in *Pagan Monotheism in Antiquity*, eds. Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 69–79.
140. Painchaud points out how the authors/editors of *Orig. World* turned the polemic against idolatry in Isaiah 41:21–29 against the Jewish god (Yaldabaoth) himself (*L'écrit*, 288).
141. It seems that Marcionite theology would have encouraged this conclusion. Sebastian Moll argues that (1) Marcion's dualism is not between a good and a just god, but between a good and an *evil* god, and (2) Marcion did not consider the Old Testament obsolete, but as a reliable account of the tribalistic, creator god (*The Arch-Heretic Marcion*, WUNT 250 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010], 161–62.
142. Layton called Yaldabaoth a parody of Yahweh ("The Hypostasis of the Archons," *HTR* 69 [1976]: 31–101 [76]). Cf. King, *Secret Revelation*, 93.
143. Cf. Deutsch, *Guardians*, 23; Orval Wintermute, "A Study of Gnostic Exegesis of the Old Testament," in *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays: Studies in Honor of William Franklin Stinespring* [Durham: Duke University Press, 1972], 241–70 [259]). See further Birger Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, 29–38; Williams, *Rethinking*, 54–79.
144. Isaiah 22; 52:11–12; 54:3; 62; 66:12; cf. also 63:10; 64:7–11.

CHAPTER 4

1. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, 3 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 3.1260.
2. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 156.
3. Origen, *Cels.* 7.9.
4. Acts 8:10. See chapter 5 below.
5. Origen, *Cels.* 6.11. The Christian prophet Montanus once putatively claimed, "I am the Lord God Almighty, who takes up residence in a human being," and "I, the Lord God [and] Father have come" (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.11.1, 9).

6. *j. Taan*. 2:1 (65b) in Andreas Lehnardt, *Ta ʿaniyot Fasten*, Übersetzung des Talmud Yerushalmi II/9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 50. Cf. *b. Sanh.* 106b.
7. Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 106–11.
8. Cf. John 10:10; 1 John 5:20; Philostratus, *Vita Ap.* 1.1 (ὡς ἐκ Διὸς ἥκοντα). See further Johannes Schneider, "ἥκω" in *TDNT* 2.926–928; Jan A. Bühner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4. Evangelium: Die kultur- und religionsgeschichtlichen Grundlagen der johanneischen Sendungschristologie sowie ihre traditionsgeschichtlicher Entwicklung*, WUNT 2/2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977), 138–66.
9. John 28:20. See further Kikuo Matsunaga, "The 'Theos' Christology as the Ultimate Confession of the Fourth Gospel," *AJBI* 7 (1981): 124–45; Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 441–53.
10. In the gospel of Mark, for instance, Jesus claims that he can forgive sins (2:10). The text immediately signals that this is the prerogative of Yahweh. When a Jewish leader (mentally) accuses Jesus of blasphemy, Jesus (who can read minds) openly claims that he has been granted God's prerogative, and performs a miracle to prove it. See further Sigurd Grindheim, *God's Equal: What Can We Know about Jesus' Self-understanding?*, LNTS 446 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 60–76.
11. On the terminology, see Michael L. Satlow, "Jew or Judaean?" in Hodge, ed., *The One Who Sows*, 165–75.
12. On John and historicity, see the report of Ismo Dunderberg, "How Far Can You Go? Jesus, John, the Synoptics and Other Texts," in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels*, eds. Eduard Iricinschi, et al. STAC (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 347–66. Whether the "historical" Jesus thought that he was divine is a question probably impossible to answer. See further Peter Stuhlmacher, "The Messianic Son of Man: Jesus' Claim to Deity," in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, eds. James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 325–46.
13. For the implied reader, see René Kieffer, "The Implied Reader in John's Gospel," in *New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives. Essays from the Scandinavian Conference on the Fourth Gospel*, eds. Johannes Nissen and Sigfred Pedersen, JSNTSS 182 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 47–65. She notes, "The implied reader is supposed to assent to the author's high Christology" (53). Francis J. Moloney observes, "Two thousand years of Christian history are a fair indication that generation after generation of Christian readers have 'entered the fictional contract' of the Fourth Gospel; they have become one with the implied reader" (Raymond Brown and Francis Moloney, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* [New York: Doubleday, 2003], 34–36 [39]).
14. On the putative misunderstanding of the Jews, see Hans-Christian Kammler, *Christologie und Eschatologie. Joh 5,17–30 als Schlüsseltext johanneischer Theologie*, WUNT 126 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 17–20.

15. "There is a context," writes Moloney, "that unites the original and all subsequent readers of the Gospel of John: a context generated by Christian faith, a community of believing readers" (*An Introduction*, 37). Accordingly, "We must allow ourselves to be seduced by the perspective of the author" (*An Introduction*, 33). Such willing (uncritical?) seduction unnecessarily limits the inquiries scholars can make regarding John.
16. On the Johannine "other," see Robert Kysar, *Voyages with John: Charting the Fourth Gospel* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), 227–36. On insiders and outsiders, see Neyrey, *John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective*, 252–81.
17. See further John Ashton, *Studying John: Approaches to the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 36–70; Brown and Moloney, *An Introduction*, 157–75, esp. 166–75.
18. Adele Reinhartz, "John 8:31–59 from a Jewish Perspective," in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, eds. John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, 3 vols. (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 2.787–97 (789); *eadem*, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 81–98.
19. For the Jews in John, see Saeed Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ: A Theological Inquiry into the Elusive Language of the Fourth Gospel*, WUNT 2/120 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 247–51.
20. Reinhartz, *Befriending*, 93.
21. Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), 267–71; Brown and Moloney, *An Introduction*, 40–86, 206–15; Jerome H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-science Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 9–36; Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 3 vols., ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1.50–55.
22. Brown and Moloney, *An Introduction*, 199–205; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 37–39; von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, 1.50, 52.
23. On the Johannine community, see esp. John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 100–140.
24. Peder Borgen, "Observations on God's Agent and Agency in John's Gospel," in *The Gospel of John: More Light from Philo, Paul and Archaeology: The Scriptures, Tradition, Exposition, Settings, Meaning*, NovTSup 154 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 194.
25. Raimo Hakola, *Identity Matters: John, the Jews and Jewishness*, NovTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 115–25.
26. The prohibition of burden bearing cannot be written off as later Jewish tradition. See Jer 17:19–27; cf. Neh 13:15–19; Exod 21:12–17; Num 15:32–36; Jub 2:29–30; 50:8; *CD* 11:7–8; *m. Šabb.* 7.2–9.7 (the thirty-ninth prohibition of labor), 10.5.
27. The imperfect verb ἔλυεν (John 5:18) suggests that Jesus did more than break Sabbath law; he regularly abolished it. Hakola rightly points out that scholars who

present Jesus as *not* breaking Jewish law, "tend to theologize the Sabbath and overlook questions concerning its observance in practice . . . It is not likely that any Jew would have understood how one can fulfil the purpose of the law by acting deliberately against one of its principal commandments" (*Identity Matters*, 129–30). He quotes E. P. Sanders: "obedience to the Torah is the condition for retaining the covenant promises; intentional and unrepenting disobedience implies rejection of the law, rejection of the covenant for which it is the condition, and rejection of the God who gave the law and the covenant" (130).

28. For Yahweh as exempt from the Sabbath, see Philo, *Leg.* 1.5–6, 16; *Cher.* 87; cf. *Let. Aris.* 210. Jesus's logic is somewhat similar to that of the allegorists in Philo, *Migr.* 91. But as Peder Borgen points out, Jesus is claiming to continue God's own creative acts, not something the Alexandrian allegorists claimed ("The Sabbath Controversy in John 5:1–18 and Analogous Controversy Reflected in Philo's Writings," *SPhA* 3 [1991]: 209–21). See further Lutz Doering, *Schabbat: Sabbathalacha und –praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum*, TSAJ 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 75–79, 178–82, 183–86, 315–86.
29. Joshua Ezra Burns, "Like Father, like Son: An Example of Jewish Humor in the Gospel of John," in *Portraits of Jesus: Studies of Christology*, ed. Susan E. Myers, WUNT 2/321 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 27–44 (34–35).
30. In the main, Michael H. Burer (*Divine Sabbath Work*, BBRSup 5 [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012]) replicates and legitimates Jesus's argument in John: Jesus *can* work on the Sabbath because in other Jewish traditions, Yahweh is sometimes depicted as working (i.e., creating, blessing) on the Sabbath. The interpretation is selective, in that most traditions (notably Gen 2:2; Jub 2:18; *Gen. Rabb.* 7.5; 11.5, 9) portray Yahweh as observing the Sabbath. Why did Jesus, at any rate, order another man to carry a burden on the Sabbath (not ostensibly a creative or beneficent deed)? Burer describes Jesus's healing as an "eschatological act" (110–111). Yet would not the future age of rest be better foreshadowed by an act of Sabbath obedience? In the end, Burer rehashes an old apologetic argument stating that the pure biblical Sabbath was degraded into "a meritorious act" during the Second Temple period (102). The Jews made the Sabbath into "Halakah," which Burer associates with an oppressive world, a lack of original Sabbath joy, and a departure from the theology of Jewish scriptures (138).
31. Exod 4:22–23; Deut 14:1; Mal 2:10; Jub 1:24–28; 2:20; 19:29–30. See further Hermann Spieckermann, "The 'Father' of the Old Testament and Its History," in *The Divine Father: Religious and Philosophical Concepts of Divine Parenthood in Antiquity*, eds. Felix Albrecht and Reinhard Feldmeier, Themes in Biblical Narrative 18 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 73–84.
32. The variant occurs in Codex Alexandrinus, the "Family 1 and 13" group of manuscripts, the majority of later Byzantine manuscripts, as well as several early church fathers including Irenaeus, Clement, Hippolytus, and Origen. See the apparatus of

Barbara Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 314.

33. See further Matthew Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*, AnBib 72 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977).
34. The comparison is explicit in James F. McGrath, *John's Apologetic Christology: Legitimation and Development in Johannine Christology*, SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99; Hartwig Thyen, *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum*, WUNT 214 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 694–95.
35. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., AB 29 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966–70), 1.408.
36. Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, 2.221.
37. Neyrey, *Ideology of Revolt*, 25. See further Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 106; Neyrey, *John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective*, 179, 444–45; Wayne Meeks, "Equal to God," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 309–21 (310); Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts as Juridical Controversy*, WUNT 2/132 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 79; Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5–12* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 13; McGrath, *Apologetic Christology*, 90, n. 41, 115; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1.647–48. Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, HNT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 309–10; Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 329.
38. Harold Attridge remarks that, in the rhetoric of the argument, "Because Jesus is the Son, he is *not* 'equal to the Father,'" but because he oversees judgment, "he is equal to the Father after all" ("Argumentation in John 5," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference*, eds. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker, Emory Studies in Early Christianity [Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002], 188–99 [192–93, emphasis his]).
39. It is true, as Alicia D. Myers points out, that Jesus's "very identity and commissioning illustrate the lawfulness of his act [working on the Sabbath]" ("'Jesus Said to Them . . .': The Adaptation of Juridical Rhetoric in John 5:19–47," *JBL* 132.2 [2013]: 415–30) [420]). Nevertheless, insufficient attention is paid to the fact that it is the character Jesus himself who *constructs* his own identity.
40. Isaiah 40:25 (אל־מי תדמיוני ואשוה). The LXX translates אשוה as ὑψωθήσομαι ("I will be exalted"). Symmachus and Theodotion offer ἰσωθήσομαι ("I will be made equal"); Aquila has ἐξισωθήσομαι ("I will be made [entirely] equal"). Cf. Ps 89:7; Exod 15:11.
41. Isaiah 14:14. Ὅμοιος can mean, "the same," "equal in force," "of the same rank or station" (*LSJ*, 1224, at I.2, 3; II).
42. See further Burns, "Like Father," in Myers, ed., *Portraits of Jesus*, 41–42.
43. Philo, *Leg.* 1.49. Cf. *Sac.* 92; *Aet.* 43. "There is nothing equal or superior to God" (οὔτε δὲ ἴσον οὔτε κρεῖσσον ἐστι θεοῦ) (*Leg* 2.3); *Cher.* 77: "What more hostile enemy

to the soul can there be than he who in his arrogance attributes to himself what belongs to God?"

44. John 5:21–22, cf. 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7; John 5:21–22, cf. 25–27. For the "living God," see Deut 5:26; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; Jer 10:10; Hos 2:1; Ps 42:3.
45. Kammler, *Christologie und Eschatologie*, 94; Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 373.
46. Note, for instance, the association of deification and honor in Josephus, *Ant.* 19.4.
47. Josephus, *Ant.* 19.4.
48. Philo, *Legat*. 78–80. See further Meeks, "Divine Agent," in Fiorenza, ed., *Aspects of Religious Propaganda*, 49–52; Borgen, *Gospel of John*, 255.
49. Hakola notes, "The argument made for Jesus in John is not only excessive but also circular, because it is based on the acceptance of Jesus as God's agent on earth. Only those who accept this can take Jesus' Sabbath action as a sign of his close relationship to God, whereas others are bound to see this action as a transgression" (*Identity Matters*, 128).
50. Life: Deut 32:39–41; 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7; Ps 36:9; 2 Macc 7:22–23; Wisd 16:13. Judgment: Deut 1:17. See further von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, 2.231.
51. Deut 32:39–41 (LXX). See further von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, 2.232.
52. Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, 2.237.
53. As von Wahlde points out, Jesus makes essentially the same point regarding the power to judge. He does nothing "of himself" (v. 19) or of his "own accord" (v. 30), but then claims the power to judge *because he is the Son of the Human*, an independent divine figure (*Gospel and Letters*, 2.237).
54. Rudolf Schnackenburg, "'Der Vater, der mich gesandt hat.' Zur johanneischen Christologie," in *Anfänge der Christologie: Festschrift für Ferdinand Hahn zum. 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Ciliers Breytenbach und Henning Paulsen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 275–92.
55. Cf. Dan 7:14: ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία. Ashton remarks, "The exceptional character of Jesus' relationship with God cannot be *explained* by the law of agency" (*Understanding*, 228, emphasis his).
56. He appears in the guise of the Canaanite deity Baal (C. L. Seow, *Daniel*, Westminster Bible Companion [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003], 108). In the Old Greek of Daniel 7:13, the one like a son of a human arrives "like the Ancient of Days" (ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν παρῆν)—a reading suggesting his closer union with the high God. Typically the Son of the Human is an independent figure, as in the *Parables of Enoch*. For his judging functions, see 1 En 49:4; 61:9; 62:2–3; 63:11; 69:27. See further Benjamin E. Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2/249 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 132–46.
57. See further Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 45–46, 57, 137–38, 301–2, 304.

58. Commentators emphasize that Jesus breaks the mold of the envoy. An envoy is not worshiped (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 254–55; Kammler, *Christologie und Eschatologie*, 115). Borgen appealed to "judicial mysticism" for the idea that the envoy "ranks as the person" of the sender (הוה ליה כגופיה) (*b. Qidd.* 43a). He reads this to mean that, "the agent is a person identical with the sender" (*Gospel of John*, 169). Per Jarle Bekken appeals to this same "halakhic principle" (*The Lawsuit Motif in John's Gospel from New Perspectives: Jesus Christ, Crucified Criminal and Emperor of the World*, NovTSup 158 [Leiden: Brill, 2015], 170). Yet if the identity of agent and sender was a recognized principle at the time of John, why depict such fierce Jewish opposition to Jesus's unity and/or equality with God?
59. Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 24–29, 57–59. See further Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 305–7; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000).
60. Asiedu-Peprah, *Sabbath Conflicts*, 98.
61. Neyrey, *Gospel of John*, 113.
62. Cf. *m. Ketub.* 2:9.
63. Deut 17:6; 19:15; cf. 11Q19 61:6–7.
64. Schäfer remarks that this saying "must have sounded in the ears of the Jews like a parody of this Halacha [the law of two witnesses]" (*Jesus in the Talmud*, 127).
65. Exod 33:20; Deut 4:12, 15, 32–36.
66. Cf. Exod 19:16–25; Deut 4:11–12, 33. Meeks calls Jesus's statement "a cavalier denial of a central Jewish belief" ("Divine Agent," 58).
67. Bekken, *Lawsuit Motif*, 140.
68. Neyrey, *Gospel of John*, 114. Nietzsche refers "to the attempt to pull away the Old Testament from under the feet of the Jews" (*The Dawn*, §84 in *Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Kaufmann 80).
69. John 5:42–43 (τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ). Most interpreters favor an objective genitive.
70. "A name," writes Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "establishes and manifests a person's identity" (*In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names*, trans. Frederick H. Cryer [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 1).
71. Cf. Exod 32:32; Jer 15:1; Philo, *Mos.* 2.166; Jub 1:20–21.
72. John 7:37–38. See further Brown, *Gospel*, 1.343.
73. I italicize "I" here and "you" below to represent the emphatic personal pronouns (ἐγώ, σύ) in the Greek. Cf. 1:4, 9; 9:4; 11:9; 12:35.
74. Cf. John 12:35. Keener points out that "the light of life" originally applied to the light of sunlight, as opposed to the darkness experienced by those in the underworld. See, e.g., Job 33:30; Ps 56:13; Prov 29:13 (*Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 1.740).
75. Ps 4:6; 36:10; 43:3; 89:16; Isa 2:5; 1 En 48:4; *Test XII. Levi* 5.3.
76. Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 338.

77. Borgen, *Gospel of John*, 210. Cf. Lincoln: Jesus "is so at one with God that his witness is self-authenticating, for by definition God needs no one to validate God's testimony" (*Truth on Trial*, 85).
78. Although Jesus says that he does not come into the world to judge (John 3:17–18), in effect his presence causes judgment (κρίσις) in the basic sense of the Greek term: separation. In their encounters with Jesus, humans are gradually separated into those who believe and those who cannot, the saved and the damned. See further Jerome H. Neyrey, "Jesus the Judge: Forensic Process in John 8,21–59," *Bib* 68 (1987): 509–42.
79. John 8:17–18. Cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15; Num 35:30. Bekken, appealing to Hugo Odeberg, says that "your Law" indicates "the law as it functioned within human jurisdiction, as distinct from the divine realm or jurisdiction" (*Lawsuit Motif*, 141). He does not cite any ancient evidence to support this dual jurisdiction.
80. Lincoln observes, "Jesus' witness to himself and his and the Father's joint witness amount to the same thing because of the unity between the Son and the Father" (*Truth on Trial*, 86). Bekken writes, "in John 8:18 the line of thought is that Jesus' testimonywitness [*sic*] to himself and his Father's testimony amount to the same thing because of the unity between the Son and the Father" (*Lawsuit Motif*, 141).
81. Unless the Father is not considered to be the Jewish god. Yet this understanding would be no less offensive to Jewish ears.
82. Cf. John 8:28, 58; 13:19; cf. 6:20; 18:5, 6, 8.
83. Brown, *Gospel*, 1.533–38; Thyen, *Studien*, 220–31.
84. The LXX translates אהיה in Exod 3:14 as Ὁ ὤν, emphasizing Yahweh's eternality. Neyrey favors eternality as the basic meaning of I AM (*Ideology*, 53–54, 213–20). Catrin H. Williams stresses eternality with salvific activity (*I Am He: The Interpretation of 'Anî Hû' in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, WUNT 2/113 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 278–79, 52–54).
85. Williams, *I Am He*, 42–50.
86. Isa 42:6; 43:11; 44:24; 45:5; 49:23. In Isa 45:18, Ἐγώ εἰμι translates אני יהוה. See further Williams, *I Am He*, 23–41, 55–62.
87. The parallels with Second Isaiah are especially significant, because there Yahweh declares his sole divinity using the tropes of forensic discourse (citing evidence, calling in witnesses, attacking opponents) just as Jesus in John 8 does. Von Wahlde rightly concludes, "This appropriation of the divine name is among the most explicit of the claims to divinity on the part of Jesus" (*Gospel and Letters*, 2.396). Cf. David Mark Ball: "The Son's identification with the Father is so close that he can even take words from Isaiah concerning the LORD's role as the only God, and use them of himself" (*'I Am' in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, JSNTSS 124 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 193, cf. 197). Based on the I AM sayings, Ball argues for Jesus' "ontological," not mere functional unity with God (278–79). On the Johannine I AM formula, see

further Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to John*, 2.79–89; Williams, *I Am He*, 266–83; Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 372.

88. Ball, *'I Am' in John's Gospel*, 90. Cf. Myers: Jewish "hostility and confusion make sense, given that in each situation Jesus' words and behavior *are* confusing in light of their expectations for the person in front of them" ("Jesus Said to Them," 429, n.40).
89. Cf. John 3:14–15; 12:31–32.
90. Schnackenburg finds it "hardly possible to explain the remark in terms of the situation" (*Gospel According to St. John*, 2.204). Brown suspects a later editorial insertion (*Gospel*, 1.354).
91. Cf. John 6:66. Contemporary commentators tend to deny clumsy editing or intrusive glosses (e.g., Thyen, *Johannesevangelium*, 432–36). Neyrey calls the believers "murderers and liars" (*Gospel of John*, 158, cf. 155). In an implicit defense of Jesus, Terry Griffith blames the Jews for deficient faith ("'The Jews Who Had Believed in Him' [John 8:31] and the Motif of Apostasy in the Gospel of John," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, eds. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008)], 183–92). Πεπιστευκότες can be read as a pluperfect: "those who had believed" (yet do so no longer). But there is no immediate prior reference to those who lost faith. Πιστεύω with εἰς (v. 30) and πιστεύω with the dative (v. 31) do not express significantly different ideas. There is thus no reason to assert that the believers in v. 30 and those immediately mentioned in v. 31 "cannot be the same" (*pace* Moloney, *Signs*, 103).
92. Cf. Paul's argument in Gal 3:15–4:31.
93. John 8:44. April D. DeConick argues that "You are from the father of the devil" is the plain reading of John 8:44a, and that the appositional reading (which equates the father and the devil) is rooted in early catholic apologetics ("Why Are the Heavens Closed? The Johannine Revelation of the Father in the Catholic-Gnostic Debate," in *John's Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic*, eds. Catrin H. Williams and Christopher Rowland [London: Bloomsbury, 2013], 147–79).
94. Sigfred Pedersen, "Anti-Judaism in John's Gospel: John 8," in *New Readings in John*, 172–93; Maurice Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?* (London: Routledge, 1996), 223–28; Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*, 400–404; Kysar, *Voyages with John*, 147–60, 230; R. Bieringer et al., eds., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Adele Reinhartz, "The Grammar of Hate in the Gospel of John: Reading John in the Twenty-First Century," in *Israel und seine Heilstraditionen im Johannesevangelium. Festgabe für Johannes Beutler SJ*, eds. Michael Labahn, Klaus Scholtissek, and Angelika Strotmann (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004), 416–27; Hakola, *Identity Matters*, 210–14; Judith Lieu, "Anti-Judaism, the Jews, and the Worlds of the Fourth Gospel," in Bauckham and Mosser, eds., *Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, 168–82.
95. "Jesus' *explanation* [of his charge] is anything but an explanation, for it is an undisguised charge that the audience is totally evil" (Neyrey, "Jesus the Judge," 527,

emphasis his). Character assassination was part of forensic rhetoric, as Keener points out (*Commentary* 1.752, with references), but it does not ethically justify the authors who put such language into Jesus's mouth.

96. Bruce Malina and R. L. Rohrbaugh speak of "a truly harsh and demeaning insult [in 8:44]" (*Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998], 162). The Jews will later accuse Jesus of being a "sinner" (John 9:24). See further Severino Pancaro, *The Law and the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity According to John* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 49–52.
97. Keener, *Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 1.765, citing, for example, Deut 4:2; 33:9; 1 Chron 10:13; Ps 119:9, 17, 67, 101, 158.
98. Harold Bloom, "'Before Moses Was, I Am': The Original and Belated Testaments," *Notebooks in Cultural Analysis* 1 (1984): 3–14 (12).
99. Bloom, "'Before Moses Was," 12. See further Bloom, *Jesus and Yahweh: The Names Divine* (New York: Riverhead, 2005), 72–88.
100. In *m. Sanh.* 7.5, mentioning the name of God constitutes blasphemy.
101. Cf. Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1.531. See further Williams, *I Am He*, 279–83. Also relevant is *Sifre Deut.* 221 (on Deut 21:22), where the blasphemer "is characterized as one who extends his hand to threaten the fundamental principle (of faith)" (Reuven Hammer, trans., *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986], 232).
102. Reinhartz, *Befriending*, 94–95.
103. On the false prophet motif, see Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 50–61. On the charge of blasphemy, see T. Söding, "Ich und der Vater sind eins" *ZNW* 93 (2002): 177–99 (181–82); and esp. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 106–7.
104. This is hardly "messianic reserve" (George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2d ed., WBC 36 [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999], 174). Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman about his messianic identity (4:26; cf. 9:35).
105. Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 597.
106. John 9:38. Celsus reports that due to his miracles (δυνάμεών τινων), Jesus became arrogant (μέγα φρονῶν) and proclaimed himself a god (θεὸν αὑτὸν ἀνηγόρευσε, Origen, *Cels.* 1.28).
107. Apollonius of Tyana could also heal the blind (Philostratus, *Vita Ap.* 3.39). Hierocles, quoted by Eusebius, remarks, "For we consider a man who has done such things [miracles] not a god, but a man who is pleasing to the gods. But they proclaim Jesus a god on the basis of a few wonders" (*Against Hierocles*, 2.27).
108. Brown, *Gospel*, 1.408 ("this description remains primarily functional"); Moloney, *Signs*, 147–48 ("The author is not primarily interested in metaphysics, but in a oneness of purpose"); von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, 2.473 ("[I]n this context, the statement is not a metaphysical one. It is a statement of functional unity").

109. The view that "Jesus has not explicitly claimed deity" is forced (Keener, *Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 1.827).
110. Deut 13:1–5; 11Q19 54:8–18.
111. Here ancient Jewish interpretations of Psalm 82:6 stand in the background. The *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* contains Tannaitic (late first to second century CE) traditions. In tractate *Baḥodesh* 9, we find an exegesis attributed to Rabbi Jose: "It was upon this condition that the Israelites stood up before Mount Sinai, on the condition that the Angel of Death should have no power over them. For it is said: 'I said, You are gods,' etc. (Ps 82:6)" (Lauterbach, *Mekilta*, 2.341). See further Joel S. Kaminsky, "Paradise Regained: Rabbinic Reflections on Israel at Sinai," in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, eds. Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel Kaminsky, SBLSymS 8 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2000), 15–43 (esp. 18–21, 33–39); Neyrey, *Ideology*, 221–24; Neyrey, "I Said You Are Gods: Psalm 82:6 and John 10," *JBL* 108 (1989): 647–63 (esp. 654–9); McGrath, *Apologetic Christology*, 123–28.
112. According to *m. Sanh.* 7.4, one who introduces an idol into Israel is punished with death.
113. John 17:21, 23. Cf. 14:20; 1 John 3:24; 4:15, and Paul's ubiquitous phrase "in Christ."
114. Neyrey, *Gospel of John*, 153. Cf. Myers: Jesus "ends with a stinging refutation against the Jews" ("Jesus Said to Them," 430).
115. Mark 14:62, citing Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13.
116. See further Tobias Nicklas, "'Du bist nur ein Mensch und machst dich selbst zu Gott' (Johannes 10,33): Das Motiv der Gotteslästerung bei Johannes vor dem Hintergrund der Synoptiker," in *Studies in the Gospel of John and Its Christology: Festschrift Gilbert van Belle*, ed. Joseph Verheyden et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 239–56.
117. See, e.g., Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); M. David Litwa, *Iesus Deus: The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus as a Mediterranean God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014).
118. On Jesus's self-authentication, see Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 484. Ashton quotes Josef Blank to the effect that "the testimony receives its entire material and formal significance from the person who gives it" (*Understanding*, 502). Cf. Borgen, *Gospel of John*, 270.
119. Richard J. Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 65–96, 157–242; K. Oatley, "Why Fiction May Be Twice as True as Fact," *Review of General Psychology* 3 (1999): 101–17; Melanie C. Green, "Transportation into Narrative Worlds: Implications for the Self," in *On Building, Defending and Regulating the Self: A Psychological Perspective*, eds. Abraham Tesser, Joanne V. Wood, and Diederik A. Stapel (New York: Psychology Press, 2005), 53–76; *eadem*,

"Transportation into Narrative Worlds: The Role of Prior Knowledge and Perceived Realism," *Discourse Processes* 38 (2004): 247–66 (esp. 262); J. Garst Green and T. C. Brock, "The Power of Fiction: Persuasion via imagination and Narrative," in *The Psychology of Entertainment Media: Blurring the Lines between Entertainment and Persuasion* (Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2004), 161–76.

120. John's readers "were not intended as observers to appraise the miracles, but as those who themselves were encountering Jesus . . . John was stirring—and steering—their imagination . . . to experience present healing (Robin Griffith-Jones, "Transformation by a Text: The Gospel of John," in *Experientia, Volume 1: Inquiry into Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Christianity* [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2008], 105–23 [107]). ". . . John is working to effect a cumulative and transformative experience in his readers as they adopt, with a self-conscious but sympathetic imagination, the varying points of view of successive characters" (108).
121. Neyrey, *Gospel of John*, 155. Moloney says that, since the Jews are "totally conditioned by their own cultural, social, and religious criteria . . . they necessarily judge Jesus as a blasphemer" (*Signs*, 114). Moloney also seems "totally conditioned" by his own religious criteria.
122. Michael Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 108.
123. McGrath rightly recognizes the depiction of Jesus's eternal deity as a Johannine rhetorical and apologetic strategy (*Apologetic Christology*, 137). Cf. Litwa, *Iesus Deus*, 4–6.
124. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel:* God Crucified *and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 1–59, esp. 6–13, 18–31, 46–51. Bauckham sees John 10:30 as an adaptation of the Shema (104–6).
125. Note that in John 20:28, Thomas calls Jesus ὁ θεός (with the definite article).
126. Ashton speaks of a "long vendetta" shared between the Johannine community and contemporary Jews (*Studying John*, 172). Lars Kierspel argues that the Jews were not a symbol of the world, which in fact designates a broader range of human enemies (*The Jews and the World in the Fourth Gospel: Parallelism, Function, and Context*, WUNT 2/220 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], 214–19). Still, the Jews in John do constitute a special instance of the demonic rejection of Johannine mythology.
127. See further Pancaro, *Law*, 492–504; James F. McGrath, "A Rebellious Son? Hugo Odeberg and the Interpretation of John 5:18," *NTS* 44 (1998): 470–73; Reinhartz, "The Gospel of John: How the 'Jews' Became Part of the Plot," in *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust*, eds. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 99–116 (103, 109). Neyrey argues that the final editors of the Johannine gospel were themselves in revolt against their society, the symbols of their religion, and the physical world itself (*Ideology*, 142–206).

CHAPTER 5

1. "Manches, was die Pseudoklementinen dem Simon Magos vorwerfen, hat man in der Antike auch Jesus von Nazaret und den frühen Christen unterstellt" (Nicklas, "Simon Magos: Erschaffung eines Luftmenschen [Pseudo-Clemens Hom II,26; Rek II,15]," in *Nouvelle intrigues pseudo-clémentines: Actes du Deuxième colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe chrétiennes, Lausanne-Genève, 30 août—2 septembre 2006*, ed. Frédéric Amsler [Lausanne: Éditions du Zèbre, 2008], 409–24 [424])
2. It is actually not clear that Simon was a Samaritan, but this seems to be the assumption of early Christian writers. See further Jarl Fossum, "Samaritan Sects and Movements," in *The Samaritans*, ed. Alan D. Crown (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 361–64; Stephen Haar, *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* BZNW 119 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 160–66). Since Simon's common title "Magus" ("the magician") serves mostly as a heresiological slur, it is not foregrounded here (see further Florent Heintz, *Simon "Le magician": Actes 8, 5–25 et l'accusation de magie contre les prophètes thaumaturges dans l'antiquité* [Paris: Gabalda, 1997], 45). For the hydra image, see Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.30.14; [Hippolytus,] *Ref.* 5.11.1.
3. On mythistory, see further William H. McNeill, *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1–22; G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1–28, 123; Mali, *Mythistory*, 1–35.
4. Werner Foerster believed that Simon's self-deification was historical ("Die 'ersten Gnostiker' Simon und Menander," in *Le origini dello Gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina 13–18 Aprile 1966*, ed. Ugo Bianchi [Leiden: Brill, 1970], 190–96 [194]; cf. Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 15–19). Simone Pétrement, however, argued that Simon's self-deification was a heresiological construction (*A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans. Carol Harrison [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990], 245–46).
5. In the twentieth century, Simon was a popular test case for pre-Christian Gnosticism—some affirming that he was a gnostic, others denying it. See the balanced position of Haar, *First Gnostic*, 306–7. It is not my concern whether and in what phase Simon should be classified as "gnostic" or not. I focus on the claim that Simon was a deity of some sort, and trace the historical development of his (self-) deification. The self-deification of Simon has not been a subject for independent investigation. See, however, the brief survey of Heintz, *Simon "Le magician,"* 118–22.
6. Gerd Lüdemann, *The Acts of the Apostles: What Really Happened in the Earliest Days of the Church* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2005), 385–401; Loveday Alexander, "Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts," *NTS* 44 (1998): 380–99; *idem*, "The Acts of the Apostles as an Apologetic Text," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire*, edited by Mark Edwards et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15–44; Marianne Palmer

Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 183–89. For an extensive survey of ancient historiography with a view to Acts, see Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography*, Emory Studies in Early Christianity (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 104–222. In general, see T. P. Wiseman, "Lying Historians: Seven Types of Mendacity," in *Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. John Marincola (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 314–36.

7. Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 1.26.3.
8. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.2; 1.29.1.
9. Origen, *Cels.* 1.57. It is generally accepted that Origen's claim that there were only thirty Simonians in his time (*Cels.* 1.57) is based on a confusion with the Dositheans (*Cels.* 6.11). See the note of Henry Chadwick in his *Origen: Contra Celsum* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 325, n. 2.
10. For an introduction to the *Refutation* with a history of research, see Emanuele Castelli, "Saggio introduttivo: L'*Elenchos*, ovvero una 'biblioteca' contro le eresie," in Aldo Magris, ed., *'Ippolito.' Confutazione di tutte le eresie* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2012), 21–56; M. David Litwa, *Refutation of All Heresies Translated with an Introduction and Notes*, WGRW 40 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), xxvii–liii. The critical edition of *Ref.* used here is Miroslav Marcovich, *Hippolytus: Refutatio omnium haeresium*, PTS 25 (Berlin, de Gruyter, 1986).
11. Karlmann Beyschlag, *Simon Magus und die christliche Gnosis*, WUNT 16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1974), 218–19.
12. Φασί in, for example, *Ref.* 6.15.3, 6.17.2. Note that Marcovich in his edition was prone to change φασί in the manuscript to φησί(ν).
13. Interpreters generally conclude that the *Great Declaration* was a late work (Edwin Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences* [London: Tyndale Press, 1973], 62–64; Haar, *First Gnostic*, 97–99; Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 32–33). An exception is J. M. A. Salles-Dabadie, who argued that the *Declaration* was written by Simon himself (*Recherches sur Simon le Mage*, Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 10 [Paris: Gabalda, 1969], 71–79, 127–40). According to Josef Frickel, the author of *Ref.* did not quote from the *Declaration* but from a paraphrase of it composed by a gnostic exegete around 200 CE. (*Die "Apophasis Megale" in Hippolyt's Refutatio (VI 9–18): Eine Paraphrase zur Apophasis Simons* [Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1968]). Frickel's theory was refuted by Catherine Osborne (now Catherine Rowett), who points out that it is based on an overly selective source-critical analysis and a misunderstanding of how the author of *Ref.* uses φησίν. Rowett herself suggests that the *Declaration* was written down, with commentary, by one of Simon's pupils (*Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy: Hippolytus of Rome and the Presocratics* [London: Duckworth, 1987], 214–27).
14. In the following discussion, the name "Simon" functions in a similar way to "John" in the last chapter: namely, as a stand-in for unknown authors advancing their community's mythology.

15. For "Beginning" (Ἀρχή) as a kind of agent, see Clement of Alexandria, *Exc.* 6.1–2; cf. 19.1.
16. The language of two Powers is reminiscent of rabbinic polemics against a "two powers heresy." See further Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), esp. 247. Such polemics probably aimed at a wide variety of Christians. The Simonians, who were concentrated in Palestine, may have been among them.
17. The manuscript reads ἡ φανεῖσα ἐπίνοια ν οὐκ ἐποίησεν. Conjectured here for ν is αὐτὸν, which appears in the next clause. Marcovich proposed νοῦν ("Mind"). Earlier editors (e.g., Wendland) read ἐπίνοιαν as one word, then simply deleted the ν.
18. The title "Standing One" (ὁ ἑστώς) is derived in part from Deut 5:31, where Yahweh addresses Moses: "But you, stand here by me" (στῆθι μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ, LXX). With this verse in view, Philo says that Moses participates in the Standing One (ὁ Ἑστώς), or God (*Post.* 28; *Conf.* 30). The philosopher Numenius also described the primal God (ὁ μὲν πρῶτος θεὸς) as the Standing One (Ἑστώς) (frag. 15 des Places from Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 11.18, 20–21); cf. CH 2.12: Νοῦς . . . ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἑστώς ("Mind . . . standing in itself"). See further Gerd Lüdemann, *Untersuchungen zur simonianischen Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 98–100; Michael Allen Williams, *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 37–38, 57; Jarl Fossum *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism.* WUNT 36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 120–24; Haar, *First Gnostic*, 2003, 275–9, 286.
19. Mark Edwards, "Simon Magus, the Bad Samaritan," in *Portraits: Biographical Representations in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, eds. Mark Edwards and Simon Swain (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 69–91 (80).
20. For the figure of Apsethos, compare Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 29.4; Aelian, *Var. hist.* 14.30 (where he is called Hanno the Carthaginian); and the scholion to Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 1.14. These texts are printed and briefly commented on by Osborne, *Rethinking*, 70–73, 359–60.
21. See further Edward Dixon, "Descending Spirit and Descending Gods: A 'Greek' Interpretation of the Spirit's 'Descent as a Dove' in Mark 1:10," *JBL* 128 (2009): 759–80.
22. See further Janet E. Spittler, *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: The Wild Kingdom of Early Christian Literature*, WUNT II/247 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 51–75.
23. Καὶ ἀγέννητος ("and unborn") is Marcovich's emendation of the manuscript reading ἐκ γε(ν)νητοῦ ("from the born one"). Cf. Justin, *1 Apol.* 25.2.
24. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom* 2.11.52.2: "The adherents of Simon want to be morally assimilated to the 'Standing one' whom they worship" (οἱ δὲ ἀμφὶ τὸν Σίμωνα τῷ Ἑστῶτι, ὅν σέβουσιν, ἐξομοιοῦσθαι <τὸν> τρόπον βούλονται).

25. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* AB 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 53–54; Richard Pervo, “Acts in the Suburbs of the Apologists,” in *Contemporary Studies in Acts*, ed. Thomas E. Phillips (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), 29–46.
26. For the ancient magus, see Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. Franklin Philip (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 20–117; Haar, *First Gnostic*, 33–70.
27. Haar, *First Gnostic*, 176. See further Timothy Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark* JSNTSup 128 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).
28. Acts reads: ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη μεγάλη. The participle καλουμένη, absent in some manuscripts, is usually taken as an explanatory addition by the author of Acts, which accords with his style. Τοῦ θεοῦ is also likely an editorial addition (cf. Mark 14:62 with Luke 22:69). See further Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. James Limburg et al., Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 63; Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, 99–105; Lüdemann, *Untersuchungen*, 39–42, 47; Lüdemann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 116–17; Pétrement, *Separate God*, 241; Richard Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 209.
29. Kurt Rudolph, “Simon—Magus oder Gnosticus,” *TRu* 42 [1977]: 279–359 [320–28]).
30. By itself, the “Great Power” could refer to a subordinate deity or to the high God. Even in *The Great Declaration*, the Great Power is subordinate to Silence (*Ref.* 6.18.2–3). Hegesippus calls his high God “the Great Power” (τῆς μεγάλης δυνάμεως) at Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.13. Nevertheless, in *PGM* 4.1275–80 the great power (τὴν μεγίστην δύναμιν) is subordinate to a higher God (ὑπὸ κυρίου θεοῦ τεταγμένην). The same applies for the Lydian inscription where the god Mēn is the “great power of the immortal God” (μεγάλη δύναμις τοῦ ἀθανάτου θεοῦ) (printed with comments in G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* [North Ryde: Macquarie University, 1983], 31–32). More sources are cited in Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, 106–20; Horsley, *New Documents* 3 (1981), §68, 106. In other Jewish sources, the Great Power also appears as a subordinate being or manifestation of the high God (2 Macc 3.38–39; Philo, *Mos.* 1.111; *Fug.* 97; *Abr.* 183; *Leg.* 3.73). Cf. *Allog.* (NHC XI,3) 50.23, 57.39. For the Samaritan use of the Great Power title, see Fossum, *Name of God*, 171–72. See further Ernst Haenchen, “Gab es eine vorchristliche Gnosis?” *ZTK* 49 (1952): 316–49 (345); Lüdemann, *Untersuchungen*, 46–49.
31. *Pace* Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, 121–23
32. See further Litwa, *Iesus Deus*, 4–6.
33. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.1 (*sublimissimam virtutem*); Ps.-Tertullian, *Adv. omn. haer.* 1.2 (*summam virtutem*); Filastrius, *Haer.* 29.1 (*virtutem quandam dei, quae supra omnes, inquit, virtutes est*).
34. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 63; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 404.

35. Origen, *Cels.* 7.9.
36. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 96–104; M. David Litwa, *Becoming Divine: An Introduction to Deification in Western Culture* (Eugene: Cascade, 2013), 70, 73–74.
37. See further Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 18–19; Penner, *In Praise*, 196–208.
38. Some scholars doubt the validity of Simon's conversion (e.g., Gilles Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion* [Zürich: Origo, 1951], 53; Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* [Boston: Beacon, 1958], 103; Fossum, *Name of God*, 164; Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 26–27). Some of this skepticism was occasioned by the idea that Simon, as a (pre-Christian) gnostic, could not have become a Christian. Haar observes, "The skepticism voiced by various commentators over the genuineness of Simon's conversion cannot claim to be occasioned by anything in the text" (*First Gnostic*, 180). Cf. Rick Strelan, *Strange Acts: Studies in the Cultural World of the Acts of the Apostles*, BZNW 126 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 212; Patrick Fabien, "La conversion de Simon le magician [Ac 8,4–25]," *Bib.* 91 (2010): 210–40 (218–28).
39. See further C. R. Matthews, "The Acts of Peter and Luke's Intertextual Heritage," *Semeia* 80 (1997): 207–22 (214–19).
40. In other cases (e.g., Acts 9:17–18), an apostle is not necessary, and the reception of the Spirit even precedes baptism (Acts 10:44–48).
41. C. K. Barrett notes, "Presumably (though Luke does not say so, and probably found the thought embarrassing) he [Simon] too received the Holy Spirit, since the next step is his request to purchase from the apostles the power to confer the Spirit" ("Light on the Holy Spirit from Simon Magus," in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, redaction, théologie*, ed. J. Kremer [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979], 281–95 [291]). Cf. Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 20.
42. Τὸ ἀργύριόν σου σὺν σοὶ εἴη εἰς ἀπώλειαν. Here I adopt the translation of Haar, *First Gnostic*, 185. By his solemn condemnation of Simon, Fabien points out, it is Peter who comically resembles a magician ("Conversion," 229–30). *Pace* Susan Garrett (*The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989], 70) and Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 212–15, Peter does not "curse" Simon. As Fabien points out, Peter speaks in the optative (εἴη εἰς ἀπώλειαν) ("Conversion," 233). Simon's destruction is potential—perhaps even willed by Peter—but hardly assured. See further Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, 104.
43. Barrett has shown how sensitive the author of Luke-Acts was about money, and how quick he was to disassociate Christian prophets from profit ("Light on the Holy Spirit," 287–92; cf. Heintz, *Simon "Le magician,"* 122–27).
44. Garrett's view that Simon's offer of money is "quintessentially satanic" and indicative of "diabolical greed" is excessive (*Demise*, 72).
45. The author of Acts tries to distinguish "true religion" and "magic" (Garrett, *Demise*, 76–78), but as J. D. G. Dunn points out, the "Christian practice of laying on hands or exorcism may look very much the same [as magic], and indeed have a very

similar effect (cf. [Acts] 8.9–11 with 8.6, 8 and 13)" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, [Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1996], 109). The hand imposition "had all the characteristics of a magic technique" (Bruce Malina and John Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008], 64).

46. See further Haar, *First Gnostic*, 183; Fabien, "Conversion," 231–32.
47. Lüdemann, developing a point made by Walter Schmithals (*Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* [Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982], 82), asserts that when Peter refers to the "thought (ἐπίνοια) of Simon's heart (τῆς καρδίας σοῦ) (Acts 8:22b), the author of Acts uses a technical term for the feminine consort of Simon known from second century sources" ("The Acts of the Apostles and the Beginnings of Simonian Gnosis," *NTS* 33 [1987]: 420–26 [424]). See further Lüdemann, "Die Apostelgeschichte und die Anfänge der simonianischen Gnosis," in *Studien zur Gnosis*, ed. Gerd Lüdemann (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 7–20 (18–20).
48. Haar, *First Gnostic*, 185, comparing Matt 18:15; Lev 19:17.
49. "Let there not grow among you a root sprouting with bitter gall" (μή τίς ἐστιν ἐν ὑμῖν ῥίζα ἄνω φύουσα ἐν χολῇ καὶ πικρίᾳ). Cf. Lam 3:15, 19; Isa 58.6 (σύνδεσμον ἀδικίας). See further Heintz, *Simon "Le magician,"* 127–30. Garrett, overinterpreting the scriptural echoes, takes the language to imply "that Simon, though he has supposedly entered into the Christian community, is still an idolater, subject to punishment because [he is] still trapped (along with all idolaters) under the authority of Satan" (*Demise*, 71).
50. Heintz, *Simon "Le magician,"* 141–42.
51. Cf. Tertullian, *An.* 34.2: *frustra flevit* ("he [Simon] wept in vain"). See further Joseph Rius-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition*, 3 vols., LNTS 302 (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 2.139, 146–47.
52. See further Fabien, "Conversion," 238–39.
53. Justin, *1 Apol.* 1.26.1.
54. Justin, *1 Apol.* 56.2.
55. Justin, *1 Apol.* 26.2.
56. The inscription can be found in *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 3474. Heintz accuses Justin of deliberate falsification in his report (*Simon "Le magician,"* 121). Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.23.1), Tertullian (*Apol.* 13.9) and Eusebius (*Eccl. hist.* 2.13) follow Justin in his error. Augustine even knew of the deified Sabine king Sancus (also called Sanctus) (*Civ.* 18.19).
57. Due to itacism, "SEMONI" ("to Semo") was pronounced the same way as "SIMONI" ("to Simon"). See further Edwards, "Bad Samaritan," 74. Lüdemann proposed that since Semo was identified with Zeus Pistios (the protector of oaths), and Simon was identified as Zeus, Simonians in Rome could make the identification between Simon and the statue (*Untersuchungen*, 49–56). But Zeus Pistios was not the same as the high God, Jupiter Optimus Maximus.
58. Justin, *1 Apol.* 26.3.

59. Justin, *Dial.* 120.6, cf. Eph 1:21. Πρῶτος ("first") probably indicates rank or degree. Haar, comparing Philo (*Migr.* 181; *Abr.* 115) and Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:13, notes that πρῶτος is "not used as a comparative but stresses preeminence with allusions to pre-existence as well as the primal creation of all things" (*First Gnostic*, 245).
60. Justin's dependence on Acts is supported by Ernst Haenchen (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971], 8) on the basis of Justin's *1 Apol.* 51.12 (which refers to Jesus's ascension and the apostles receiving power). Andrew Gregory believes that there remains "no clear evidence for Justin having used Acts" ("Among the Apologists? Reading Acts with Justin Martyr," in *Engaging Early Christian History: Reading Acts in the Second Century*, eds. Rubén R. Dupertuis and Todd Penner [Durham: Acumen, 2013], 169–86 [174]). See further *idem*, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century*, WUNT II/169 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 317–21.
61. Justin, *1 Apol.* 56.1.
62. Justin, *1 Apol.* 56.4. Pieter W. van der Horst argues, "Justin does not say that Simon was worshipped by Samaritans-in-Rome." The question is whether there were *Simonians* (who *might* also have been from Samaria) in Rome. Van der Horst's argument that we should call the Samaritans (Σαμαρεῖς) in Justin "Samarians" is only valid if "Samaritans" is a solely religious (not ethnic) designation ("Samaritans at Rome?" in *Japhet in the Tents of Shem: Studies on Jewish Hellenism in Antiquity* [Leuven: Peeters, 2002], 251–60 [259]). For Simonians in Rome, see Alastair H. B. Logan, "Magi and Visionaries in Gnosticism," in *Portraits of Spiritual Authority: Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient*, eds. Jan Willem Drijvers and John W. Watt, RGRW 137 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 27–44 [32–33]).
63. Justin, *1 Apol.* 26.1.
64. Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.23.1–4.
65. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.2. For the figure of Helen, see Jarl Fossum, "The Simonian Sophia Myth," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 53 (1987): 185–97.
66. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.3.
67. Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 8.9: *patitur ergo Christus, sed in carne . . . Verbum vero 'in incorruptione' permansit* ("Thus Christ suffered, but in flesh . . . The Word, however, remained in incorruption"); Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.5.23.2 (μὴ παθών ("[Jesus] did not suffer"); cf. *Acts John* 101–102 (*NTA* 2.185–186); *Ep. Pet. Phil* (NHC VIII,2) 139.15–22; *1 Apoc. Jas.* (NHC V,3) 31.15–22. Some early Christian sources say that it was Simon of Cyrene who was crucified, while Christ stood by laughing (Basilides in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.4; *Disc. Seth* [NHC VII,2] 55.30–56.19; *Apoc. Pet.* [NHC VII,3] 81.3–21). See further Guy Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered," *JECS* 12 (2004): 267–88; Ronnie Goldstein and Guy Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism: A New Proposal," *ZAC* 10 (2007): 423–41.

68. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 21.2.4.
69. *Asc. Isa.* 10.17–31. See further Jonathan Knight, "The Origin and Significance of the Angelomorphic Christology in *The Ascension of Isaiah*," *JTS* 63 (2012): 66–105 (83–85).
70. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.3.
71. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.1.
72. *Pace* Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 30. Pearson's view that "The historical Simon clearly had nothing to do with the Christian religion" (*Ancient Gnosticism*, 30) is unjustified. Pheme Perkins's opinion that second-century Simonians copied "a more successful Christian rival" unnecessarily makes Simonians secondary (*Gnosticism and the New Testament* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 10).
73. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.4.
74. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.4.
75. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.2.
76. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29.1.
77. See further Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 16–17.
78. See further Antti Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, NHMS 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1–3; Silke Petersen, *"Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!" Maria Magdalena, Salome und andere Jüngerinnen Jesu in christlich-gnostischen Schriften*, NHMS 48 (Leiden: Brill 1999), 94–104.
79. *Exeg. Soul* (*NHC* II,6) 127.22–28, trans. Meyer.
80. *Exeg. Soul* (*NHC* II,6) 134.8–11.
81. *Exeg. Soul* (*NHC* II,6) 136.35–137.1.
82. Sasagu Arai argued that *Exeg. Soul* is Simonian in its essential features (*Wesenszügen*) ("Simonianische Gnosis und die *Exegese über die Seele*," in *Gnosis and Gnosticism: Papers read at the Seventh International Conference on Patristic Studies*, ed. Martin Krause, NHS 8 [Leiden: Brill, 1977], 185–203 [196–203]).
83. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.2.
84. Vergil, *Aen.* 6.518–19.
85. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.1.
86. Justin, *1 Apol.* 26.6; cf. 4.7–8; 7.3.
87. Origen, *Cels.* 1.57.
88. For most of the twentieth century, scholars dated the original *Acts of Peter* to the late second century (180–200 CE) (Jan Bremmer, "Aspects of the Acts of Peter: Women, Magic, Place and Date," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter*, ed. Jan Bremmer [Leuven: Peeters, 1998], 1–20 [16–18]). Recently Matthew C. Baldwin argues that a written form of the *Acts of Peter* only appeared in the late third century CE (*Whose Acts of Peter? Text and Historical Context of the Actus Vercellenses* WUNT II/196 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 3, 302). The late-fourth-century Latin translation in the *Actus Vercellenses* (which contains most of the material on Simon) represents a new recension, or as he puts it: "an independent utterance" (300). But the dating of a papyrus fragment (P.Oxy 849) convinces other scholars that the original *Acts*

of Peter dates to around 200 CE (e.g., Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction*, trans. Brian McNeil [Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008], 83–84). Robert F. Stoops recently dates the original work even earlier: "between 160 and 175 C.E." (*The Acts of Peter*, ed. Julian V. Hills [Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2012], 31). Below, the *Actus Vercellenses* and the *Martyrdom of Peter* are quoted in the edition of R. A. Lipsius, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1891; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1972), 1:45–103. For Simon in the *Acts of Peter*, see G. P. Luttikhuizen, "Simon Magus as a Narrative Figure in the *Acts of Peter*," in Bremmer, ed., *Apocryphal Acts of Peter*, 39–51.

89. *Acts Pet.* 4. For the question "is he the Christ?" cf. John 4:29.
90. *Acts Pet.* 4 (*Tu es in Italia deus, tu Romanorum Salvator*).
91. The "soft voice" translates *voce gracili* (*Acts Pet.* 4).
92. *Acts Pet.* 4 (*tamquam fumus cum rabiis et minas refulgens*).
93. Lipsius here prints *quemque universi adornantes* (*Acts Pet.* 4). One should probably read *adorantes* ("worshiping").
94. *Acts Pet.* 23. Cf. Tertullian, who says that Simon, "cursed by the apostles, was rejected from the faith" (*maledictus ab apostolis de fide eiectus est*) (*Idol.* 9.6).
95. *Acts Pet.* 5 (*parum te novi, deus es aut homo*).
96. *Acts Pet.* 6.
97. *Acts Pet.* 12.
98. *Acts Pet.* 29 (*ex eadem hora adorabant eum tamquam deus pedibus eius devoluti*).
99. *Acts Pet.* 10.
100. *Acts Pet.* 22 (*sancto dei*; cf. ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ in Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34).
101. *Acts Pet.* 10 (*Simoni iuveni deo*). The young god is a rendition of the Greek adjective νέος, which could be understood either as "new" or "young." In Rome, for instance, both Gaius Caesar and Germanicus were called νέοι θεοί (*IGRom* 4 §§ 74–75, 1094).
102. *Acts Pet.* 17.
103. *Acts Pet.* 14. Klauck observes how this story echoes the mocking of Jesus in the gospels (*Apocryphal Acts*, 92).
104. *Acts Pet.* 15; cf. John 8:44.
105. *Acts Pet.* 23. For the "show" (*spectaculum*), see *Acts Pet.* 28.
106. *Acts Pet.* 23.
107. *Acts Pet.* 28.
108. Litwa, *Iesus Deus*, 173–78.
109. *Mart. Pet.* 2.
110. *Mart. Pet.* 2–3. The story is also told in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 6.9.2–6. When the crowds acknowledge the flying Simon as a god, Peter brings him crashing down (Marcel Metzger, *Les Constitutions Apostoliques*, SC 329, 3 vols. [Paris: Cerf, 1986], 2.318–19).
111. Lipsius, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, 1:166. See further Otto Zwierlein, *Petrus in Rom: Die literarischen Zeugnisse mit einer kritischen Edition der Martyrien*

des Petrus und Paulus, Untersuchungen zur Antiken Literatur und Geschichte (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 59–61.

112. Here I am concerned with the Clementine *Homilies*, preserved in Greek, not the (somewhat later) Latin *Recognitions*. I use the text of Bernard Rehm and Georg Strecker, eds., *Die Pseudoklementinen I: Homilien*, GCS 42, 3d ed. (Berlin: Akademie, 1992). For an introduction to the *Homilies*, see Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts*, 193–216. The origin, structure, and theology of the Pseudo-Clementines are dealt with by Bernard Pouderon, *La genèse du roman pseudo-Clémentin: Études littéraires et historiques* (Paris: Peeters, 2012).
113. *Hom.* 19.6.3–5.
114. *Hom.* 2. 23.1.
115. *Hom.* 2.23.4 (δοκιμώτατος).
116. On the rod, see Stanley Isser, "Dositheus, Jesus, and a Moses Aretalogy," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty Part Four*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 167–89 (175–76); Fossum, *Name of God*, 117–20.
117. *Hom.* 2.22.6 (Εἰ σὺ εἶ ὁ ἑστώς, καὶ προσκυνῶ σε).
118. *Hom.* 2.22.7 (Τοῦ Σίμωνος εἰπόντος Ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ Δοσίθεος . . . πεσὼν προσεκύνησεν). Already in Exod 3:13–14, the Tetragrammaton is explained as meaning an everlasting "I am who I am." Then "I am" serves as a name in itself ("I Am has sent me"). Cf. John 8:24, 28, 58; esp. 13:19. See further Pieter F. Goedendorp, "If you are the Standing One, I also will worship you (Pseudo-Clementine Homilies II 24.6)," in *Proceedings of the First International Congress of the Société d'Études Samaritaines*, eds. Abraham Tal and Moshe Florentin (Tel Aviv: Chaim Rosenberg, 1991), 61–77, esp. 66–7. See further *Hom.* 18.12.1; *Rec.* 1.72.3; 2.7.1–3; 2.11.3; 3.47.3.
119. On "I am," see Fossum, *Name of God*, 125–29.
120. *Hom.* 2.22.3.
121. *Ref.* 6.18.3.
122. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.2.
123. *Hom.* 22.3 (Ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ χριστὸν ἑαυτὸν αἰνισσόμενος, ἑστῶτα προσαγορεύει); cf. 18.6.4.
124. *Hom.* 2.32.2.
125. *Acts Pet.* 9, 13, 15.
126. *Rec.* 2.6.9 (*et putet eum de caelis deum ad salute hominum descendisse*); cf. 2.10.2. See further Ayse Tuzlak, "The Magician and the Heretic," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, eds. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 416–26 (422).
127. *Hom.* 7.12.3.
128. Caesarea: *Hom.* 3.29–58; Laodicea: *Hom.* 16–19.
129. For the fight against Marcionism, see A. Salles, "Simon le magician ou Marcion?" *VC* 12 (1958): 197–224; H. J. W. Drijvers, "Adam and the True Prophet,"

in *History and Religion in Late Antique Syria* (Aldershot: Brookfield, 1994), 314–23.

130. For example, *Hom.* 3.40; 18.8–9.1; 16.10. Simon himself points out to Peter: "It's clear you flee from the scriptures" (πρόδηλος εἶ φεύγων ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν) (3.41.1). Peter can only retort that Simon departs from the "order of inquiry" (τάξιν ζητήσεως) (3.41.2).
131. *Hom.* 18.5.1
132. *Hom.* 19.6.3–5.
133. *Hom.* 2.37–52.
134. *Hom.* 19.1.2; 3.42.3; 18.9.1–3. Specifically, Peter remarks that the passage declaring that Yahweh repented creating humanity (Gen 6:6) is "false" (ψεῦδός), as is the text saying that Yahweh tested (or tempted: ἐπείραζεν) Abraham (Gen 22:1 LXX) (*Hom.* 3.43.2). Peter appeals to (in his view valid) oral tradition of Scripture, but does not clarify how that tradition was actually passed on from Moses to Jesus. In the end, whatever Peter deems true appears to be simply ascribed to "the True Prophet" (Jesus). See further Karl Shuve, "The Doctrine of the False Pericopes and the Other Late Antique Approaches to the Problem of Scripture's Unity," in Amsler, ed., *Nouvelles intrigues*, 437–45.
135. *Hom.* 7.9.3 (ὡς αὐτὸς ὢν θεός).
136. *Hom.* 7.9.5.
137. *Hom.* 7.12.1; cf. 18.23.5.
138. *Hom.* 18.9.1 (ἔπαινος ἐγένετο).
139. *Hom.* 6.26.1.
140. For κύριος applied to Peter, see, for example, *Hom.* 1.21.7; 3.5.1; 4.5.3; 10.3.1.
141. *Hom.* 19.24.5.
142. *Hom.* 20.12.
143. See further Dominique Côté, *Le theme de l'opposition entre Pierre et Simon dans les Pseudo-Clémentines* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2001), 56; Étienne Barilier, "La revanche de Simon le Magicien," in Amsler, ed., *Nouvelles intrigues*, 9–22 (14–15). Faustus later gave his name to Faust, who was in turn modeled on Simon. See further Gilles Quispel, "Faust: Symbol of Western Man," *Gnostic Studies* 2 (1975): 288–307.
144. See further Alberto Ferreiro, *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval and Early Modern Traditions*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 125 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 35–54.
145. Garrett, *Demise*, 74–75. Garrett refers here to the portrayal of Simon in Acts, but it better fits his depiction by patristic writers.
146. Jerome, *Comm. Matt.*, 4.24.5 (*ego sum sermo dei, ego sum speciosus, ego paraclitus, ego omnipotens, ego omnia dei*). Jerome professes to take this quote from a writing attributed to Simon. He adds, in the same passage, that "all chief heretics are antichrists and in the name of Christ teach what is contrary to Christ."

147. [Hippolytus,] *Noet.* 1.2; *Ref.* 9.10.9–11.4; 9.12.16–19; Tertullian, *Prax.* esp. 20, 27, 29. See further Ronald Heine, "Christology of Callistus," *JTS* 49 (1998): 56–91. Mark DelCogliano, "The Interpretation of John 10:30 in the Third Century: Antimonarchian Polemics and the Rise of Grammatical Reading Techniques," *JTI* 6 (2012): 117–38.

CHAPTER 6

1. Carl Jung, *The Red Book, Liber Novus: A Reader's Edition*, ed. Sonu Shamdasani (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 191.
2. David Brakke, following Bentley Layton, argues that one can use the term "Gnostic" in a narrow sense to identify a particular Christian group in antiquity (*The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010]). In contrast, Geoffrey S. Smith attempts to prove that "the Gnostic school" and the "Gnostics" are heresiological constructs "designed to consolidate a variety of unaffiliated Christian groups into one coherent and manageable category" (*Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015], 152). Most scholars continue to use "gnosis"/"gnostic" as global terms, with full recognition that the designations are both etic and heuristic (e.g., Roelof van den Broek, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013]).
3. John D. Turner, "Baptismal Vision, Angelification, and Mystical Union in Sethian Literature," in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi et al., STAC 82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 204–16; Dylan M. Burns, *Apocalypse of an Alien God: Platonism and the Exile of Sethian Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 122–39.
4. Lanzillotta, "A Way of Salvation," 71–102.
5. April D. DeConick, "Jesus Revealed: The Dynamics of Early Christian Mysticism," in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elior*, eds. Daphna Arbel and Andrei Orlov (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 299–324 (311–15).
6. Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–82*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 120, 180, and *passim*. Foucault summarizes this series of lectures in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16–49. Foucault also addresses self-care in *The History of Sexuality, Volume* 3: *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 37–68.
7. Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 256–57; cf. 419–21, 454–55.
8. Augustine, *Conf.* 7.17.23.
9. Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 184–85.
10. See further Litwa, *Becoming Divine*, 232–35.

11. The divine spark is often described as a key gnostic trait (e.g., Antti Marjanen, “Gnosticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 203–20 [211]; Van den Broek, *Gnostic Religion*, 2). In April D. DeConick’s cognitive model, the divine spark corresponds to what she calls *“Innate Spiritualness . . .* The Gnostic is a person whose essential nature is believed to be uncreated, deriving directly from the divine” (“Crafting Gnosis: Gnostic Spirituality in the Ancient New Age,” in *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, eds. Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus. NHMS 82 [Leiden: Brill, 2013], 287–305 [300–301]).
12. Gerhard Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 30–43, 64–65.
13. F. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, “Devolution and Recollection, Deficiency and Perfection: Human Degradation and the Recovery of the Primal Condition according to some Early Christian Texts,” in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Jewish, Early Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuizen*, eds. Anthony Hilhorst and George H. van Kooten, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 443–60 (448–49).
14. Aristotle, *Nic. eth.* 1177b. See further David Sedley, “The Ideal of Godlikeness,” in *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 309–28; Julia Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 52–71; J. M. Armstrong, “After the Ascent: Plato on Becoming Like God,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2004): 171–83; F. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, “A Way of Salvation: Becoming Like God in Nag Hammadi,” *Numen* 60 (2013): 71–102 (80–81); A. A. Long, *Greek Models of Mind and Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 162–97.
15. Plato, *Tim.* 41c8 (σπείρας); cf. 90a2–b1.
16. Plato, *Resp.* 589e (τὸ ἑαυτοῦ θειότατον); cf. *Tim.* 45a1–2 (the head is τὴν τοῦ θειοτάτου καὶ ἱερωτάτου . . . οἴκησιν); 69d6 (τὸ θεῖον); 73a7–8 (τοῦ θειοτάτου τῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν); 88b2 (τὸ θειότατον τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν φρονήσεως); *Leg.* 726a (ψυχὴ θειότατον, οἰκειότατον ὄν).
17. Plato, *Tim* 90c. Plato may have depended on the saying of Heraclitus: “the character of a person is his divinity” (ἦθος ἀνθρώπου δαίμων) (DK 22 B119). Cf. also Plato, *Leg.* 897b1–2: νοῦν . . . ἀεὶ θεὸν ὀρθῶς θεοῖς (“mind . . . ever rightly a god among gods”). See further Ian Kidd, “Some Philosophical Demons,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 40 (1995): 217–24 (221).
18. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae phil.* 7.87–88 (τοῦ παρ’ ἑκάστῳ δαίμονος). J. M. Rist emphasized that for Chrysippus, the *daimōn* was “with” (παρά) not “in” the individual person (*Stoic Philosophy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969], 263–64). Cf. A. A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 163–64.

19. L. Edelstein and I. G. Kidd, *Posidonius I: The Fragments*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1.170, frag. 187.6–8 (τῷ ἐν αὑτῷ δαίμονι, where αὑτῷ is a correction of the manuscript reading αὐτῶ).
20. Seneca, *Ep.* 41:2.
21. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.14.12. See further Johan C. Thom, *Cleanthes'* Hymn to Zeus: *Text, Translation, and Commentary*, STAC 33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 63.
22. Plutarch, *Quaest. plat.* 999d-e: ὁ νοῦς γὰρ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός ("for our mind is the god"). See further Kidd, "Demons," 222.
23. We are told directly that his soul is released from his head (*Gen. Socr.* 590b). Timarchus then has a long conversation with his mind (which resists revealing its identity). Finally his divine mind returns the same way it came, causing a sharp pain as it reenters Timarchus's head (*Gen. Socr.* 592e).
24. Plutarch, *Gen. Socr.*, 591e–f. Plutarch admits his dependence on Hesiod, who called the souls of those who died in the golden age "divinities" (δαίμονες) who watch over humankind (*Op.* 122–126). Iamblichus speaks of a doctrine, sometimes supported by Porphyry, that "the soul differs in no way from intellect and the gods, and the superior classes of being, at least in respect to its substance in general" (νοῦ καὶ θεῶν καὶ τῶν κρειττόνων γενῶν οὐδὲν ἡ ψυχὴ διενήνοχε κατά γε τὴν ὅλην οὐσίαν) (*De anima* 6, trans. Dillon and Finamore).
25. See further Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed*, 119–71.
26. Justin, *2 Apol.* 7.1; cf. 13.3 (τοῦ σπερματικοῦ θείου λόγου τὸ συγγενὲς); 13.5 (τῆς ἐνούσης ἐμφύτου τοῦ λόγου σπορᾶς); *1 Apol.* 32.8 (ἄνθρωποι, ἐν οἷς οἰκεῖ τὸ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ σπέρμα, ὁ λόγος). The latter passage is similar to Justin, *Dial.* 54.1.
27. Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 68.2.
28. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.13.88.2.
29. Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 117.4 (ἵνα ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἱδρύσῃ τὸν θεόν).
30. Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.81.4; 3.1.5; cf. 3.20.1 (Christ within).
31. *Teach. Silv.* (NHC VII,4) 92.25–27.
32. *Norea* (NHC IX,2) 28.4, 12, 18–19. In the *Corpus Hermeticum* (second to third centuries CE), Hermes instructs his disciple Tat, "Mind comes from the very essence of God—if, in fact, God has any essence . . . In humans this mind is god" (ἐν μὲν ἀνθρώποις θεός ἐστι) (12.1).
33. *Dial. Sav.* (NHC III,5) 135.16–23; cf. *Exeg. Soul* (NHC II,6) 133.1–134.5.
34. *Wis. Jesus Chr.* (NHC III,4) 106.24–107.2; (BG 8502,3) 119.1–9.
35. Saturninus in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.1.
36. *Gos. Truth* (NHC I,3) 26.5–6.
37. *Disc. 8–9* (NHC VI,6) 52.25.
38. *Disc. 8–9* (NHC VI,6) 61.9.
39. [Hippolytus], *Ref.* 5.8.32 (Naassenes).
40. *Corp. herm.* 1.15 (οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον); *Ascl.* (NHC VI,8) 69.23–25.
41. *Tri. Tract.* (NHC I,5) 105.22–27.

42. Cf. [Hippolytus], *Ref.* 9.17.1; *Gos. Thom.* 93.
43. Cf. Ovid, *Met.* 1.81 (*semina caeli*).
44. Ps.-Plato, *Axiochus* 370c.
45. See further Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed*, 137–61.
46. *Laws* 899d: συγγένειά τις θεία ("a divine kinship"); cf. Pindar, *Nem.* 6.
47. Plato, *Resp.* 6.508b.
48. Plato, *Phaedo* 79d; cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.9.29–34.
49. See the sayings of the Seven Sages in DK 10 §2 (62.8); Χίλων §1 (63.25); Θαλῆς §9 (64.6–7); Plato, *Prot.*, 343a–b; Pausanias, *Descr.* 10.24.1.
50. See, for example, Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 309; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 7.2.20–25.
51. The earliest association of self-knowledge and σωφροσύνη is Heraclitus DK 22 B 116: ἀνθρώποισι πᾶσι μέτεστι γινώσκειν ἑωυτοὺς καὶ σωφρονεῖν ("It is given to all human beings to know themselves and to think soundly").
52. Plato, *Charm.* 164c–165b; *Tim.* 72a; *Phileb.* 48c–49a; *Leg.* 11.923a4; [*Alc. maj.*] 124b, 128d–129a, 131b4; 133c18; cf. Ps.-Plato, *Amatores* 138a-b; Plutarch, *E Delph.* 394c; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.4.23.1. On Socratic self-knowledge, see Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 3–4, 12–15, 51–60, 66–72, 169–85; Julia Annas, "Self-knowledge in Early Plato," in *Platonic Investigations*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 13 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 111–38, esp. 119–26; Sara L. Rappe, "Socrates and Self-Knowledge," *Apeiron* 28:1 (1995): 1–24; Chr. Gorm Tortzen, "*Know Thyself*—A Note on the Success of a Delphic Saying," in *Noctes Atticae: 34 Articles on Graeco-Roman Antiquity and its Nachleben*, eds. Bettina Amden, et al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2002), 302–14; Lloyd P. Gerson, "On Knowledge and Self in Plato," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 15 (2000), 231–53; *idem*, *Knowing Persons: A Study in Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 29–39; Voula Tsouna, "Socrate et la connaissance de soi: Quelques interpretations," *Philosophie Antique* 1 (2001): 37–64 (44–50); Andrea Nightingale, "Plato on *aporia* and self-knowledge," in *Ancient Models of Mind: Studies in Human and Divine Rationality*, eds. Andrea Nightingale and David Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8–26.
53. On the date and authenticity of *Alc. maj.*, see Nicholas Denyer, *Plato: Alcibiades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 11–26. Denyer argues for Platonic authorship, and opts for a date in the early 350s BCE.
54. [Plato], *Alc. maj.* 133c. "The" god here may be Apollo, the god of wisdom and the speaker of the Delphic maxim. Cf. *Phaedr.* 229e–230a.
55. [Plato], *Alc. maj.* 133c (καί τις εἰς τοῦτο βλέπων καὶ πᾶν τὸ θεῖον γνούς, θεόν τε καὶ φρόνησιν, οὕτω καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἂν γνοίη μάλιστα).
56. Whether or not we accept that *Alc. maj.* 133c8–17 was originally part of the *Alcibiades*, it remains an important part of its interpretation. The discovery of a Middle Platonic commentary on the *Alcibiades* (dated to the late second or early third century CE) indicates that 133c8–17 was not present (F. Lasserre,

"Commentaire de *l'Alcibiade I* de Plato" *Varia Papyrologica*, eds. F. Decleva Caizzi, et al. [Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1991], 7–23 [8]). D. M. Johnson reviews the debate and argues that God is present in the comparison whether or not the lines are removed ("God as the true Self: Plato's *Alcibiades I*," *Ancient Philosophy* 19 [1999]: 1–19 [10–13]). Annas has trouble with the passage because God "seems to be both outside and inside the soul" ("Self-knowledge," 132, n. 51)—yet this would seem to be the point. Cf. *Gos. Thom.* 3: "the kingdom is both inside of you and outside of you."

57. See further H. D. Betz, "The Delphic Maxim ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ in Hermetic Interpretation," *HTR* 63 (1970): 465–84 (471). Jean Pépin, *Idées grecque sur l'homme et sur dieu* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1971), 71–114.
58. Cf. *Gos. Thom.* 4.
59. *Gos. Thom.* 70.
60. *Teachings Silv.* (NHC VII,4) 106.30–33.
61. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 26.13.2.
62. *Test. Truth* (NHC IX,3) 35.26–36.28, following the reconstruction of Giverson and Pearson, *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, 135–37.
63. *Acts John* 95 (*NTA* 2.183).
64. *Gos. Truth* (NHC I,3) 18.28–31.
65. See further Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians,"* NHMS 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 30–32, 40–53, 57–64, 66–67, 73–75, 88–89, 91–94, 108–111, 154–55, 171–72, 258–60, 323–24, 425–26, 457–59, 496–97.
66. *Gos. Phil.* (NHC II,3) 61.20–35.
67. *Steles Seth* (NHC VII,5) 118.31–119.2. In *CH* 1, the narrator refers to the divine revealer Poimandres as "my mind" (νοῦς ἐμός, e.g., 1.21).
68. *Disc. Seth* (NHC VII,2) 65.18–20.
69. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 26.3.
70. *Pist. Soph.* 2.96.
71. *Pist. Soph.* 2.96.
72. Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 16.
73. See further Karen L. King, *Revelation of the Unknowable God with Text, Translation, and Notes to NHC XI,3* Allogenes (Santa Rosa: Polebridge, 1995), 60–61. The *Allogenes* of NHC XI is to be distinguished from the *Book of Allogenes* from Codex Tchacos.
74. This particular version of the text may, however, be the product of a fourth-century revision. See Burns, *Apocalypse*, 155; cf. *idem*, "Apophatic Strategies in *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3)," *HTR* 103 (2010): 161–79 (166).
75. *Holy Book* (NHC III,2) 68.1–69.5. Cf. Burns, *Apocalypse*, 198, n.38.
76. Cf. the *Book of Allogenes* in Codex Tchacos 60.19–22: "I have been called Allogenes since I come from another race (γένος)." For the identification of Allogenes with Jesus, see Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 97; Rasimus, *Paradise*, 58.

77. On genre, see further Francis Fallon, “The Gnostic Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 123–58 (esp. 127, 148). King, *Revelation*, 56–59; Burns, *Apocalypse*, 54–56, 60. On Youel, a representative or double of Barbelo, see M. Scopello, “Youel et Barbélo dans le traité de l’Allogène,” in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi (Québec, 22–25 août 1978)*, ed. Bernard Barc (Louven: Peeters, 1981), 374–82.
78. One is struck by Allogenes’s apparent disinterest in ethical and (communal) ritual practices. Yet it would be wrong to say that he reduces everything to the cognitive level. As other scholars have pointed out, it is assumed that Allogenes goes through moral and ascetic practices to reach his level of contemplation. See further Richard Valantasis, “Allogenes,” in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, ed., Vincent Wimbush (Fortress: Minneapolis, 1990), 235–42 (235–37); King, *Revelation*, 8; Michael Williams, “Did Plotinus’ ‘Friends’ Still Go to Church? Communal Rituals and Ascent Apocalypses,” in *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Ancient Literature. Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson*, eds. April D. DeConick, Gregory Shaw, and John D. Turner, NHMS 85 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 495–522.
79. See further John Turner in *Zostrien (NH VIII,1)*, eds. Catherine Barry, et al., BCNH 24 (Louven: Peeters, 2000), 131–57; and Turner in *L’Allogène (NH XI,3)*, eds. Wolf-Peter Funk et al., BCNH 30 (Louven: Peeters, 2004), 104–17.
80. Turner directly compares *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* in Barry et al., *Zostrien*, 116–31.
81. *Nous*, “mind,” is a widely accepted restoration.
82. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 45.9
83. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 45.13.
84. Turner in *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick, NHS 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 179, 251–52; cf. Turner, “Gnosticism and Platonism: The Platonizing Sethian Texts from Nag Hammadi in Their Relation to Later Platonic Literature,” in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, eds. Richard T. Wallis and Jay Bregman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 425–60 (437–38). For different views of the Triply-powered One, see King, *Revelation*, 20–29; Wolf-Peter Funk, *Nag Hammadi Deutsch*, 2 vols., GCS 12 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 2.770–72.
85. For details, see Turner, “Gnosticism and Platonism,” 433–34.
86. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 50.24–29.
87. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 50.30. Cf. Plotinus: those who see God have “that power within themselves which comes from him [the One]” (τῇ ἐν αὑτῷ δυνάμει συγγενεῖ τῷ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ) (*Enn.* 6.9.4).
88. *Zost.* (NHC VIII,1) 5.11–12. Turner comments: “The power ‘in’ Zostrianos must be his intellect, now made luminous” (in Barry, et al., *Zostrien*, 498).
89. “The lamp [of the body] is the mind,” according to a saying of Jesus in *Dial. Sav.* (NHC III,5) 125.18–19. Cf. *Teach. Silv.* (NHC VII,4) 99.15–16.
90. *Zost.* (NHC VIII,1) 44.1–5.

91. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 52.8; cf. Plato, *Theaet.* 176b. For Jewish parallels, see Madeleine Scopello, "L'âme en fuite: Le traité gnostique de l'Allogène (NH XI,3) et la mystique juive," in *Gnose et Philosophie: Études en hommage à Pierre Hadot*, eds. Jean-Marc Narbonne and Paul-Hubert Poirier (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2009), 123–45.
92. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 52.9–13.
93. *Zost.* (NHC VIII,1) 44.18–22, trans. Turner, modified.
94. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 56.15–20.
95. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 56.30–36.
96. Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.81.4; 3.1.5. For the soul becoming Logos, see [Hippolytus], *Ref.* 5.21.9 (the "Sethians").
97. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 57.16–23.
98. In this respect, gnostics are like God, who, as incorporeal, is also neither great nor small (*Allogenes* [NHC XI,3] 63.6–7).
99. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 52.7 (weakness); 50.24–25, 61.4 (accepts strength).
100. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 50.15.16.
101. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 57.27–34.
102. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 58.26–28.
103. Neoplatonists believed that our souls, though immaterial, needed a physical, luminous vehicle. See further E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 313–21; H. J. Blumenthal, "Soul Vehicles in Simplicius," in *Platonism and Late Antiquity*, eds. Stephen Gersh and Charles Kannengiesser (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 173–88; John Dillon, "Plotinus and the Vehicle of the Soul," in *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, eds. Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus, NHMS 82 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 485–96.
104. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 58.29–31. For the "pure place" cf. the supercelestial place (ὑπερουράνιον τόπον) in Plato, *Phaedr.* 247c3.
105. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 59.1.
106. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 59.10–13.
107. Turner, in Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (New York: Harper One, 2007), 694, n.63.
108. Cf. *Disc. 8–9* (NHC VI,6) 57–58: "I [am Mind and] I see another Mind . . . I see myself!"
109. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 59.9–16.
110. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 59.38–60.1, following the reconstructions and translation of King, *Revelation*, 146–47. These beings are evidently "the forms of those who truly exist" (*Allogenes* 51.15–16).
111. Cf. Plotinus: "the whole of Intellect is all together and not separated or divided, and all souls are together in the eternal world, not in spatial separation" (*Enn.* 4.2.1.5–7); spiritual beings are "all together" in Intellect (*Enn.* 5.8.7–9). Cf. *Zost.* (NHC VIII,1) 21.9–11; 116.1–2. Turner says that the self is assimilated "to the ever more

refined levels of being to which one's contemplation ascends, until one achieves the absolute unitary stasis of self-unification, mental abstraction and utter solitariness characteristic of deification" ("Gnosticism and Platonism," 429). "[T]he object of the ascent is to become assimilated with each higher level of being through which one passes" (447). "*Allogenes* is distinguished by a Platonically-inspired visionary act of the individual intellect in which it assimilates itself to the hierarchy of ontological levels with which it was aboriginally consubstantial" (449).

112. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 60.17–18.
113. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 60.19; cf. 59.14. We witnessed this inward withdrawal earlier in *Zost.* (NHC VIII,1) 44.18–22. Turner compares Plotinus, *Enn.* 3.8.9.29–32: "Intellect must first withdraw (ἀναχωρεῖν) backwards, as it were, and as it were give itself up to what lies behind it (for it faces in both directions); and there, if it wishes to see that [First principle], it must not be altogether intellect."
114. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 60.39; 61.9–10.
115. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 60.19 (withdrawal into Vitality); 60.30 (withdrawal into Being).
116. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 61.12–14.
117. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 61.5–8, trans. King. Since the text is reasonably secure at this point, I remove King's brackets.
118. Turner in Meyer, ed., *Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 695.
119. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 61.5–6.
120. Turner notes that "the consciousness of the knowing subject is actually assimilated to the ontological character of the level that one intelligizes at any given point" (in Barry et al., *Zostrien*, 124).
121. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 66.35–37, trans. King.
122. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 68.30–31, trans. King.
123. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 68.33–34.
124. *Zost.* (NHC VIII,1) 130.18–21.
125. *Zost.* (NHC VIII,1) 130.24–26.
126. *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 4.19–35; cf. *Wisd. Jes. Chr.* (Greek frag.): the "unruled Forefather, when he gazes at himself in his own mirror, an equal to himself appears. His likeness is manifest as a Forefather, God, Father and counter-face (*antōpos*) correlated to the face of the preexisting unborn Father" (Douglas M. Parrott, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1*, NHS 27 [Leiden: Brill, 1991], 214). See further Andrei A. Orlov, "The Face as the Heavenly Counterpart of the Visionary," in *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*, ed. Craig A. Evans, 2 vols. (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 2.59–76.
127. Turner, "From Baptismal Vision to Mystical Union with the One: The Case of the Sethian Gnostics," in *Practicing Gnosis*, eds. DeConick, Shaw, and Turner, 411–31 (430).
128. *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 47.11–14, 32–33; 61.35–38.
129. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.2.13.3.

130. The self-generating aeon is Autogenes, the third member of the Sethian primal triad (Father-Mother-Child). See further Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 542.
131. Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Random House, 1984), 340–72 (351). See the comments of Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 177.

CONCLUSION

1. Bertrand Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1938), 11. Cf. Ludwig Feuerbach: "Humanity thinks and believes a God only because he wants to be God himself but, against his will, is not God (*Der Mensch denkt oder glaubt nur einen Gott, weil er selbst Gott sein will, aber wider seinen Willen es nicht ist*)." (*Gottheit, Freiheit und Unsterblichkeit vom Standpunkte der Anthropologie*, Sämmtliche Werke X [Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1866], 290).
2. Susan Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 37.
3. For the categories "locative" and "utopian," see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), xii, 100–103, 130–42, 147–51, 160–66, 169–71, 185–89, 291–94, 308–9.
4. For the epic of Gilgamesh, see Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* (London: Penguin, 1999), 88–99.
5. Shawn W. Flynn argues that Yahweh's rise to absolute power was most likely a cultural translation of Marduk's rise to power in Babylon (*YHWH Is King: The Development of Divine Kingship in Ancient Israel* [Leiden: Brill, 2014], 119–70).
6. Doniger, *Implied Spider*, 81. Cf. Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes, and the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4–13.
7. Pierre Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," *Comparative Social Research: A Research Annual* 13 (1991): 1–44 (14, emphasis original).
8. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 101.
9. Doniger, *Implied Spider*, 106–7.
10. Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 86.
11. Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 95.
12. Camus, *The Rebel*, 79–80.
13. Camus, *The Rebel*, 306.
14. Litwa, *Becoming Divine*, 222–30.
15. Camus, *Rebel*, 119.
16. Litwa, *Becoming Divine*, 117–89.

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