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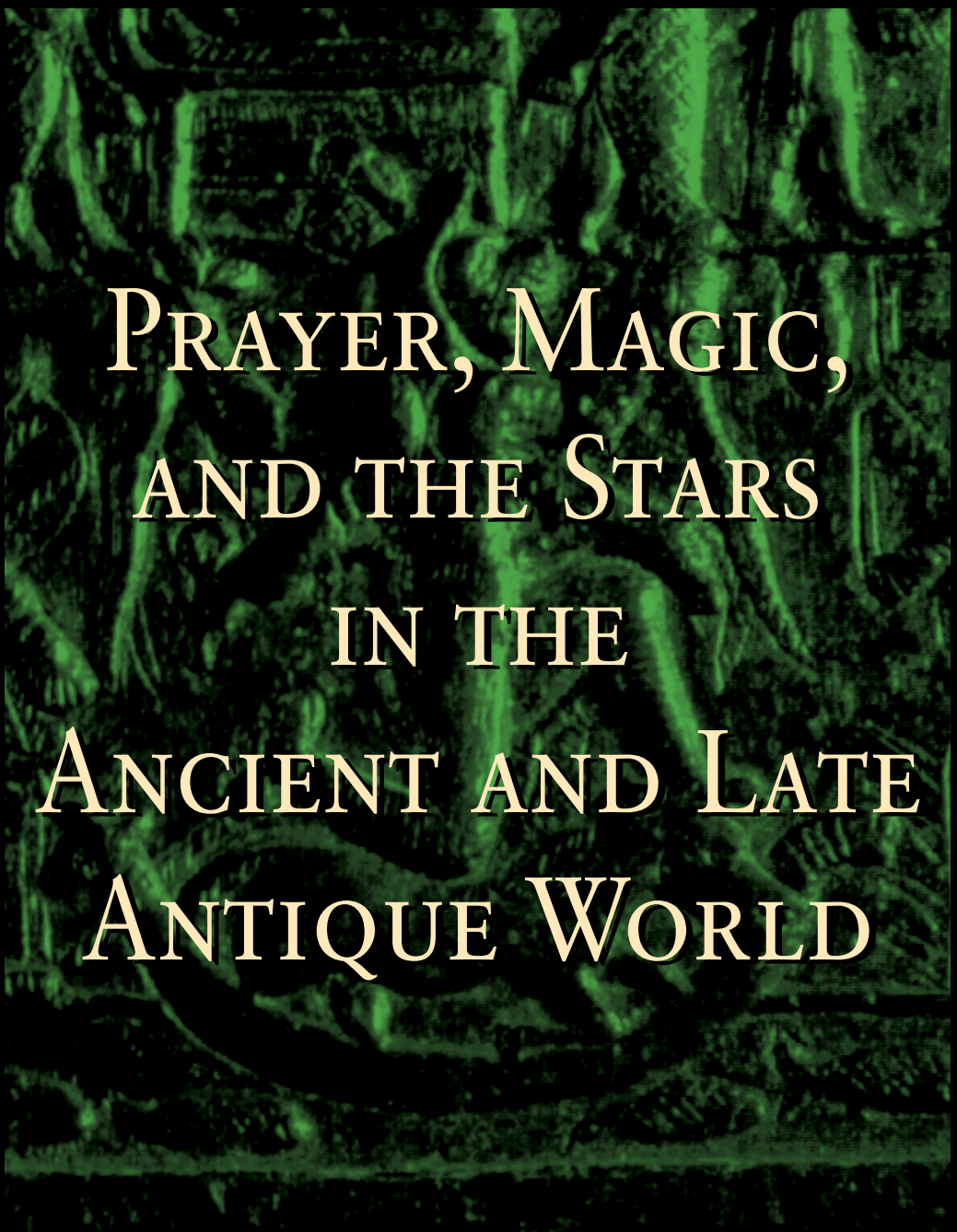

Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World

EDITED BY

Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler

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THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
University Park, Pennsylvania

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Prayer, magic, and the stars in the ancient and late antique world/
edited by Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler.
p. cm.—(Magic in history)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-271-02257-4 (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN 0-271-02258-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Magic, Ancient—Congresses.
2. Magic—Religious aspects—History—Congresses.
3. Dreams—Religious aspects—History—Congresses.
4. Stars—Religious aspects—History—Congresses.
5. Divination—History—Congresses.
I. Noegel, Scott B.
II. Walker, Joel Thomas, 1968– .
III. Wheeler, Brannon M., 1965– .
IV. Series.

BF1591.P73 2003
200'.93—dc21
2003009823

Printed in the United States of America

Published by The Pennsylvania State University Press,
University Park, PA 16802–1003

It is the policy of The Pennsylvania State University Press to use acid-free paper. Publications on uncoated stock satisfy the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Material, ANSI Z39.48–1992.

Contents

Acknowledgments

The editors would like to acknowledge the gracious support of a number of programs and individuals who have helped to make the "Prayers, Magic, and the Stars" symposium, from which these essays derive, such a productive event. In particular, a number of centers, departments, and programs at the University of Washington deserve our gratitude for their financial and logistical support. These include the Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities; the Departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization, Classics, History, Art History, Jewish Studies, and Comparative Religion; the Henry M. Jackson School for International Studies; the University Bookstore; the Graduate Student Senate; and the Graduate School. We also would like to thank Dianne Zimmer and the University of Washington's Graduate School for providing the funding to help us create the book's index.

Several University of Washington faculty members also donated their time at the event as session chairs and respondents. These include Drs. Jim Clauss, Sheila Colwell, Christopher Hallett, Martin Jaffee, Pierre Mackay, and Michael Williams. Dr. Alan Segal of Barnard College also served in this capacity. In addition, we extend our appreciation to Dr. Michael Halleran, Divisional Dean for Arts and Humanities, for kindly kicking off our event with a word of introduction. We also thank Dr. Woodruff T. Sullivan III, Professor of Astronomy at the University of Washington, for helping us to chart the ancient stars in his spectacular planetarium show.

While preparing the manuscript for publication, two individuals have provided invaluable help: Greg Civay, for creating the map that accompanies this volume, and Gary Martin, for his tireless patience and exactitude as our editorial assistant.

List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	David Noel Freedman et al., eds., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römanischen Welt*
ArOr	*Archiv Orientální*
ASAE	*Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BdÉ	*Bibliothèque d'étude*
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–)
CAT	Andrée Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939,* 2 vols., Mission de Ras Shamra, 10 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1963)
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CdÉ	*Chronique d'Égypte*
CT	*Cuneiform Texts from the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*
DDD	Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999)
EHG	Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990)
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JMS	*Journal of Mithraic Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JPOS	*Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*

JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement
JSQ	*Jewish Studies Quarterly*
*KTU*1	Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976)
*KTU*2	Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995)
LKA	Erich Ebeling, Franz Köcher, and J. Jacob-Rost, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953)
LKU	Adam Falkenstein, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk* (Berlin, 1931)
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968)
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codices
OLP	*Orientalia Louvaniensia Periodica*
Or	*Orientalia*
PDM	*Papyri Demoticae Magicae*
PGM	Karl Preisendanz, ed., *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri,* 2 vols. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1928–31); repr., Karl Preisendanz and Albert Henrichs, eds. (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973–74), supplemental texts in Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986)
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RE	*Reallexikon der Egyptologie*
RP	*Revue de Philologie*
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAK	*Studien zur altägyptische Kultur*
SEL	*Studi epigraphici e liguistici*
SO	*Studia Orientalia*
TB	Talmud Bavli (= Babylonian Talmud)
TCL	*Textes cunéiformes du Louvre*
TY	Talmud Yerushalmi (= Palestinian Talmud)
UF	*Ugarit Forschungen*
UNP	Simon B. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry,* SBL Writings from the Ancient World, 9 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997)
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*

VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplement
WB	Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* (Berlin, 1926–63)
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZÄS	*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*

List of Figures

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Introduction

Scott B. Noegel, Joel T. Walker, and Brannon M. Wheeler

The thirteen essays in this volume have their genesis in an international conference that we organized at the University of Washington, held on 3–5 March 2000. The conference papers examined the manifold techniques and traditions, both sanctioned and unsanctioned, individual and communal, by which the people of the ancient and late antique world attempted to interpret and communicate with the divine powers of heaven and earth. Our goal at this conference, as in this volume, was to investigate the topic of magic and the stars in an interdisciplinary framework extending from the ancient Near East to the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic literatures of late antiquity.

Our interest in this subject has been inspired by parallel developments in several academic fields. Since the early 1980s, the fields of Classics and ancient history have witnessed a dramatic increase in academic publications on the subject of "magic."[1] The new wave of scholarship reflects one wing of a broader revival of research into the religion and mythology of the Graeco-Roman world that has developed since the late 1960s.[2] The new scholarship encompasses a variety of methodological approaches and emphases, but there are several common themes worth noting. First, there has been a veritable flood of new editions and translations of the major corpora of Graeco-Roman "magical" papyri, amulets, and other

1. For a cross section of current trends, see the papers from other recent conferences: Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 129 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995); Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg, eds., *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium,* Studies in the History of Religions, 75 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997); and David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen, eds., *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4–8 May 1997,* Papers of the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4 (Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999). See also Ramón Teja, ed., *Profecía, magia y adivinación en las religiones antiguas,* Codex Aqvilarensis, 17 (Palencia: Aguilar de Campoo, 2001); Leda Ciraolo and Jonathan Seidel, eds., *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World,* Ancient Magic and Divination II (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002); and Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer, eds., *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002). Richard Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," in Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Ancient Greece, and Rome* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 159–275, includes a concise and valuable bibliographic essay (266–69).

2. On the historiographical background, see Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World,* trans. Franklin Philip (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8–18.

artifacts.[3] The new collections of translated sources have made the magic of the ancient world accessible not only to other scholars and their students but to a sizable and diverse audience of general readers.

Second, recent work has provided compelling documentation for the broad area of overlap between "religion" and "magic" in the Graeco-Roman world.[4] From the courtrooms of classical Athens to the horse-racing stadia of late Roman North Africa, there is ample evidence for the deployment of magical rituals, objects, and words. These written, spoken, or sung words—whether we call them spells, incantations, or charms—draw upon a ritual and conceptual vocabulary closely linked to "official" forms of civic and public prayer.[5] In contrast to earlier scholarship, which tended to see such shared elements as evidence for magicians' surreptitious appropriation of public religion, recent scholarship has preferred to view "magical" and "religious" practices as part of a continuum that encompassed both individual and communal forms of piety. This perspective has the distinct merit of moving the study of ancient magic to a more central, respectable position in the field of Classical Studies.[6] As Fritz Graf has observed, "magic, in a certain sense, belongs to antiquity and its heritage, like temples, hexameters, and marble statues."[7]

A third characteristic of the "new wave" of scholarship on Graeco-Roman magic—its attention to the cross-cultural and international dimensions of magic in the Mediterranean world—charts a particularly exciting frontier. Recent research has clarified many aspects of the intimate relationship between Graeco-

3. Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986; 2d ed., 1992); Roy Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze "Lamellae": Text and Commentary* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994); and esp. John G. Gager, ed., *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). For select literary sources, see Georg Luck, ed., *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

4. See esp. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink, eds., *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Sarah Iles Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

5. Fritz Graf, "Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual," in Faraone and Obbink, *Magika Hiera,* 188–213, economically documents the correspondences. See also Sarah Iles Johnston, "Songs for the Ghosts: Magical Solutions to Deadly Problems," in Jordan, Montgomery, and Thomassen, *World of Ancient Magic,* 83–102, and David Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic: The Power of the Word in Egyptian and Greek Traditions," *Helios* 21 (1994): 189–221.

6. Gager, *Curse Tablets,* 24, urges the complete abandonment of magic as a separate category of analysis. For defense of the traditional dichotomy between religion and magic (grounded in the work of George Frazer), see Luck, *Arcana Mundi,* 4–9, and further bibliography in Graf, "Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual," 207 nn. 3–4.

7. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World,* 2.

Roman "magic" and its antecedents in indigenous Egyptian tradition,[8] while other work has begun to examine the relationship between the magical and divinatory traditions of ancient Syria and Mesopotamia and those of the Graeco-Roman Near East.[9] The implications of this research reach far beyond the study of "magic" texts alone.[10] Thus, as conference organizers and editors, we were particularly interested in drawing attention to the wealth of new scholarship on "magic" in various fields of Near Eastern and Biblical Studies. Since the late 1970s, there has been a steady stream of new translations and synthetic analyses of the divinatory and astrological traditions of ancient Mesopotamia,[11]

8. Robert Kriech Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 236–49; idem, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and Their Religious Context," in *ANRW* II 18.5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 3333–79; David Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician,'" in Schäfer and Kippenberg, *Envisioning Magic,* 115–35. But cf. the reservations of Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World,* 5–8.

9. See already Franz Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (Leipzig: Verlag und Druck von B. G. Teubner, 1925). For more recent works, see Erica Reiner, "Magic Figurines, Amulets, and Talismans," in A. E. Farkus, P. O. Harper, and E. B. Harrison, eds., *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Papers Presented in Honor of Edith Porada* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1987), 27–36; Christopher A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardian Statues in Greek Myth and Ritual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); idem, "The Mystodochus and the Dark-Eyed Maidens: Multi-Cultural Influences on a Late Hellenistic Incantation," in Meyer and Mirecki, *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* 297–333; idem, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

10. Walter Burkert, "Itinerant Diviners and Magicians: A Neglected Element in Cultural Contacts," in Robin Hägg, ed., *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.*: Tradition and Innovation, Proceedings of the Second International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 1–5 June 1981 (Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen, 1983), 115–19, and Christopher A. Faraone, "Molten Wax, Spilt Wine, and Mutilated Animals: Sympathetic Magic in Near Eastern and Early Greek Oath Ceremonies," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 113 (1993): 60–80, are model studies in this regard. See also M. J. Geller, "The Influence of Ancient Mesopotamia on Hellenistic Judaism," in Jack M. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995), 1:43–54.

11. Studies on divination preceded those on magic by many years. See, e.g., Johannes Hunger, *Babylonische Tieromina nebst griechisch-römischen Parallelen,* Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft, 3 (Berlin: Wolf Peiser Verlag, 1909), and Georges Conteneau, *La divination chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens* (Paris: Payot, 1940). For more recent works, beginning in the 1970s, see David H. Engelhard, "Hittite Magical Practices" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1970); Leonard William King, *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery: Being "The Prayers of the Lifting of the Hand"* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975); Walter Farber, *Schlaf, Kindchen, Schlaf! Mesopotamische Baby-Beschwörungen und Rituale* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989); Werner Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen "Gebetsbeschwörungen,"* Studia Pohl, 5 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976); F. A. M. Wiggermann, *Babylonian Prophylactic Figures: The Ritual Texts* (Amsterdam: Free University Press); Graham Cunningham, *Deliver Me from Evil: Mesopotamian Incantations 2500–1500 BC* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio, 1997); Tzvi Abusch, *Babylonian Witchcraft Literature* (Atlanta, Ga.: Brown Judaic Studies, 1987); Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn, eds., *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives,* Studies in Ancient Magic and Divination, 1 (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1999); Erica Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia,* Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 85/4 (Independence Square [Philadelphia]: American Philosophical Society,

Egypt,[12] and Israel.[13] These path-breaking studies of Near Eastern religious traditions, however, have rarely enjoyed a distribution beyond major university libraries,[14] and their existence has often escaped notice even among scholars of Graeco-Roman magic. Our selection of essays for this volume, therefore, was

1995); Jean Bottéro, "Magie. A. In Mesopotamien," *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 7 (1987–90): 200–234; Walter Farber, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Mesopotamia," in Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East,* 3:1895–909; Scott B. Noegel, "Dreams and Dream Interpreters in Mesopotamia and in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)," in Gayatri Patnaik, ed., *Dreams and Dreaming: A Reader in Religion, Anthropology, History, and Psychology* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave-St. Martin's Press, 2001), 45–71.

12. Ritner, *Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* and Joachim F. Quack, "Kontinuität und Wandel in der spätägyptischen Magie," *SEL* 15 (1998): 77–94, both deeply undercut traditional assumptions about the "magical" tendencies of Egyptian religion. Paul Ghalioungui, *Medicine and Magic in Ancient Egypt* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963), Geraldine Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), Eleanor L. Harris, *Ancient Egyptian Divination and Magic* (York Beach, Me.: Weiser, 1998), and Bob Brier, *Ancient Egyptian Magic* (New York: Morrow, 1999), are useful surveys for the nonspecialist. J. F. Bourghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), provides a critical foundation for all later studies. See also Robert Kriech Ritner, "The Religious, Social, and Legal Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic," in Meyer and Mirecki, *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* 43–60.

13. Though see the now outmoded studies of T. Witton Davies, *Magic, Divination, and Demonology Among the Hebrews and Their Neighbors* (Ph.D. diss., University of Leipzig, 1897) (London: J. Clarke & Co. 1898; repr., New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1969); Anton Jirku, *Die Dämonen und ihre Abwehr im Alten Testament* (Leibzig: A Deichert, 1912); idem, *Mantik in Altisrael* (Rostok: Rats- und Universitätsbuchdruckerei von Adlers Erben, 1913); and Alfred Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination Among the Hebrews and Other Semites* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938). For works beginning in the 1960s, see Otto Eissfeldt, "Wahrsagung im Alten Testament," in D. F. Wendel, ed., *La divination en Mésopotamie ancienne et dans les régions voisines,* XIVe Rencontre assyriologique internationale (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 141–45; André Caquot, "La divinations l'ancien Israël," in André Caquot and M. Leibovici, eds., *La divination* (Paris: Presses Univeritaires de France, 1968), 83–113. An important work often overlooked in more recent studies is Michael Fishbane, "Studies in Biblical Magic: Origins, Uses, and Transformations of Terminology and Literary Form" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1971). See also Piera Arata Mantovani, "La magia nei testi preesilici dell'Antico Testamento," *Henoch* 3 (1981): 1–21; Christiano Grottanelli, "Specialisti del soprannaturale e potere nella Bibbia ebraica; appunti e spunti," in F. M. Fales and Christiano Grottanelli, eds., *Soprannaturale e potere nel mondo antico e nelle società tradizionali* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1985), 119–40; J. K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, "Divination and Magic in the Religion of Ancient Israel: A Study in Perspectives and Methodology" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1986); Lester L. Grabbe, *Priests, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995); Meir Bar-Ilan, "Witches in the Bible and the Talmud," in Herbert W. Basser and Simcha Fishbane, eds., *Approaches to Ancient Judaism,* n.s., vol. 5 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1993), 7–32; Robert Michael Braman, "The Problem of Magic in Ancient Israel" (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1989); Josef Tropper, *Nekromantie: Totenbefragung im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament,* Alter Orient und Altes Testament, 223 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989); Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and Its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation,* JSOTSup 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

14. With the possible exception of Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia,* and Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt.* Outside of academia, general readers have often had to resort to much earlier surveys, deeply flawed but still in print, such as E. A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic* (London, 1901; repr., New York:

guided in part by a desire to bring to a wider audience some of the best current work on divination and astrology from the fields of Egyptology, Assyriology, and Biblical Studies.

As we formulated our conception for this volume, we also were keenly aware of the burgeoning interest in astrology, divination, and other forms of "magic" among scholars of late antiquity. Despite the objections of many clerics (whether bishops, rabbis, or *ʿulamāʾ*), the sun, the moon, and the stars often retained their traditional association with divine power in the thought-world of late antiquity, and their movements remained the subject of extensive learned and also popular debate.[15] Various forms of divination—ranging from Christian versions of Graeco-Egyptian lot divination to talmudic strategies for dream interpretation—developed out of, and gradually transformed, ancient methods of ascertaining the will of the gods.[16] Followers of all three Abrahamic monotheisms continued to perform invocatory rituals inherited from the polytheist past, despite frequent de-

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Dover Books, 1971); and Davies, *Magic, Divination, and Demonology Among the Hebrews and Their Neighbors.*

15. See esp. Alan Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), and now K. von Stuckrad, "Jewish and Christian Astrology in Late Antiquity: A New Approach," *Numen* 47 (2000): 1–40. On the "magic of the heavens," see Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 87–126. For a brief overview, note Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 64–85.

16. For these particular examples, see Lucia Papini, "Fragments of the *Sortes Sanctorum* from the Shrine of St. Colluthus," in David Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998), 393–401; Peter Schäfer, "Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages," *JJS* 41 (1990): 75–91, esp. 88. William Klingshirn's forthcoming study of divination in late antiquity promises to elucidate further connections. On magic in early Judaism, see Gideon Brecher, *Das Transzendentale, Magie, und magische Heilertarten im Talmud* (Vienna: Klopf & Eurich, 1850); Samuel Daiches, *Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and in the Later Jewish Literature* (London: Jews' College Publication, 1913); Jacob Neusner, "Rabbi and Magus in Third-Century Sassanian Babylonia," *History of Religions* 6 (1966): 169–78; Jens-Heinrich Niggemeyer, *Beschwörungsformeln aus dem "Buch der Geheimnisse" (Sefar ha-razîm): Zur Topologie der magischen Rede,* Judaistische Texte und Studien, 3 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975); James H. Charlesworth, "Jewish Astrology in the Talmud, Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Early Palestinian Synagogues," *HTR* 70 (1977): 183–200; Y. Avishur, "Darke ha-Emori: Ha rega ha-kena'anibavli we-ha-mivne ha-sifruti," in Chaim Rabin, D. Patterson, B. Z. Luria, and Yitzhak Avishur, eds., *Studies in the Bible and Hebrew Language Offered to Meir Wellenstein on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Jerusalem: Jewish Society for Bible Research in Israel, 1979), 17–47; J. N. Lightstone, "Magicians, Holy Men, and Rabbis: Patterns of the Sacred in Late Antique Judaism," in W. Green, ed., *Approaches to Ancient Judaism,* vol. 1 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1985), 133–48; Daniel Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1994); Giussepe Vertri, *Magie und Halakha* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997); K. von Stuckrad, *Frömmigkeit und Wissenschaft: Astrologie in Tanach, Qumran, und frührabbinischer Literatur,* Europäische Hochschulschriften, 23; Theologie, 572 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996); Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). For the impact of Mesopotamian ideas on dream interpretation in rabbinic Judaism, see M. J. Geller, "The Survival of Babylonian Wissenschaft in Later Tradition," in Sanno Aro and

nunciations of these rituals as survivals of "paganism" or "idolatry."[17] As with the study of Graeco-Roman and Near Eastern magic, a spate of recent editions and translations has now made accessible substantial excerpts from the vast range of late antique "texts of ritual power."[18] The conceptual framework used to approach this material has also changed, as scholars have abandoned the conventional evolutionary schema (i.e., magic as a degenerate form of religion) and have focused increasingly on the sociological functions of the *accusation* of magic.[19]

R. M. Whiting, eds., *The Heirs of Assyria: Proceedings of the Opening Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project Held in Tvärminne, Finland, October 8–11, 1998,* Melammu Symposia, 1 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000), 1–6; Scott B. Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East,* American Oriental Series (New Haven, Conn.: in press).

17. For western Europe, see in addition to Flint, *Rise of Magic,* Richard Kiekhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Kiekhefer, however, is less concerned with the specific legacies of Graeco-Roman magic. There is not yet a comparable study for the Orthodox Christian world, though Henry Maguire, ed., *Byzantine Magic* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, distributed by Harvard University Press, 1995), contains several valuable essays; James Russel, "The Archaeological Context of Magic in the Early Byzantine Period" (in ibid., 35–50) is the most revealing for the legacy and transformation of earlier Graeco-Roman magic. For the legacy of polytheism among the diverse religious communities of late antique Mesopotamia, one may consult the vast literature on the Aramaic incantation bowls. See Rudolph Stübe, *Jüdisch-babylonische Zaubertexte* (Halle: J. Krause, 1895); James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1913); and the article by Michael Morony in this volume. For works that draw attention to the cosmopolitan context of the incantation bowls, see also I. Jeruzalmi, *Les coupes magiques araméennes de Mésopotamie* (Paris, 1964); Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts* (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1967); Christa Müller-Kessler and K. Kessler, "Spätbabylonische Gottheiten in spätantiken mandäischen Texts," *ZA* 89 (1989): 65–87; Tapani Harviainen, "Syncrestic and Confessional Features in the Mesopotamian Incantation Bowls," in *L'ancien Proche-Orient et les Indes: Parallelismes interculturels religieux* (Helsinki, 1993), 29–37; idem, "Pagan Incantations in Aramaic Magic Bowls," in M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield, and M. P. Weitzman, eds., *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 53–60; Erica C. D. Hunter, "Incantation Bowls: A Mesopotamian Phenomenon?" *Or* 65 (1996): 220–33; Hannu Juusola, "Who Wrote the Syriac Incantation Bowls," *SO* 85 (1999): 75–92. On early Islam, see further below.

18. For the Christian tradition, see Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power,* Mythos (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Philippe Gignoux, *Incantations magiques syriaques* (Louvain: E. Peeters, 1987). Major collections of Jewish texts can be found in W. S. McCullough, *Jewish and Mandean Incantation Bowls in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967); Charles Isbell, *Corpus of Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975); Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1985); Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1,* Semitic Texts and Studies 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992). See also T. Schrire, *Hebrew Amulets: Their Decipherment and Interpretation* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

19. Concisely articulated at Gager, *Curse Tablets,* 25. For the emergence of this new thematic focus, see the influential essays of G. Poupon, "L'accusation de magie dans les actes apocryphes," in

Increased dialogue with current scholarship on Graeco-Roman religion similarly has begun to reveal how much Christian conceptions of "magic" owed to Graeco-Roman antecedents but also where Christian ritual and theory diverged most fundamentally from the polytheist past.[20]

The study of magic in Arabic sources, and especially the relationship of those sources to earlier late antique or even ancient contexts, has been the topic of rigorous investigation since at least the mid-nineteenth century. Most of this work is philological in character, focusing on the editing and interpretation of key texts, but important advances have been made in constructing a general typology of magical practices and in tracing common etiological myths.[21] Perhaps the best-known Arabist studies of magic are the extant Arabic texts relating to the "Hermetic Corpus," focusing primarily on the *Tabula Smaragdina* and related alchemical traditions said to have been transmitted from Alexander the Great via Apollonius of Tyana.[22] Closely related to this is the so-called "Nabataean Cor-

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Les actes apocryphes des apôtres: Christianisme et monde païen (Geneva: Labor & Fides, 1981), 71–85, and esp. Peter Brown, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," in Mary Douglas, ed., *Witchcraft, Confessions, and Accusations* (London: Tavistock, 1970), 17–45, reprinted in Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber & Faber; New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 119–46.

20. Andrzej Wypustek, "Un aspect ignoré des persécutions des chrétiens dans l'antiquité: Les accusations de magie érotique imputées aux chrétiens aux IIe et IIIe siècles," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 42 (1999): 50–71, is excellent on the intersection between Christian and Graeco-Roman conceptions of magic. On demonology as the linchpin for Christian conceptions of magic, see Valerie Flint, "The Demonization of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions," in Ankarloo and Clark, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe,* 277–348, and the lucid observations of Robert Marcus, "Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 40 (1994): 375–88, on the affinities with Neoplatonist demonology. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978; repr., New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993), was pivotal in opening this interdisciplinary dialogue.

21. For recent overviews, see Kornelius Hentschel, *Geister, Magier und Muslime: Dämonenwelt und Geisteraustreibung im Islam* (Munich: Diederichs, 1997), and Sylvain Matton, *La magie arabe traditionnelle* (Paris: Retz, 1977). Older, but still useful, are Edmond Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers: A. Jourdan, 1909); Alfred Ossian Haldar, *Associations of Cult Prophets Among the Ancient Semites* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1945); and Toufic Fahd, *La divination arabe* (Ph.D. thesis, Strasbourg, 1966) (Paris: Sindbad, 1987). See also the important collection of essays in Charles Burnett, *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages: Texts and Techniques in the Islamic and Christian Worlds* (Aldershot, Hampshire; Brookfield, Vt.: Variorum, 1996).

22. For an outline of the textual corpus, see Martin Plessner, "Hirmis," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2d ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 3:463–65. See also Garth Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), and the English translation of the texts: *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermetica and the Latin Asclepius,* trans. Brian P. Copenhaver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Also useful are the introductory materials in A. J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste,* 4 vols. (Paris: Librairie LeCoffre, 1949–54). For the transmission into Arabic, see A. Siggel, "Das Sendschreiben das Licht über das Verfahren des Hermes der Hermesse," *Der Islam* 24 (1937): 287–306. Several of the Arabic texts include etiologi-

pus." This corpus makes reference to a number of Arabic texts that purport to be translations of, or based upon, earlier "Nabataean" and other Hellenistic texts. Thus, for example, the corpus cites the Descent of Ishtar, known from more ancient Babylonian sources, and an account in which a *golem* (i.e., an artificial human) is created by a chief magician named Ankabutha.[23] In some accounts, this "Nabataean" knowledge is traced back to the contents of secret books bequeathed to the biblical figure Seth by his father Adam.[24] The Arabic materials linked to the Sabians of Harran also include magical texts and traditions from earlier periods. Prominent among these texts is the *Turba Philosophorum,* a diverse compilation that includes the *physica* and *mystica* of Democritus, a manual of talismanic astrology attributed to Hippocrates, and the prophecies of Baba the Harranian.[25] There are also vast fields of research on Arabic alchemy, divination, and the alphabetic and numerological sciences, which were understood as

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cal legends explaining the chain of literary transmission; see, e.g., the *Fihrist* of Ibn Nadim and the *Kitab al-uluf* of Abu Maᶜshar, which is preserved in Ibn Juljul, *Tabaqat,* ed. Fu'ad Sayyid (Cairo, n.d.), and Saiᶜd al-Andalusi, *Tabaqat al-umam,* ed. Louis Cheikho (Cairo, 1950); see also the useful analysis by A. E. Affifi, "The Influence of Hermetic Literature in Muslim Thought," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1950): 840–55. The account linking the text with Apollonius of Tyana can be found in the *Kitab dhakhirat al-Iskandar,* also called the al-Istimakhis (vademecum): see Plessner in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* (1925): 912–20. It is also found in Ursula Weisser, ed. and German trans., *Kitab sirr al-khaliqah* (Aleppo, 1979, and Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), a work attributed to Balinus (Apollonius of Tyana). An overview of the Emerald Tablet traditions can be found in the dated but still useful Julius Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina* (Heidelberg: C. Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1926).

23. See Jaakko Hämeem-Anttila, "Ibn Waḥshiyya and Magic," *Anaquel de estudios árabes* 10 (1999): 39–48. For the work of Ibn Waḥšiyya, *al-Filaha al-Nabatiyyah* (Damascus, 1993), see the edition by Toufic Fahd, ed., *L'agriculture nabateénne: Traduction en arabe attribuée a Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Ali al-Kasdani connu sous le nom d'Ibn Waḥshiyya (4/10e siècle)* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1993–98). A fuller overview of the literature and texts can be found in Theodor Noldeke, "Nabataische Landwirtschaft," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 29 (1876): 445–55, and Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums 1* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967–), 4:318–29. A study of Waḥšiyya's text can be found in Martin Levey, *Medieval Arabic Toxicology: Book on Poisons by Ibn Waḥshiya and Its Relation to Early Indian and Greek Texts* (Philadelphia, 1966), and Bhristoph Burgel, "Die Suferweckung vom Scheintod," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 4 (1987–88): 175–94.

24. On the connection between these traditions and magic, see John C. Reeves, "*Manichaica Aramaica?* Adam and the Magical Deliverance of Seth," *JAOS* 119 (1999): 432–39.

25. On the *Turba Philosophorum,* see Julius Ruska, *Turba Philosophorum: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Alchemie* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1931). On the manual of talismanic astrology, see Abu al-Qasim Maslama b. Ahmad al-Majriti, *Ghayat al-hakim* (trans. into Latin as "Picatrix"), ed. Helmut Ritter (Berlin: Teubner, 1933); German trans. Helmut Ritter and Martin Plessner (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1962). See also the study by Ritter, "Picatrix: Ein arabisches Handbuch hellenistischer Magie," in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1921–22* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1923), 94–124. On the prophecies of Baba the Harranian, see Franz Rosenthal, "The Prophecies of Baba the Harranian," in W. B. Henning and E. Yarshater, eds., *A Locust's Leg: Studies in Honour of S. H. Taqizadeh* (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1962), 220–32.

having ancient origins by Muslim, and later European, scholars who translated and studied them.[26]

Only in recent years, however, have scholarly works on the magical traditions of the ancient world and late antiquity begun to engage the fundamental, and still evolving, debates about the study of religion and magic among sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars of comparative religion.[27] Some have attributed the lack of previous engagement to the legacy of Durkheim's argument that "magic" is to be distinguished from "religion" in that the structure and goal of magic is individual, not social.[28] Such an approach excludes certain practices and texts from analysis on the grounds that the so-called magical phenomena are not relevant to the understanding of religion and its social function. Other historians of religions adopt this stance to justify the study of magic as distinct from religion. Marcel Mauss's "General Theory of Magic" outlines the social structure represented by the magician and his clients and how this structure is represented in the social efficacy of certain magical rites.[29] Bronislaw Malinowski, in his study of the Trobriand islanders, and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, in his ethnography of the Azande, have taken similar approaches.[30]

Many historians of religions have regarded magic simply as a type of religious practice and have tended to subsume magic and the phenomena associated with it under more ambiguous and undifferentiated categories such as "religious ex-

26. On the influence of "magic" in later Islamic thought, see H. F. Hamdani, "A Compendium of Ismaili Esoterics," *Islamic Culture* 2 (1937): 210–20; S. H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines;* Rudolf Strothmann, *Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1943); and some of the many works by Yves Marquet, such as "Révélation et vision véridique chez les Ikhwan al-Safa," *Revue des études islamiques* 32 (1964): 27–44. On the influence of Hermeticism on European thought, see Francis A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1964).

27. For a concise introduction to the many theoretical approaches that have been applied to magic, see Graham Cunningham, *Religion and Magic: Approaches and Theories* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

28. See Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,* trans. Joseph Swain (New York: Free Press, 1915), esp. 57–60 (originally published as *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* [Paris, 1912]). For the impact of earlier astrological sciences on Islamic sources, see also Keiji Yamamoto and Charles Burnett, eds., *Abû Ma'šar on Political Astrology: The Book of Religions and Dynasties,* 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999).

29. See Marcel Mauss, "Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie," in *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950; repr., 1991). For an incisive critique of Mauss's approach to magic, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction à l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss," in ibid., ix-lii, trans. Felicity Baker, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (London: Routledge, 1987).

30. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* (New York: American Book Co., 1935; repr., 1978). An analysis of Malinowski's theory of magic can be found in S. F. Nadel, "Malinowski on Magic and Religion," in Raymond Firth, ed., *Man and Culture: An Evaluation of the Work of Bronislaw Malinowski* (London: Routledge, 1957), 189–208. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracle, and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937; repr., 1976).

perience" or "ritual."[31] Such is the case with the influential work of Mircea Eliade, which often draws heavily on examples of phenomena that other historians of religions would characterize as magic. In his work on alchemy and geomancy, for example, Eliade analyzes alchemy and related divinatory techniques as evidence for the widespread influence of rituals that link cosmogonic symbols with the imaginary center of the world.[32] In his works on Yoga and Shamanism too, Eliade similarly investigates individual connections to the sacred or divine. Yet, these connections clearly relate to the ancient Near Eastern divinatory, prophetic, and initiation practices that he chose to emphasize.[33] Thus, though influential, Eliade's application of models developed in Indian contexts to ancient Near Eastern materials has not always produced a more nuanced understanding of ancient magical practices. Similarly, his attempts to impose models developed from Near Eastern materials onto nonliterate cultures have not stood up to more recent critical analysis.[34]

The focus on magical practices as examples of divine experiences has enjoyed much attention in a number of disciplines. Early anthropologists, like Edward Tylor, speak of "primitive" forms of religion as "magic" insofar as they treat coincidence as a means of divine communication.[35] William James discusses religion as the objectification of unseen ideals and singles out a number of experiences that he labels "mystical." For James, these experiences correspond to perceived lapses in rational explanations for psychological experiences.[36] Some phenomenologists similarly subsume phenomena often associated with magic under their generic defi-

31. See, e.g., Einar Thomassen, "Is Magic a Subclass of Ritual?" in Jordan, Montgomery, and Thomassen, *World of Ancient Magic,* 55–66.

32. See Mircea Eliade, *Cosmologie si alchimie babiloniana* (Bucharest, 1937), and his *Forge and the Crucible,* trans. Stephen Corrin (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

33. Eliade's interest in divinatory techniques, initiation rites, and their use in establishing a connection with the divine is most clearly expressed in his *Le yoga: Immortalité et liberté* (Paris: Payot, 1954), trans. Willard Trask, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), and his *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* (Paris: Payot, 1951), trans. Willard Trask, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

34. See, e.g., Jonathan Z. Smith's critique of the latter in his *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual,* Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), esp. 13–21. In this respect, Eliade might be understood, as Smith understands him, as continuing and extending some of the Pan-Babylonianist models. See, e.g., Jonathan Z. Smith, "Mythos und Geschichte," in Hans Peter Duerr, ed., *Alcheringa oder die beginnende Zeit: Studien zu Mythologie, Schamanismus und Religion* (Frankfurt: Qumran, 1983), 19–48, esp. 35–41.

35. See Edward B. Tylor, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind,* 3d ed. (London, 1878), 129–31. See also Tylor, *Primitive Culture,* 2d ed., vol. 1 (New York, 1889), 115–16. On the background of Tylor's theories, see George W. Stocking Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), esp. 284–330. See also J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 131–56.

36. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902; repr., New York: Penguin, 1982). On James and the background to the study of religious ex-

nition of religion. Gerardus Van der Leeuw, for example, contends that "power" is the object of religion and that the harnessing and objectification of power by man, experienced as the "sacred" through rituals such as sacrifice and divination, produces a variety of human religions. Later sociologists such as Joachim Wach and cultural anthropologists like Victor Turner also defined religion as the result of an experience, induced through various means, including those others might term "magical."[37]

In recent years a fresh approach to the study of magic has begun to emerge from within the history of religions. Rather than isolate "magic" as a peculiar phenomenon separate from religion or simply include "magic" as an undifferentiated aspect of religion, some historians of religions have attempted to explain magic as a distinct but integral component of religion.[38] In part, this move is informed by a recognition that many of the written and oral sources available to historians of religions appear to distinguish certain rituals, experiences, and beliefs as somehow set apart from other public, common, or unspecialized aspects of religion.[39] In some cases, the separation of magic from religion is polemical in character. Medievalists have helped to delineate how the cultivation of "magic" as a special set of knowledge and practices, and its relationship to Christianity and Judaism, was connected to important social and economic changes and to the increased attention to metaphysics and scientific thinking.[40] Others see magic as an important subset of larger religious practices and ideas. Thus, scholarship on Indian and East Asian religions has acknowledged the native use of "magic" as a logic of thinking in Vedic and Buddhist texts.[41]

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perience, see Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

37. Joachim Wach, *Types of Religious Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), esp. 209–27. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), esp. 112–30. This approach of Wach's is evident but less so in his *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944). A useful but older overview of this perspective can be found in Raymond Firth, *Symbols: Public and Private* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973).

38. See, e.g., A. S. Kapelrud, "The Interrelationship Between Religion and Magic in Hittite Religion," *Numen* 6 (1959): 32–50; H. S. Vernsel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion," *Numen* 38 (1991): 177–97.

39. See Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), esp. 59–76. There is also a useful summary of "magic" as a term in Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World,* 8–18.

40. See Amos Finkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

41. See Michael Witzel, *On Magical Thought in the Veda* (Leiden: Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1979); Brian K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 34–39; Asko Parpola, "On the Symbol Concept of the Vedic Ritualists," in Haralds Biezais, ed., *Religious Symbols and Their Functions* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1979), 139–53; Stan-

It is this recognition, that "magic" constitutes a native category of thought in a variety of cultures and traditions, that typifies the recent shift toward the study of magic in the history of religions. This shift gives new theoretical weight to the notion of "magic" as a reified category into which we might place certain practices and ideas. The purpose of this classification is not, however, the labeling of selected phenomena as "magical" in a pejorative sense or in a way that might exclude them from the rational, acknowledged aspects of religion. Rather, the aim of such scholarship is to determine the meaning and significance of terminology, practices, and concepts that are evident in the textual and ethnographic record. "Magic" thus is viewed, not as a category that historians of religions impose on their material, but rather as a relatively limited set of phenomena recognizable in that material.

The difference separating this more recent approach from that of earlier scholars like Mauss and Malinowski is remarkable not so much for its theoretical insights as for its methodology. Most of the essays in this volume avoid entanglement in the definition of magic and begin by trying to understand the internal logic of particular "magical" documents or artifacts. These essays thus attempt to uncover the explanation of particulars ensconced in specific cultural contexts. Nevertheless, by using the term "magic," this scholarship recognizes the inevitable need to translate and interpret those particulars into more generic terms. The result, therefore, is the beginnings of a far more nuanced and subtle understanding of "magic" as a generic category that is both part of the historical and ethnographic record and integral to theoretical conceptions of religion.

It is this background, then, coupled with our desire to make accessible the most recent scholarly advances in the study of ancient magic, that informs the thirteen essays in this volume. Like the conference that preceded it, *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars* deliberately collapses conventional disciplinary boundaries in its definition of the ancient and late antique world. Contributors to the volume include scholars from the fields of Assyriology, Egyptology, Classics, Jewish Studies, Early Christianity, Late Antiquity, and Early Islam; in geographical range, the essays cover material originating from at least eleven modern nations, stretching from western Iran to the central Mediterranean. What unites the essays is a common interest in methods of communication with the divine—various forms of divination,

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ley Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man,* n.s., 3 (1968): 175–208; and idem, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Related to this is the important monograph of Richard Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshiping Siva in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). Many of these ideas and interpretations can be found to have roots in the discussion by Sylvain Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brahmanas,* Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études, science religieuses, 11 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898).

exegesis, or rituals used to interpret, invoke, or obstruct the superhuman power(s) of the cosmos. Though many of these rituals have traditionally been placed under the rubric of "magic," others could just as easily be called religion. The inclusion of "prayer" in our title acknowledges the close connections between magic and more sanctioned forms of religious activity.

The "stars" of our title underlines another key theme: the intimate link between divinity and the celestial bodies throughout the ancient world and, to a lesser extent, in late antiquity. This fundamental aspect of ancient religion has only recently begun to receive the attention it deserves, particularly in the fields of Classical Studies and Late Antiquity.[42] There has been more recognition of the prominence of the stars in Mesopotamian religion,[43] where the first cuneiform sign used to designate the word "god" appears in the image of a star. Yet even in Assyriology, and in Egyptology too, there is a need for more research.[44] By investigating the role of the heavenly bodies in both public and private religions, across time, and throughout the ancient Near East and Mediterranean worlds, the essays in this volume reveal both shared cross-cultural assumptions about the divine power of the celestial bodies and striking differences in how humankind read and appealed to those divine powers.

This background and our goals also inform the organization of this book, which consists of four parts. Part I, "Locating Magic," uniquely includes a single essay: "Here, There, and Anywhere," by Jonathan Z. Smith, one of the most prominent theorists in the comparative study of religion. Here Smith builds upon his earlier work by advancing a new typology for the study of religion in the ancient world and late antiquity.[45] His typology consists of three components: "(1) the 'here' of domestic religion, located primarily in the home and in burial sites; (2) the 'there' of public, civic, and state religions," usually centered on temples staffed by a spe-

42. Hence the enormous contribution of recent books like Tamsyn Barton's *Ancient Astrology,* which have highlighted the centrality of the celestial bodies in many aspects of Graeco-Roman thought and religion. See also Scott, *Origen and the Life of the Stars.* On Islam, see George Saliba, "The Role of the Astrologer in Medieval Islamic Society," *Bulletin d'études orientales: Science occultes et Islam* 44 (1992): 45–68.

43. Hermann Hunger, ed., *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992); N. M. Swerdlow, ed., *Ancient Astronomy and Celestial Divination* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999). See also Hannes D. Galter and Bernhard Scholz, ed., *Die Rolle der Astronomie in den Kulturen Mesopotamiens; Beiträge zum 3. Grazer morgenländischen Symposium, 23.–27. September, 1991,* Grazer morgenländische Studien, 3 (Graz: Karl-Franzens Universität, 1993); David Pingree, "Legacies in Astronomy and Celestial Omens," in Stephanie Dalley, ed., *The Legacy of Mesopotamia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 125–38.

44. There is, for instance, relatively little discussion of the stars in Abusch and van der Toorn, *Mesopotamian Magic.*

45. Of the earlier work, see esp. Smith, *To Take Place,* and idem, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990).

cial class of literate priests; "and (3) the 'anywhere' of a rich diversity of religious formations that occupy an interstitial space between these other two loci, including a variety of religious entrepreneurs and ranging from groups we term 'associations' to activities we label 'magic.'" His topography of ancient religion provides a stimulating framework, one that insists on the comparative study of "magic" against the backdrop of broader changes in the political, economic, and cultural history of the ancient world. Smith points to the expansion and relative prominence of the religions of "anywhere," over against and sometimes at the expense of the persistence of the religions of "here" and "there," as one of the most significant developments of late antiquity.

Part II, "Prayer, Magic, and Ritual," contains four essays that reveal the rich diversity of approaches now being applied to the study of ancient magic. Ian Moyer's essay, "Thessalos of Tralles and Cultural Exchange," examines the epistolary prologue of the text on astrological botany attributed to the first-century Greek physician Thessalos of Tralles. The story of Thessalos's encounter with a native Egyptian priest in Thebes has stood at the center of many previous discussions of ancient magic. After a careful review of earlier interpretations, Moyer presents a novel reading of Thessalos's revelation as a product of cultural exchange through the medium of ritual. The contribution by Marvin Meyer ("The Prayer of Mary in the Magical Book of Mary and the Angels") addresses the much-contested taxonomy of prayer versus magic through the lens of a specific well-documented case study: a late antique prayer to the Virgin Mary preserved in Coptic, Ethiopic, and Arabic. Focusing on the Coptic version, Meyer demonstrates how a text like the Prayer of Mary in Bartos simultaneously belongs within traditions of both late antique "magic" and Coptic Christian piety. Gideon Bohak's essay, "Hebrew, Hebrew Everywhere? Notes on the Interpretation of *Voces Magicae*," addresses an important methodological question: how should scholars explain the often unintelligible and "powerful 'alien' words" that figure so prominently in the diverse magical texts of late antiquity. All too often, according to Bohak, scholars have posited a "Jewish" origin for particular *voces* on rather shaky philological grounds. Their learned etymologies may stem more from the authors' Judeocentric and Christocentric perspectives than from any disproportionate Jewish contribution to the magical idioms of late antiquity. The final essay of the section, Michael G. Morony's "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," offers a general introduction to the "magic bowls" of southern Iraq and sketches an innovative and promising strategy to use the incantation bowls as documents for the social history of late antique Mesopotamia.

Part III, "Dreams and Divination," also composed of four essays, explores various strategies for communication with, or interpretation of, divine power. In "The Open Portal: Dreams and Divine Power in Pharaonic Egypt," Kasia Szpa-

kowska uses the inscriptions of two New Kingdom officials and a contemporaneous dream-interpretation manual to document a significant development in ancient Egyptian divinatory conceptions. In particular, she reveals how nonroyal figures gradually gained hitherto restricted access to the gods by way of ritual dreaming. Moreover, she demonstrates how this shift from royal to nonroyal access may have been influenced by political and cultural changes affecting the Egyptian empire in the aftermath of foreign invasions. As Peter Struck demonstrates in his contribution, "Viscera and the Divine: Dreams as the Divinatory Bridge Between the Corporeal and the Incorporeal," a search for communion with the divine in the Graeco-Roman tradition often led believers to turn inward. Using evidence from Plato and the Hippocratic treatise *On Regimen,* Struck brings together the emphatically corporeal and the emphatically incorporeal regions of human existence. In particular, Struck investigates the tendency in ancient thought to link the viscera and the divine as reflected in many different forms of divination, even in what may seem to be the least corporeal of the divinatory arts, the practice of reading dreams. Jacco Dieleman's "Stars and the Egyptian Priesthood in the Graeco-Roman Period" presents another case study in the Greek world's fertile encounter with Egyptian culture. His analysis centers on a ritual text for astral divination whose importance lies in its use of two languages: Demotic (later Egyptian) for the ritual's technical instructions and Greek for conjuring the deity. As Dieleman shows, the terminology and procedures of this ritual reveal a complex and lively dialogue between tradition and innovation in late Egyptian religion. Michael D. Swartz's "Divination and Its Discontents: Finding and Questioning Meaning in Ancient and Medieval Judaism" turns our attention to the close connection between the hermeneutics of Jewish divination (a world that is "inherently semiotic") and methods of biblical exegesis. To demonstrate his argument, Swartz focuses on books of lot divination (*goralot*) whose worldview assumes that every detail of our environment has meaning and whose authors seek to reassure their readers of the sanctity of this hermeneutic. As he shows, these books register ambivalent attitudes toward divination by some rabbis in late antiquity and represent a well-established pattern common to many Jewish magic rituals in presenting their divinatory system as a substitute for the loss of specific Temple rituals.

Part iv, "The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars," moves appropriately *ad astra* to consider evolving ideas about the nature of the celestial bodies in the religions of the ancient world and late antiquity. Francesca Rochberg's "Heaven and Earth: Divine-Human Relations in Mesopotamian Celestial Divination" demonstrates how Mesopotamian legal, religious, and cosmological conceptions, which identify the gods with celestial bodies and assume a reciprocal correspondence between events in the heavens and those on earth, profoundly influenced the practice of

ancient Mesopotamian celestial divination. Rochberg also shows how the orderliness of the Mesopotamian cosmos hinged on the maintenance of reciprocal relations between heaven and earth. Thus, rulers, who needed to maintain order over their subjects on earth, had to observe through divination the omens in the heavens and to respond with the appropriate rituals to ward off the evil portended by some omens. As Rochberg illustrates, implicit in the practice of these rituals is the possibility that some procedure could persuade the gods to prevent the occurrence of the predicted event. Mark S. Smith, in "Astral Religion and the Representation of Divinity: The Cases of Ugarit and Judah," compares the conception of divinity in West Semitic religion, as revealed by tablets excavated at the late Bronze Age port of Ugarit in northern Syria, with that of Judah, as depicted in the Hebrew Bible. As Smith demonstrates, for much of their history the people of Ugarit imagined their divine pantheon as a heavenly version of the royal patriarchal household, but with strong connections to specific celestial bodies. Later, their conceptualization of divinity shifted to place the storm-god Baal at the pantheon's head, thus replacing the former chief god, El, and divorcing the pantheon from its long-held astral associations. Smith uses this model of change as an analogy to elucidate the emergence of Yahweh as the Israelite god and the subsequent eclipse of astral religion in Israel. He demonstrates, for example, how Israelites, by identifying Yahweh with El, retained a connection to astral deities in their attribution to Yahweh of a "host of heaven," but rejected most other celestial associations, especially when the Neo-Assyrian empire and its astral cults began to expand their influence. Thus, Smith provides a strong framework for understanding the Israelite conceptualization of Yahweh and his celestial associations. Nicola Denzey's essay, "A New Star on the Horizon: Astral Christologies and Stellar Debates in Early Christian Discourse," revisits the oft-cited scholarly assumption that early Christians rejected outright Graeco-Roman systems of astrology. Her point of departure is the textual evidence for a lively and impassioned debate in which Christians engaged both sides concerning the validity—not to mention the true significance—of astrology and astrological prognostication. At the center of the debate were various interpretations of the significance and hidden meaning of the "star of Bethlehem" in the Gospel of Matthew. By examining a variety of early Christian exegetical traditions about the star, Denzey demonstrates how early Christians attempted to interpret the history of the Church within the hermeneutical framework of Graeco-Roman astrology. The final essay of the volume, Radcliffe Edmonds's "At the Seizure of the Moon: The Absence of the Moon in the Mithras Liturgy," introduces us to a set of ritual instructions found in the Mithras Liturgy that were used to prepare "magicians" for encountering the supreme sun-god Mithras. In particular, Edmonds focuses on the text's instruction that the ritual preparations take place "at the seizure of the moon," that is,

when the moon is new, or absent from the heavens. Edmonds shows that the significance of the moon's absence lies in its role in the genesis of souls, bringing them down from the upper realms into the world below. The moon also is absent from the experience of the "magician," as he ascends to encounter Mithras on the rays of the sun through the air, winds, and the planets. Indeed, as we learn, the absence of the moon is not an isolated ritual detail, but rather corresponds to a pattern found throughout the whole spell, in which the moon's absence is crucial to the magician's project of immortalization through his contact with the powers of the sun. Edmonds's analysis shows how the absence of the moon reveals the cosmology underlying this famous spell.

Thus we hope that this diverse collection of approaches and materials serves to suggest ways in which "magic" in the ancient world might be seen as a distinct but variegated phenomenon. These essays illustrate some of the various means by which ancients accessed the divine.

PART I

Locating Magic

1
Here, There, and Anywhere

Jonathan Z. Smith

The editors of this volume have presented me with a double rhetorical task. According to their initial formulation, I was to write for both an interested public and for an international group of experts. The formulation of the general topic drew upon the specialized knowledge of nine academic units of the University of Washington. It contemplates a geographical range of more than two and a half million square miles of land, "from Iran and Mesopotamia in the East to Canaan, Egypt, and the Aegean in the West."[1] Concealed in these boundaries is the intense interactivity of these various cultures across the entire southern Eurasian continent: for example, Sumer and the Indus valley in trade relations in the third millennium (B.C.E.);[2] F. J. Teggert's calculation that, of the forty occasions of war in the western Roman empire, between 58 B.C.E. and 107 C.E., twenty-seven were directly traceable to changes in the commercial policy of the Han Chinese government.[3] The invitation projects a literate time-span of some 3,800 years as it considers religious phenomena within this broad region in their "Ancient, Classical and Late Antique forms." It defines "religion" comprehensively as the "manifold techniques, both communal and individual, by which men and women . . . sought to gain access to divine power." I would revise only the last

1. I cite here the formulations of the original conference document. The general assumptions parallel an important contemporary redescription of the ancient Mediterranean world as an interactive site of transformative contact as well as divisive conflict. See, e.g., the Melammu initiative of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project devoted to "the intellectual heritage of Babylonia and Assyria in East and West," in Sanno Aro and R. M. Whiting, eds., *The Heirs of Assyria: Proceedings of the Opening Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project Held in Tvärminne, Finland, October 8–11, 1998,* Melammu Symposia, l (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000).

2. See, e.g., David Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity,* vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); E. C. L. During-Caspers, "Harappan Trade in the Arabian Gulf in the Third Millennium BC," *Mesopotamia* 7 (1972): 167–91; S. Ratnagar, *Encounters: The Westerly Trade of the Harappa Civilization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981).

3. F. J. Teggart, *Rome and China: A Study of Correlations in Historical Events* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1939), vii-viii, et passim.

clause, substituting "sought to gain access to, or avoidance of, culturally imagined divine power by culturally patterned means."[4]

As the recent turn of the millennium has resulted in much celebratory rhetoric concerning the duration of one new late antique religion—one of five new late antique religions to continue into modern times[5]—it is worth recalling that our assigned region and time-span encompass a set of religious traditions most of which have had two- or three-millennia-old histories. To understand these phenomena is to think through the dynamics of religious persistence, reinterpretation, and change—to think through the ways in which a given group at a given time chose this or that mode of interpreting their traditions as they related themselves to their historical past and to their social and political present.

In fulfilling my assigned task, there are only two stratagems available to me, either to focus, in thick detail, on a particular instance as exemplary of the whole, or to generalize, recognizing that generalization falls between particularity and universality and, therefore, is always both partial and corrigible. In this presentation, I will take the latter tack, and I will do so in the form of a topography.

I have signaled this intent with my title, which I owe to Dr. Seuss's character Sam and his canonical rejection of green eggs and ham by means of a formula that recurs some half dozen times in the Seuss work with only a change of verb. To cite just one occurrence:

> I will not eat them here or there,
> I will not eat them anywhere.[6]

My confidence in this tripartite division of every place was strengthened when Dr. Seuss's doggerel brought to mind Robert Orsi's important 1991 article "The Center Out There, In Here, and Everywhere Else: The Nature of Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Saint Jude, 1929–1965." In this study, Orsi seeks to answer a quite particular question:

4. As is readily recognizable, I adapt here Melford Spiro's definition of religion as "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings," specifying the interactions in terms of access and avoidance in keeping with the conference's announced theme. See Melford Spiro, "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation," in M. Banton, ed., *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion,* Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth Monographs, 3 (London: Tavistock, 1966), 96.

5. I include as the five new late antique religions surviving to modern times Judaism, Samaritanism, Christianity, Mandaeanism, and, depending on how one dates the Iranian formations, the Parsis (as well as the Gabars).

6. Dr. Seuss, *Green Eggs and Ham* (New York: Random House, 1960), n.p. It is important to my topography that "anywhere" not be read as "everywhere."

> A peculiar anomaly has characterized the National Shrine of Saint Jude Thaddeus, patron saint of hopeless causes and lost causes, since its founding by . . . a Spanish order of missionaries in Chicago in 1929. On the one hand, Jude's shrine was seen by both the saint's devout and the clerical caretakers of the site as a specific and special place of power, desire and hope, which is how such locations have always been imagined in the Catholic tradition; on the other hand, the devout were never encouraged nor did they feel compelled to go to that place in order to secure the benefits they sought from the saint.[7]

Orsi proposes that the solution to this "spatial decentering" was the formation of a voluntary association, the League of Saint Jude, which communicated with the shrine by writing. Through this association a "center out there" was established and maintained by means of "writing as going." This transformed a local shrine into a national one. Equally important, this transformation shifted attention from a notion of space "as the primary focus of devotional life to time"—a late antique strategy I have explored at some length in *To Take Place*.[8]

In this essay I should like to propose a topography for this volume's expansive topic in terms of three spatial categories: (1) the "here" of domestic religion, located primarily in the home and in burial sites; (2) the "there" of public, civic, and state religions, largely based in temple constructions; and (3) the "anywhere" of a rich diversity of religious formations that occupy an interstitial space between these other two loci, including a variety of religious entrepreneurs, and ranging from groups we term "associations" to activities we label "magic."

While modes of access to and means of protection from imaginations of divine power differ in all three of these loci, I would locate one significant difference between the ancient/classical and late antique forms of the Mediterranean religions under review as being the expansion and relative prominence of the third locus (the religions of "anywhere") in late antiquity over against, and sometimes at the expense of, the persistence and transformations of the first two loci (the religions of "here" and "there").[9]

7. Robert Orsi, "The Center out There, in Here, and Everywhere Else: The Nature of Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Saint Jude, 1929–1965," *Journal of Social History* 25 (1991): 213–32.

8. Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual,* Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 86–95, et passim.

9. While the topographical strategy remains constant, I would not wish this scheme to be identified with the distinction "locative/utopian" developed, among other applications, to explore continuities, revaluations, and differences in archaic and late antique Mediterranean religions in Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions,* Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, 23 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), xi-xv, 100–103, 130–42, 147–51, 160–66, 169–71, 185–89, 291–94, 308–9, as well as in subsequent publications.

1. "HERE": THE SPHERE OF DOMESTIC RELIGION

Considered globally, domestic religion is the most widespread form of religious activity; perhaps due to its very ubiquity, it is also the least studied. This is especially true of domestic religion of the past. Being largely nondramatic in nature, and largely oral in transmission, domestic religion does not present itself to us as marked off as "religious" in any forceful manner. Its artifacts, if any, are small-scale and often of common materials, resulting in what one scholar has termed an archaeology of clay rather than of gold. Such artifacts tend to fill up museum basements rather than display cases. While their interpretation remains insecure, I need only refer to the decades-old debate between scholars of ancient Mediterranean religions as to whether the common small clay nude female figurines associated with household sites are dolls for children or goddesses for ritual to make the point.[10] The domestic realm, "here," precisely because it is not "there," because it is not situated in separated sacred space, invites ambiguity as to significance. This ambiguity is only increased when such artifacts are assigned to the dubious place-holding category of "popular religion." For these reasons, one can only applaud important recent works, such as the study by Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel* (1996), that begin to redress the imbalance.[11]

Domestic religion, focused on an extended family, is supremely local. It is concerned with the endurance of the family as a social and biological entity, as a community, as well as with the relations of that community to its wider social and natural environs. While no doubt pressing the matter to an extreme, one thinks of Fustel's insistence that each family, in classical Greek and Roman tradition, constituted a separate "religion."[12]

While the parallel is remote from the cultures this volume treats, and therefore serves as an analogy, I have been most helped in imagining the category of domestic religion by Marcel Granet's portrait of a rural Chinese peasant household.[13]

10. For a summary of these debates, see P. J. Ucko, *Anthropomorphic Figurines of Predynastic Egypt and Neolithic Crete with Comparative Material from the Prehistoric Near East and Mainland Greece,* Royal Anthropological Institute, Occasional Paper, 24 (London: A. Szmidla, 1968).

11. Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life,* Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East, 7 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

12. Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study of the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1896), 41, 46–48, et passim. This usage is especially dominant in Fustel's description of the marriage rituals (pp. 53–60).

13. Marcel Granet, *La civilisation chinoise: La vie publique et la vie privée,* L'évolution de l'humanité: Synthèse historique, 25 (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1929), 205; idem, *La religion des Chinois,* 2d ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), 21–25.

Several feet below the ground is buried a receptacle containing the bones or relics of ancestors. Directly above this is a subterranean storage vessel containing next year's seed rice. Placed above this, on the surface of the ground, is the bed of the primary householder couple. These three loci interact through symmetrical relations of exchange. The power of the ancestors enlivens the seed rice and the conjugal bed. The rice feeds both the ancestors and the householders. The sexual activity of the husband and wife quickens the seed rice and the ancestors. There is no apparent distance to be overcome. Relations are intimate; their continuity is expressed in terms of circulation and exchange.

Although the idiom differs within and between the religions of the regions we have under review, an analogous set of symmetrical relations pertain. It is a continuity that remains as long as the familial community is itself maintained. Extinction is its most obvious threat—whether by war, disaster, disease, or demonic attack. While the religious avoidance of these general traumas remains primarily an affair of civic or national modes of religion, the presence in many domestic sites of small divine figurines with apotropaic inscriptions suggests similar concerns with avoidance within the sphere of household religion.[14]

For domestic religion, dislocation is another sort of threat bearing a similar religious value. While scholars have tended to focus their attention on the civic and national implications of exiles and diasporas, forced distance from hearth, home, and, especially, the familial burial site is a profound rupture of the presumed endless accessibility of the ancestors that stands at the heart of domestic religion. One needs only to recall the solemn oath Joseph made the Israelites in Egypt swear, "When God comes to you, you shall carry up my bones from here" (Gen. 50:25), and the narration of the fulfillment of that promise by Moses at the time of the Exodus from Egypt (Exod. 13:19), the bones finally being reburied at a familial site: "The bones of Joseph, which Israel had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem, in the portion of ground that Jacob bought . . . it became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph" (Josh. 24:32). If, from the temple-centered perspective of the religions of "there," the dead constitute a pollution, interfering with sacred transactions, in the religions of "here," the dead are an indispensable medium for such transactions.[15]

Finally, to any list of threats to domestic continuity must be added the danger of forgetfulness; hence, the importance of formal and informal genealogies as well as family sagas. This latter threat raises, as well, a different set of poten-

14. See, e.g., the inscriptions cited in D. Rittig, *Assyrisch-babylonische Kleinplastik magischer Bedeutung vom 13.–6. Jh. v. Chr.* (Munich: Verlag Uni-Druck, 1977), 185–208.

15. For a suggestive attempt to account for the historical reasons for this shift in archaic and classical Greek religion, see I. Morris, "Attitudes Toward Death in Archaic Greece," *Classical Antiquity* 8 (1987): 296–320.

tial interruptions to the community and continuity of the family. As both Emile Durkheim and Arnold van Gennep already perceived,[16] these are the issues addressed by those life-crisis rituals surrounding birth, puberty, marriage, and death, with their attendant dilemma of increasing or decreasing the community. Such entrances and exits, such incorporations and dissolutions, require social/ritual markings and memorializations. While van Gennep's overreliance on the metaphor of "threshold" may require revision, for domestic religion the *limen* is central inasmuch as it highlights issues of external, rather than familial, relations. The threshold separates those who belong, or who are welcome through complex codes of hospitality, from those who are not. It separates those who are received by a host (in the sense of one who provides food) from those who are repelled by a host (in the sense of armed force). The central locus of this difference, expressed as inclusion or exclusion, and, therefore, the most elaborated form of the domestic religion of "here," is the familial meal, with its attendant ethos of commensality.

The meal might be routinely marked as "religious" by verbal formulae or through ritual business with food—although almost always these employ ordinary domestic utensils or common fire, and consist of small elaborations of quotidian acts of eating, drinking, cooking, serving, pouring—but its prime mode of domestic sacrality consists in acknowledging who is there, both the familial living and the familial dead. The latter present something of a paradox. It is, on the one hand, crucial that the dead remain in the sphere of the dead. Ghosts, the undead, the resurrected constitute, from this perspective, a threat to be protected against, while protecting them against others. On the other hand, it is equally crucial that there be controlled contact with the dead, that there be a continuity of relationship and appropriate modes of the dead's presence. Hence practices that range from memorializing the dead at meals to sharing food with the dead or eating with the dead, often at burial sites.[17] (In the latter case, there is archaeological evidence at selected sites for *refrigeria,* often by holes drilled in tombs or tomb-

16. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995), esp. 405; Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 41–165.

17. See my treatment of these themes in Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity,* Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 14; and Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 122–32. There have been a number of important specialized studies of some of these themes, ranging from Jo Ann Scurlock, "Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1988), to T. J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit,* Harvard Semitic Monographs 39 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989); Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 279–84, offers a set of subtle generalizations concerning the familial dead.

stones through which foodstuffs and drink could be introduced.)[18] The appropriate form of the presence of the dead is expressed, as well, in general categories such as "blessing," as well as in their oracular or intercessionary roles within familial settings.[19]

2. "There": The Sphere of Civic and National Religion

It is possible to be briefer in describing the religion of "there," as this is what most of us think of first when we imagine ancient religion: the dominant deities and their attendant mythologies and liturgies; the impressive constructions associated with temple, court, and public square. Wherever one's domicile, these latter locales are someplace else, are "over there" in relation to one's homeplace. To some degree, access to such constructions is difficult, as expressed in the architectural language of walls and gates, of zones and nested interiors.[20]

The religion of "there" appears, cross-culturally, as the result of the cooccurrence of at least six elements, although causal priority cannot be ascribed to any one member of the nexus: urbanism, sacred kingship, temple, hereditary priesthood (as well as other religious specialists often organized as craft guilds),

18. The starting point for any analysis remains André Parrot, *Le "refrigerium" dans 1'au delà* (Paris: Librairie E. Leroux, 1937). See further *CAD* A/2, 324, s.v. *arûtu*. For a rare Greek example, see Martin P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion: 1, Die Religion Griechenlands bis auf die griechische Weltherrschaft,* Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, 5. Abt., 2. Teil (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1976), 177 and n. 1. For these traditions in late antiquity, see, among others, G. F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer, 1985), 172, s.v. "meal for the dead," and compare the use of Snyder in Smith, *Drudgery Divine,* 129–32. For later, North African Christian *refrigeria,* largely associated with martyria, see J. Quasten, "*Vetus Superstitio et Nova Religio:* The Problem of Refrigerium in the Ancient Church of North Africa," *HTR* 33 (1940): 253–66.

19. The oracular materials are often subsumed under the broader category of necromancy (a term of enormous fluidity, as, for example, in Josef Tropper, *Nekromantie: Totenbefragung im Alten Orient und Alten Testament,* Alter Orient und Altes Testament, 223 [Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989]). See, among others, the significant recent studies by I. L. Finkel, "Necromancy in Ancient Mesopotamia," *AfO* 29–30 (1983–84): 1–17; Karel van der Toorn, "The Nature of the Biblical Teraphim in the Light of the Cuneiform Evidence," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 203–22; B. B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition,* Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 11 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994). See also the shrewd comments on oracular dreams of the dead in a Melanesian context in Kenelm Burridge, *Mambu: A Study of Melanesian Cargo Movements and Their Social and Ideological Background* (London: Methuen, 1960), 252–53; idem, *Tangu Traditions: A Study of the Way of Life, Mythology, and Developing Experience of a New Guinea People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 164–66.

20. Smith, *To Take Place,* 48–73. Compare the recent remarkable work by S. M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

sacrifice, and writing.[21] As this list suggests, the religion of "there" has to do primarily with relations of power. These relations are expressed, religiously, through modes of replication and rectification, characteristically employing the dual idioms of sacred/profane, pure/impure, permitted/forbidden.[22] Skill in the strategic deployment of these relations requires complex specialized knowledge (rather than largely oral, familial knowledge), as well as the mastery of intricate modes of interpretation ranging from the technologies of divination to the devices of casuistry.[23]

Central to these "imperial" religious formations is a principle first enunciated by the so-called Pan-Babylonian school, who understood their early reading of cuneiform texts to reveal a worldview dominated by the equivalence "as above, so below."[24] Rather than the immediate and symmetrical reciprocities of the religion of "here," the religion of "there" postulates a distance between the realm of the gods and the human realm. This distance is a relative one. Unlike today's all-but-infinite cosmos, the ancient calculation of distance was a matter of hundreds of feet (the distance at which the smoke of sacrifice disappears from view). Nevertheless, this distance was mediated by structures such as kingship and temple, in which the "above" served, ideologically, as a template for the "below," in which a variety of human activities served to bring the "below" ever closer to the "above" through ritual works of repetition and, when breaches occurred, through ritual works of rectification.

This essentially imperial cosmology is concerned with defending both the center and the periphery. These are frequently first established as the result of a cosmogony through combat in which a new king of the gods overthrows the previous king, thereby gaining the right to reorganize the world according to his like. (Note that, despite many scholars' formulations, this is a movement not from chaos to order but rather from a previous system of order to a new system of order.) Typically, parts of the predecessor's cosmos are recycled and re-placed in the new order, thus introducing a potentially destabilizing element if the new or-

21. This complex has been best adumbrated by Paul Wheatley's work on "urban genesis," especially *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1971). See further the bibliography of Wheatley in Smith, *To Take Place,* 149 n. 16, as well as my comments on Wheatley, 50–54.

22. These three systems, while often parallel, ought not to be confused, as they are in the classic work by Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

23. See Smith, *Map Is Not Territory,* 70–72; idem, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown,* Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 48–49.

24. On the Pan-Babylonian school, see Smith, *Imagining Religion,* 23–29; idem, "Mythos und Geschichte," in Hans Peter Duerr, ed., *Alcheringa oder die beginnende Zeit: Studien zu Mythologie, Schamanismus und Religion* (Frankfurt: Qumran, 1983), 36–41.

der is not scrupulously maintained. (Another mode of destabilization is the possibility, inherent in royal combat, of a new challenger.) Following the victory and coronation of the king of the gods, through an essentially bureaucratic taxonomy, the various parts of the cosmos, both celestial and terrestrial, are assigned their stations, have their roles and honors established, their names pronounced, their powers placed, and their destinies fixed.[25] For human activity to be successful in achieving replication and rectification, the intricacies of this order must be known—a knowledge that implies both an initial difficulty of discovery and an evidence, once discovered, that is celebrated in genres ranging from wisdom texts to omens, from law-codes to mythic and historical narratives. In each of these kinds of texts, individually acquired insight is rendered into public discourse through the mediation of precedent.

Rather than commensality among an extended family with ordinary foodstuff, the central ritual of the religion of "there" is the sacrifice, a meal among unequals, often coded in complex hierarchies (as, for example, in the division of the corpse and the distribution of the meat), with at least one, usually sacerdotal, figure serving not as the presence but rather as the representative of the god(s), with concern for transporting the meat (itself not a usual item of diet) to the divine realm, which is "over there."[26] Sacrifice is primarily food for the god(s), but it becomes, as well, linked with complex systems of sacred/profane, purity/

25. This summarizes both the Divine Combat Myth and the Kingship in Heaven Myth, which are widely distributed throughout the Mediterranean. See, among others, C. Scott Littleton, "The 'Kingship in Heaven' Theme," in Jaan Puhvel, ed., *Myth and Law Among the Indo-Europeans* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 83–121; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); B. F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); H. R. Page, *The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion: A Study of Its Reflexes in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature,* VTSup, 65 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

26. I draw here on Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 32, and his valuable contrast between games and rituals: "Games thus appear to have a disjunctive effect. . . . Ritual, on the other hand, is the exact reverse; it conjoins, for it brings about a union (one might even say communion in this context) or in any case an organic relation between two initially separate groups. . . . [In ritual] there is an asymmetry which is postulated in advance between profane and sacred, faithful and officiating, dead and living, initiated and uninitiated, etc." Compare the view of sacrifice as communication in Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 97–98. I have presented an account of sacrifice in Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Domestication of Sacrifice," in R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, ed., *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation: Conversations Between W. Burkert, R. Girard, and J. Z. Smith* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 278–304. On the division of meat, see both Marcel Detienne, "Culinary Practices and the Spirit of Sacrifice," in Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, eds., *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 13, and J.-L. Durand, "Greek Animals: Toward a Topology of Edible Bodies," in ibid., 87–118.

impurity, permitted/forbidden. As such, sacrificial praxis invites learned exegesis and complex systematics unthinkable apart from writing. While I do not share the implications they draw, I commend the observation of some scholars that sacrifice is "as much a textual enterprise as one of actual practice; the sacrifice system begins to develop a level of significance independent, though not inseparable, from cultic practice."[27]

3. The Religion of "Anywhere"

At times more closely related to the familial model characteristic of the religions of "here," at other times closer to the imperial model characteristic of the religions of "there," there is a third pattern of religion, which takes many forms but has in common the element that it is tied to no particular place. It is, in the strict sense, "neither here nor there." It can be anywhere. In archaic or classical formations, religions of "anywhere" include religious clubs and other forms of associations, entrepreneurial religious figures (often depicted as wandering), and religious practitioners not officially recognized by centers of power.[28] In many cases, to use an old sociological distinction, they are associations or figures of status, but not of rank. What they offer are means of access to, or avoidance of, modes of culturally imagined divine power not encompassed by the religions of "here" and "there." At times they may imitate, at other times they may reverse, aspects of these two other dominant forms of religion.

What has interested me for much of my scholarly career is the fact that, throughout the Mediterranean world, in the period of late antiquity, these religions of "anywhere" rise to relative prominence, although the religions of "here" and "there" continue, often in revised forms.[29] Much energy by several generations of scholars has been devoted to accounting for this change.[30] While the explanations have been highly variegated, reflecting, no doubt, that we are treating with a multicausal phenomenon, I would lift out three elements as especially relevant to our theme: a new geography, a new cosmography, and a new polity.

27. G. A. Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings," in *ABD* 5:873. For a similar perception of what Anderson calls "sacrifice as a textual phenomenon," see Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice,* 16.

28. See, e.g., Walter Burkert, "Craft Versus Sect: The Problem of Orphics and Pythagoreans," in B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders, eds., *Self-Definition in the Graeco-Roman World,* Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, 3 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 1–22.

29. See note 9 above.

30. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory,* 143.

1. First, the New Geography

While there were experiments in imperialisms from Sumer on, and dislocations due to invasions or colonizations, there is a difference in disruptive scale resulting from the newer imperialisms ranging from the Persian and Macedonian to the Roman. An anthology of texts could be gathered that expresses both the positive and negative evaluations of displacement, of being a citizen of no place. But if, as for many, the extended family, the homeplace, as well as the burial place of the honored dead are no longer coextensive *topoi,* then the religion of "here" has been detached from its roots.

In such a situation, the religion of "here" must be transmuted in such a way as to overcome this dislocation. One solution will be sociological, the association as a socially constructed replacement for the family.[31] The other solution will be mythological. In these traditions dislocation is cosmologized by a new, vertical myth that overlies the horizontal reality (much as in Philo, where the terrestrial migrations of the Israelitic ancestors have been revalued as celestial ascents). In some forms, humans are depicted as dispersed, as exiled from their heavenly home, as having been mis-placed into bodies. Through death, or by undergoing rituals that are deathlike, individuals may ascend, back, to their true home, "on high," thus overcoming distance. Locale, having been dis-placed, is now re-placed.[32] These transformations give comparative advantage to religions of "anywhere."

2. Second, the New Cosmography

While not without elaboration, the archaic two-story cosmos (above/below) or three-story (above/earth/underworld) cosmos allowed for points of mediation between strata imagined as being relatively adjacent. Communication was largely unimpeded.[33] Each realm could have the other always in its sight. (Hence, archaic

31. See the important collection of studies in J. S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson, eds., *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1996), and the brilliant overview of the state of the question by R. S. Ascough, *What Are They Saying About the Formation of Pauline Churches?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998).

32. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory,* xii-xv, et passim.

33. The issue of the communication between the realms as well as the dilemma of the blockage of communication between the upper and lower worlds has led to J. Rudhardt's important revisionary understanding of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* in "À propos de 1'hymne homérique à Déméter," *Museum Helveticum* 35 (1978): 1–17, now available in a slightly abridged English translation in H. P. Foley, ed., *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 198–211. See a1so J. S. Clay, *The Politics of Olympus: Form*

structures such as covenant). Each displayed its appropriate order to the other, an order that was to be affirmed and replicated, an order that could be rectified if breached. The cosmos, as the Greek implies (Gk. *kosmos,* lit. "order"), was essentially good and beautiful because its elements were in their appropriate place. These were the essential presuppositions for the religions of "there."[34]

The new late antique cosmography, articulated from Eudoxus (390–340 B.C.E.) to Ptolemy (fl. 127–48 C.E.), proposed a far different picture. The earth was now conceived as a sphere, surrounded by the circular orbits of other planetary spheres, which either comprised or were transcended by divine realms.[35] In a common literary topos, the view back from the vast expanse of celestial space rendered the earth small; the human activities on its surface were seen as minuscule, as insignificant.[36] As the planets revolved around the earth, they spent much of their time period out of sight. We can't see them; they can't see us. What are they up to? Do they know what we're up to? How is the elevation of the food of sacrifice possible with such a remote and movable target? (The dilemma is not unlike that of the Houston Space Center which can fire a rocket only when there is a "window of opportunity.") Transcendence of earth, both as an experience and as a source of knowledge, becomes a goal—giving comparative advantage to a religion of "anywhere." (It is important, in the understanding of these traditions and their transcendental horizon, not to substitute the notion of "everywhere" for that of "anywhere.")

To give but one example: It is one thing to observe the movements of the heavenly bodies and discern from them knowledge both of the regularities of the cosmos and of the destinies of terrestrial affairs, the collection of which remains, especially in the vast Mesopotamian omen series, one of the chief intellectual achievements associated with the religions of "there." It is quite another matter to claim experience of having ascended to the stars or through the planetary spheres, and to assert one's kinship with them, in order either to obtain celestial knowledge directly or to press past them to reach even higher realms and even more hidden divine knowledge.

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and Meaning in the Major Homeric Hymns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 202–66, esp. 208–13, 219, 220–21, 256–57, 260–66.

34. Compare the essay by Jean Bottéro, "The Religious System," in *Mesopotamia,* 201–31, esp. 218–31.

35. See, among others, Martin P. Nilsson, "The New Conception of the Universe in Late Greek Paganism," *Eranos* 44 (1946): 20–27; cf. idem, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion: 2, Die hellenistische und römische Zeit,* 4th ed., Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, 5. Abt., 2. Teil (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), 702–11; idem, *Greek Piety* (New York: Norton, 1969), 96–103.

36. See the treatment of this topos in E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety,* The Wiles Lectures, 1963 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 7–8.

3. Third, the New Polity

The creation of new political ideologies, post-Alexander (356–323 B.C.E.), are the result of the total cessation of native kingship.[37] The unique, mediating role of the king was one of the foundations of the religion of "there." His removal from the scene was decentering. In some late antique traditions, the old forms of kingship became idealized objects of nostalgia, as in messianism. At the same time, archaic combat myths were re-visioned as resistance myths to foreign kings, resulting in new religious formations such as apocalypticism and millenarianism.[38] Other traditions appear to have pressed the logic of archaic sacred kingship even further. If the king was the image of the deity, and if the wrong king, that is to say, the foreign or illegitimate king, now sat on the throne, then there must be a wrong, or counterfeit, king of the gods on high, a concomitant variation explored in gnosticizing reinterpretations of archaic traditions.[39]

The new mode of kingship, post-Alexander, was not only foreign, it was remote. Positively, as Eric Petersen has suggested, the model of the distant emperor, mediated by satraps, governors, or vassal kings, played a significant role in the elaboration of the new formations of monotheism, along with the king-god's ubiquitous attendant subordinate and secondary divinities, principalities, and powers.[40] All of these actors were capable of being readily assimilated to the new, expanded cosmography. Similarly, there could be claimed experiences of celestial journeys to, or the receipt of messages from, the true king of the gods, who was above, or antagonistic to, the king-god of this world.[41]

In illustrating the effects of these three new elements, I have largely confined myself to examples from the mythological response to the new geography, cosmog-

37. See, in general, S. K. Eddy, *The King Is Dead: Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism, 334–31 B.C.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), a pioneering work on the consequences of the cessation of native kingship.

38. On these themes, see Smith, *Map Is Not Territory,* 67–87. For the Egyptian materials there cited, see now the superb treatment by D. Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity,* Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 159–238.

39. I have persistently maintained that rather than thinking of "gnosticism" as a separate religious entity, it should be viewed as a structural possibility within religious traditions, analogous to categories such as mysticism or asceticism, and needs to be seen in relation to exegetical, reinterpretative practices. The wrong-king/wrong-god element discussed in the text should be compared to M. A. Williams's category of "biblical demiurgical" in his important work *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 51–53, et passim.

40. E. Petersen, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935).

41. Cf. Forsyth, *Old Enemy.*

raphy, and polity. Let me turn, now, to the social, with respect to two formations, one of which, while common, does not appear to figure largely in this volume, that of associations. The other, which is discussed at length elsewhere in this collection, is magic. In so doing, I will highlight reconfigurations and reinterpretations of elements characteristic of the religions of "here" and "there."

Associations, as religions of "anywhere," may be understood primarily as replacements of the religion of "here" in modes appropriate to the new world order. They do so, at least in part, by adapting elements more characteristic of the religions of "there." Responding to the experience of dislocation, they provide a new, predominantly urban, social location. Some were formed first as immigrant societies, initially retaining strong bonds to the homeplace. Others associate around divine figures, gods and goddesses, usually, but not exclusively, of the sort more characteristic of the civic and state religions of "there." The archaic domestic preoccupation with familial relations of inclusion/exclusion is here translated into a concern for boundaries that enclose a restricted and tested membership. While entire households may join such a club, the primary relations are between individuals as members of a fictive kin group, addressing one another as "brother" and "sister." This apparent egalitarianism stands in notable contrast to the hierarchical ordering of members, bearing an often bewildering diversity of titles, some of which echo those in the highly organized bureaucracy of the religions of "there."[42] Kinship is forged by rituals of acceptance, of initiation and expulsion, as well as legalistically by the formal acceptance of rules, the taking of oaths, the paying of dues. In this sense, group identity is not genealogical, but, rather, contractual. Indeed, some groups are chartered by the state; all are subject, at least in principle, to government regulation.[43]

The meal shared by these "brothers" and "sisters" continues to be the prime repetitive ritual for expressing their relations, now undertaken in the setting of a privately owned cult place or burial site, at times with hieratic practices that reflect priestly concerns characteristic of the religions of "there" (as, for example, in the Pharisaic *havurah*).[44]

In some associations, rather than forgetfulness representing a threat to the maintenance of the community, disclosure now menaces the group. Secrecy, with respect to those outside, has become an important value.

42. See Th. Schmeller, *Hierarchie und Egalität: Eine sozial-geschichtliche Untersuchung paulinischer Gemeinden und griechisch-römischer Vereine,* Stuttgarter Bibelstudien, 162 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1995).

43. See the literature cited in note 31 above.

44. Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 83–90.

Finally, I should note that these associations have the potential of working at cross-purposes to the older conceptualizations of family in the religions of "here," as when differing memberships divide genealogical siblings while, at the same time, establishing new, intimate relations and loyalties among their socially created fellow "brothers" and "sisters."

I have written elsewhere on the problematics of magic, and shall, therefore, not rehearse that here.[45] For the purposes of this essay, it is sufficient only to note that late antique magic, often conceptualized as a religion of "anywhere," represents, among other things, a fascinating and creative combination and re-formation of elements characteristic of both the religion of "here" and of "there." Like the religion of "here," its prime space is domestic, its rituals are small-scale. It may seek relations with the dead, or with exceedingly local divinities. But, just as frequently, it treats with the sorts of deities more commonly associated with the religions of "there." In either case, it does so in the insistent idiom of oracle and sacrifice. Finally, as is characteristic of the religions of "there," magic is a learned profession, presupposing both written texts and complex techniques for their interpretation.[46]

From another perspective, however, late antique magic is primarily a religion of "anywhere." As is the case with associations, it deploys ritual distinctions, especially initiations, with a highly developed sense of inclusion/exclusion. As with associations, its greatest threat is the divulging of its secrets.[47] As is characteristic of religions of "anywhere," it places great value on direct experience of transcendent beings, both as a demonstration of power and as a means of gaining esoteric knowledge.

In the vast panorama of religions this volume encompasses, it is possible to propose a final taxonomic generalization, one that depends on contrastive worldviews and their attendant soteriologies. We may distinguish between religions of "sanctification," which celebrate the present ordered world, having as their goal its maintenance and repair, and religions of "salvation," which seek to escape the structures and strictures of this world through activities having as their goal a con-

45. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory,* 172–89; idem, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," in *ANRW* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), 16.1:425–39; idem, "Trading Places," in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 129 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 13–27.

46. Hans Dieter Betz, "The Formation of Authoritative Tradition in the Greek Magical Papyri," in Meyer and Sanders, *Self-Definition in the Graeco-Roman World,* 161–70.

47. See, among others, Hans Dieter Betz, "Secrecy in the Greek Magical Papyri," in Hans G. Kippenberg and G. G. Stroumsa, eds., *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions,* Numen Book Series, 65 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 153–75.

stant working towards transcendence. While perhaps having an apparent affinity with one or the other, the religions of "here," "there," and "anywhere," have been adapted to either worldview. The contestations, permutations, and combinations generated by these two ethoi, whether within or between any particular tradition, constitute what we take to be the history of religions.

PART II

Prayer, Magic, and Ritual

2

Thessalos of Tralles and Cultural Exchange

Ian Moyer

Over the last two decades, scholarship on "magic" in the ancient world has seen a recurrent debate over the definition of the word, its validity as a category, and its applicability to the beliefs and practices of different cultures, especially when "magic" is defined as a negative counterpart to "religion." Scholars have struggled to free themselves of inherited preconceptions in describing and analyzing various phenomena in antiquity to which the conventional etic[1] term "magic" is applied, recognizing that distinctions derived from the evolutionary or oppositional schemes of early folklore and anthropology are not necessarily those indigenous to a given culture.[2] Recently, this question of emic

I would like to thank, for an excellent conference, Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler; for forbearance as I discuss their arguments, Jonathan Z. Smith and Robert Kriech Ritner; for helpful comments and criticism, the editors of this volume as well as Christopher Faraone, Richard Gordon, and Alex Stevens (any remaining faults, of course, are my own); and for first drawing my attention to Thessalos's fascinating treatise on astrological botany, Keith Bradley.

1. The etic (as opposed to emic) approach to language and culture was defined by Kenneth L. Pike (*Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior,* pt. 1, preliminary ed. [Glendale, Calif.: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1954]) as one in which the scholar attempts to describe, classify, and analyze the data of a particular language and culture with reference to a generalized comparative scheme derived in advance of the study of that language and culture. The emic approach, by contrast, is an internal view of the particular elements of a language or culture as they relate to one another.

2. This is not the place to rehearse these arguments, and in any case that task has been admirably accomplished elsewhere. Fritz Graf (*Magic in the Ancient World,* trans. Franklin Philip [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997], 8–19, gives a clear and concise summary of the main lines of scholarship on Graeco-Roman magic and the debate on definitions of magic, though he argues (pp. 20–27) that the oppositions of the Frazerian triad "magic-religion-science" do have a legitimate basis in Graeco-Roman understandings of magic and religion. Christopher A. Faraone (*Ancient Greek Love Magic* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999], 16–18) gives another brief overview and further references. Other especially significant recent contributions to the discussion are the volume edited by Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink, *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), and essays by Alan F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition," in Roelof van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 349–75; H. S. Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion," *Nu-*

and etic definitions of "magic" has been at the center of a disagreement in print between Jonathan Z. Smith and Robert Kriech Ritner, involving the interpretation of a treatise on astrological botany attributed to the Greek physician Thessalos of Tralles.[3] The prologue to this treatise includes the marvelous tale of Thessalos's search for magical knowledge, which ends in Thebes with an Egyptian priest and a divine revelation. At issue is whether the acquisition of the revelation represents the novel and creative reinterpretations of archaic practice typical of late antique *magic* or the continuity of traditional Egyptian *religion*. These conflicting readings reflect differing heuristic strategies, but a reconciliation is possible, since the question of magic versus religion is not solely one of scholarly distinctions. It is embedded in the text itself. The Thessalos prologue is a narrative of cross-cultural exchange and commoditization, in which religious rites and discourse belonging to traditional Egyptian civilization are transformed and given a new "magical" value.

Since the first publication of this text in 1878, historians and scholars of religion have recognized it as an important document for understanding the religious life of late antiquity.[4] Departing from the evolutionary schemes of earlier studies such as those by A. D. Nock and A. J. Festugière,[5] who saw the text as evidence of incipient spiritualization in a decadent paganism, Smith has used the Thessalos narrative to explore a shift from *locative* to *utopian* modes of religious practice typical of the Hellenistic world.[6] In the wake of Alexander's conquests (334–324 B.C.E.), the almost total cessation of native kingship in the Near East

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men 38 (1991): 177–97; and Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 129 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 13–27.

3. The debate is between the position outlined by Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions,* Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, 23 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), and the criticisms of Robert Kriech Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 219–20, and "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and Their Religious Context," in *ANRW* II 18.5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 3356–58.

4. Smith (*Map Is Not Territory,* 172) described Thessalos's autobiographical account as "one of the most precious texts for an understanding of the religious life of Late Antiquity." For the publication history of the text, see Smith, *Map Is Not Territory,* 172–74, with his notes and references. The various versions are assembled by H.-V. Friedrich, ed., *Thessalos von Tralles* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1968); all subsequent references are to the sections and page numbers of this edition.

5. A. D. Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 108–9; A. J. Festugière, "L'expérience religieuse du médecin Thessalos," *RB* 48 (1939): 45–54; idem, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste I: L'astrologie et les sciences occultés,* 3d ed. (Paris: Librairie LeCoffre, 1950), 56–59.

6. A convenient summary of this theory is found in Smith, *Map Is Not Territory,* xi–xv, and the themes of his argument are treated in more detail in chapters 4–9 of the same work, and pp. 293, 308–9. It is especially important to note that Smith's scheme of a shift from *locative* to *utopian* modes is in no way intended to be construed as an evolution from one pattern of religious mentality to another. As Smith himself writes, "They are not to be identified with any particular culture at any par-

and Egypt led to radical reinterpretations of traditional religions. The locative religious formations characterized by strong ties to a particular homeland and to a temple or cult house in which the god dwelt or manifested himself, and by ideologies of sacred kingship and priesthood, were rivaled by diasporic and utopian formations in which access to the divine could be found anywhere, transcendence became central, and the primary operative was the mobile religious entrepreneur, the holy man, or the magician. The essential quality of Thessalos's revelation, as Smith has argued, is that it is not found in the locative context of the archaic temple with the authorization of sacred kingship, but is procured in a more temporary location with the assistance of the late antique magician.

Ritner's criticisms,[7] however, have created some difficulties for Smith's argument. From Ritner's Egyptological perspective, the rite that gained Thessalos his interview with a god was conducted by a priest practiced in traditional modes of religious observation, not by an itinerant magician. The text itself, however, clearly describes the object of Thessalos's quest as "some sort of magical operation" (Gk. τι τῆς μαγικῆς ἐνεργείας). Several scholars have argued that "magic" (Gk. μαγέια, Lat. *magia*) in the Hellenistic and Roman world was often a polemical category—that "their" religion was magic,[8] but in Thessalos's narrative, Egyptian "magic" is clearly desirable, and this differential valuation provokes cross-cultural exchange. A revelation produced by means of an Egyptian religious ritual becomes an exchange item, desired by a wandering Greek and supplied by a Theban priest.

As he describes his adventure, Thessalos reveals an awareness of similar narratives current in literature of the period, which record the tribulations of a hero passing from one fount of wisdom to another and eventually arriving at his goal.[9] Thessalos's tale takes the form of a letter addressed to the Roman emperor (either

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ticular time. They remain coeval possibilities which may be appropriated whenever and wherever they correspond to man's experience of the world" (309).

7. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire," 3356–58.

8. See, e.g., Segal, "Hellenistic Magic," and Richard Gordon, "Aelian's Peony: The Location of Magic in the Graeco-Roman Tradition," *Comparative Criticism* 9 (1987): 59–95. Segal has argued that the application of the term "magic" based on presumed universal characteristics is problematical in the Hellenistic period. A universalizing definition "creates an ideal type which can only be approximated by a specific occurrence." Moreover, "magical" vocabulary was often applied by religious authorities to activities and groups perceived as threatening to the social order ("Hellenistic Magic," 349–51). As Gordon has pointed out, one approach to the position of magic in Graeco-Roman society was to marginalize it as a foreign intrusion into the culture. In Pliny's discussion of magic in the *Natural History,* for example, he follows a long tradition in attributing the origin of magic to Persia, whence it migrated into Greece and entered the Graeco-Roman world (Pliny, *Natural History* 30.3–13).

9. Examples of this sort of tale are found in Plutarch *Moralia* 410A–B, 421A–B; Justin *Dialogue with Trypho* 1–8; Harpocration *Cyranides* prologue, lines 30–68, in Dimitris Kaimakis, ed., *Die Kyraniden* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1976), 15–17. More comical versions are found in Lucian *Menippus;* (Ps.)-Lucian *Onos;* and Apuleius *Metamorphoses*. For parallels to this sort of spiri-

Claudius or Nero), in which he claims to have outstripped all others in the search for the miraculous.[10] According to this epistolary prologue, he set out from his home in Asia Minor with a large amount of money and devoted himself to the study of philosophy and medicine in Alexandria. After assiduously following the lectures of theoretical physicians (Gk. διαλεκτικῶν ἰατρῶν), he made the rounds of the libraries in preparation for his departure. There he came upon a book attributed to the legendary Egyptian king and astrologer Nechepso. It contained a collection of miraculous remedies based on the sympathies of plants and stones with signs of the zodiac and promised amazing results to the bearer of its arcane knowledge.[11]

Unfortunately, Thessalos's attempt to put the remedies of Nechepso into practice ended in complete failure—a failure made worse by a hasty proclamation of his discovery to friends and relations in Asia Minor. Rather than face the ridicule of his Alexandrian colleagues or the disappointed expectations of the folks back home, he consigned himself to wandering in Egypt until he could accomplish something in accordance with his rash promises. Eventually he arrived in the Upper Egyptian city of Thebes (Diospolis), where—in order to discover magical powers—he tried to ingratiate himself with the priests, most of whom were scandalized at his propositions:

> And so I came to Diospolis—the oldest city of Egypt, containing many temples—and spent some time there. For there were many learned high priests <there> and <elders> adorned with subtle learning. As time passed and my friendship with them grew, I inquired if some sort of magical operation was still preserved. Though the majority of them, I observed, were indignant at my rashness in such undertakings,[12] I was not shaken from friendship with one of them, who could be trusted because of the impres-

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tual quest in search of the alien wisdom of Egypt, see the Ps.-Clementine *Recognitions,* and Lucian *Philopseudes* 34–36. A native Egyptian parallel is found in the story of Setne Khamwas and Naneferkaptah preserved in a Demotic papyrus (P. Cairo 30646) of the Ptolemaic period (323–30 B.C.E.); for an English translation, see Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume III: The Late Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 127–37.

10. "(1) . . . Many in their lives have tried, august Caesar, to deliver many marvelous things, and not a one has been able to bring his undertakings to completion, owing to the darkness of fate pressing upon their thoughts, but I believe I alone of the men of this age have been able to accomplish something marvelous [and known to few]." (Gk. Πολλῶν ἐπιχειρησάντων ἐν τῷ βίῳ, Σεβαστὲ Καῖσαρ, παραδοῦναι πολλὰ παράδοξα, μηδενὸς πρὸς τέλος ἀγαγεῖν τὰς ἐπαγγελίας δυνηθέντος διὰ τὸν <ἀπὸ> τῆς εἱμαρμένης ταῖς διανοίαις αὐτῶν ἐπικείμενον ξόφον, μόνος δοκῶ τῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος ἀνθρώπων πεποιηκέναι τι παράδοξον <καὶ ὀλίγοις γνωστόν>) Thessalos *proem.* 1 (Friedrich, *Thessalos von Tralles,* 45).

11. Thessalos *proem.* 3–6 (Friedrich, *Thessalos von Tralles,* 45–47).

12. The translation of this phrase poses some difficulty. I have more or less followed Festugière ("L'expérience religieuse," 60), who translated the phrase ἐπαγγελίας ὁμοίας τῇ προπετείᾳ μου <ἐπι>

> siveness of his character and the extent of his age. This man professed to have the ability to perform direct divination by means of a bowl.[13]

Thessalos drew aside this one priest who did not reject him outright. In a secluded grove away from the city, the desperate Greek implored the Theban priest to assist him with his predicament. The priest agreed, and at his bidding, Thessalos maintained purity for three days, then met the priest at dawn on the third day—having first concealed on his person a papyrus and some ink. The priest led Thessalos to a pure house he had prepared, and asked the Greek, with whom would he like to converse—some spirit of the dead or a god? Thessalos then revealed his intentions: to speak one-on-one (Gk. μόμῳ μοι πρὸς μόνον ὁμιλεῖν) with the god Asclepius (i.e., Egyptian Imhotep).[14] The priest was visibly displeased. Nevertheless, he had promised, and so he carried out the rite. He seated Thessalos before the place where the god was to appear, summoned Asclepius/Imhotep with his ineffable names,[15] and left the physician to question the god about the remedies of Nechepso. Soon the god appeared in a spectacular vision and spoke to Thessalos. As it turns out, the wisdom of King Nechepso was limited, and required supplementary knowledge of the correct times at which to harvest the plants—knowledge acquired directly from Asclepius himself and (ostensibly) forming the matter of the treatise that follows.

The insufficiency of Nechepso's treatise and its replacement by the direct "magical" revelation achieved by Thessalos are central to Smith's argument that this text represents a shift from *locative* to *utopian* modes of accessing the divine. In the world after Alexander's conquests, where native kingship had been displaced in so many territories, the divinely ordained king was no longer a sufficient guar-

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φερόντων as "s'indignaient de ma témérité à concevoir de telles espérances," considering the construction a variant of φέρειν with an adverb χαλεπῶς, for example, which I have supplied in the English translation, though it does not appear in Friedrich's text, and the dative case. Cf. *LSJ,* s.v. φέρω III.2. Franz Cumont ("Écrits hermétiques," *RP* 42 [1918]: 85–108) seems to have favored the restoration [ἐπι]φερόντων, translating "reprochent." In any case, some such solution must be accepted, since it is evident that the priests reacted negatively to Thessalos's inquiries.

13. (12) Γενόμενος οὖν ἐν Διὸς πόλει—ἀρχαιοτάτην <λέγω> τῆς Αἰγύπτου πόλιν καὶ πολλὰ ἱερὰ ἔχουσαν—διέτριβον αὐτοθι· ἦσαν γὰρ <ἐκεῖ> καὶ ἀρχιερεῖς φιλόλογοι καὶ <γέροντες> ποικίλοις κεκοσμημένοι μαθήμασιν. (13) προβαίνοντος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου καὶ τῆς πρὸς αὐτούς μοι φιλίας μᾶλλον αὐξανομένης, ἐπυνθανόμην, εἰ τι τῆς μαγικῆς ἐνεργείας σῴζεται. καὶ τῶν μὲν πλειόνων ἐπαγγελίας ὁμοίας τῇ προπετείᾳ μου φερόντων κατέγνων· (14) ἑνὸς δέ τινος διὰ τὸ (οὐ) σοβαρὸν τῶν ἠθῶν καὶ τὸ τῆς ἡλικίας μέτρον πιστευθῆναι δυναμένου οὐκ ἀνεχαιτίσθην τῆς φιλίας. ἐπηγγείλατο δὲ οὗτος αὐτοπτικὴν ἔχειν λεκάνης ἐνέργειαν. Thessalos *proem.* 12–14 (Friedrich, *Thessalos von Tralles,* 49–51).

14. Thessalos *proem.* 22 (Friedrich, *Thessalos von Tralles,* 53).

15. Many of the words and phrases in the Greek magical papyri described originally by Karl Preisendanz as *"Zauberworte"* have, on closer examination, turned out to be transcriptions of Egyptian words or divine names; see Ritner's notes in Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells,* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

antor of supreme knowledge.[16] But the pseudonymous status of the astrologer-king Nechepso complicates the picture. The earliest treatises on astrology that went under his name, often with that of Petosiris, are generally agreed to have been written during the second century B.C.E. in Ptolemaic Egypt.[17] The fragments preserved in various sources often refer to him as "the king,"[18] and yet the exact royal identity of the astrologer is uncertain. As several scholars have noted, the recension of Manetho's dynastic list in Julius Africanus does include a Nechepso among the forerunners of the (Saïte) twenty-sixth dynasty (664–525 B.C.E.), but there is little independent evidence confirming the existence of such a king.[19] More likely is that "Nechepso" is a version of the name of the well-known Saïte king Necho II with the addition of the epithet "the king" [Eg. *pȝ (n)swt*]. The epithet may have been added when a work on divination or astrology was attributed to his authorship in order to clarify the identification of the treatise with the king.[20] In any case, the name Nechepso is clearly linked with the Saïte dynasty, a period of great cultural revival in Egypt preceding the conquest by the Persian king Cambyses in 525 B.C.E.[21] Since astrology was in reality adopted during the Achaemenid Persian period (525–404 B.C.E.),[22] the attempt to beget Egyptian astrology on a Saïte figure is undoubtedly a native Egyptian attempt to claim a fictitious cultural and

16. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory,* 185–89.

17. P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria,* 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 1:437, who follows Wilhelm Kroll, ed., *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1894–1972), 16.2160–67.

18. E.g., Firmicus Maternus 4.22.2: "Nechepso, iustissimus Aegypti imperator et astrologus valde bonus" (Nechepso, the most just ruler of Egypt and an exceedingly good astrologer); he is also sometimes described simply as "the king," e.g., Vettius Valens 3.16: ὁ γὰρ βασιλεὺς τοῦ πρώτου κλίμακος μόνας τὰς ἀναφορὰς ἐδήλωσεν (For the king demonstrated the risings of the first latitude only). Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria,* 2:630–31 nn. 487, 490, 491.

19. W. G. Waddell, trans., *Manetho,* Loeb Classical Library 350 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940), frags. 68–69; J. D. Ray ("Pharaoh Nechepso," *JEA* 60 [1974]: 255–56) has suggested that Nechepso is identical with that person found in an Egyptian inscription interpreted by W. M. Flinders Petrie as reading *Ny-kȝ.w-bȝ.* Ray, however, proposes that the name's final hieroglyph, a ram (*bȝ*—Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglpyhs,* 3d ed. [Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1998], 459, E10), was later read as *pȝ sr,* resulting in the Greek transcription Νεχέψω. Rolf Krauss and Gerhardt Fecht, "Necho II. alias Nechepso," *Göttinger Miszellen* 42 [1981]: 49–60, dispute this interpretation.

20. This is the argument of Krauss and Fecht ("Necho II. alias Nechepso"), who also note that Eusebius's version of the Manethonian king list equates Nechepso and Necho II and that Necheus is a variant of the name Nechepso in the astrological texts.

21. On the cultural renaissance of Late Period Egypt, see Helmut Brunner, "Zum Verständnis der archaisierenden Tendenzen in der ägyptischen Spätzeit," *Saeculum* 21 (1970): 150–61; István Nagy, "Remarques sur le souci d'archaïsme en Égypte à l'époque Saïte," *Acta Antiqua* 21 (1973): 53–64; and Alan B. Lloyd, "The Late Period," in Bruce G. Trigger et al., eds., *Ancient Egypt: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

22. A crucial study in this regard is Richard A. Parker, *A Vienna Demotic Papyrus on Eclipse- and Lunar-Omina,* Brown Egyptological Studies 2 (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1959).

intellectual primacy in the science of astrology during the second century—almost two hundred years after the hated Persian domination had been ended by Alexander the Great and replaced by the Macedonian dynasty of the Ptolemies. The astrological tradition of Nechepso is, therefore, a product of Hellenistic political configurations just as much as is Thessalos's text.

It is this Hellenistic Egyptian literary tradition, discovered in the urban, Lower Egyptian, and largely Greek context of Alexandria, that disappoints Thessalos's expectations, and it is no coincidence that the search for knowledge turns toward the south, toward Upper Egypt. In the passage from Alexandria to Thebes, Thessalos's narrative invokes a geography of cultural authenticity. Upper Egypt was in many respects "more Egyptian" than the delta and Fayyum regions, which had been more thoroughly penetrated by Greek settlers in the Ptolemaic period. Studies of ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt have detected a general tendency toward adopting Egyptian names and language among Greek settlers in the predominantly Egyptian milieu of Upper Egypt.[23] Thebes itself was the center of several native Egyptian revolts in the second and first centuries B.C.E., one of which resulted in a twenty-year period of revived pharaonic rule over the Thebaïd.[24] The great seat of the god Amun was long a focus of native resistance to foreign rule and the preservation of cultural identity. Thessalos expressly describes Thebes as "the oldest city of Egypt, containing many temples," and observes that "there were many learned high priests <there> and <elders> adorned with subtle learning."[25] A couple of centuries after Thessalos's visit, Thebes does indeed seem to have been a center in which traditional magico-religious knowledge was preserved. The Anastasi papyri, which constitute the bulk of the ritual materials known as the Greek and Demotic magical papyri, are Theban in origin.[26] This later reputation of Thebes

23. Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt Under Roman Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), reprinted as American Society of Papyrologists Classics in Papyrology, vol. 1 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1999), 155; Koen Goudriaan, *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt,* Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology 5 (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1988), 91.

24. The Theban dynasty of Haronnophris and Chaonnophris (205–186 B.C.E.) is treated by P. W. Pestman, "Haronnophris and Chaonnophris: Two Indigenous Pharaohs in Ptolemaic Egypt (205–186 B.C.)," in S. P. Vleeming, ed., *Hundred-Gated Thebes: Acts of a Colloquium on Thebes and the Theban Area in the Graeco-Roman Period,* Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava 27 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995). Subsequent revolts were led by Petosiris in 164 and Harsiesis in 130 B.C.E. See Eric G. Turner, "Ptolemaic Egypt," in F. W. Walbank et al., eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History,* vol. 7, pt. 1, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 162; D. J. Thompson, "Egypt, 146–31 B.C.," in J. A. Crook, A. Lintott, and E. Rawson, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History,* vol. 9, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 313. According to Pausanias 1.9.3, a final Theban revolt against the Ptolemies in 88 B.C.E. resulted in considerable damage to the city. Thompson, "Egypt, 146–31 B.C.," 316–17.

25. Thessalos, *proem.* 12. See note 13 above.

26. See W. J. Tait, "Theban Magic," in Vleeming, *Hundred-Gated Thebes,* and Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (repr., Princeton: Princeton

was, it seems, already established in Thessalos's day. The city serves in his narrative as the geographic and cultural location in which revelation is to be found. The move from Hellenized Alexandria to the tradition and authenticity of the Theban milieu is as significant as the displacement of the astrologer-king Nechepso by direct divine revelation.

When Thessalos arrived in this religious center, he attempted to befriend the learned Theban priests in order to seek his objective, and as time went on, he made his intentions clear. He asked them whether "some sort of magical operation was still preserved."[27] The priests' reaction to Thessalos's inquiry has been one of the focal points of debate over the interpretation of this text. Smith has suggested that the reaction of the priests to Thessalos's propositions derived from a lost faith in the continued efficacy of traditional ritual powers.[28] This interpretation of the admittedly difficult Greek phrase describing the priests' reaction[29] seems to put too much weight on a fourteenth-century Latin translation, which, though a century earlier than the best Greek manuscripts, is a very loose approximation of the Greek. The Latin phrase *et quidam eorum faciebant ridiculum de me* ("and some of them mocked me") is clearly a gloss that garbles the rather more obscure Greek.[30] It seems unlikely that the priests were ridiculing Thessalos for his continued belief in the extinct power of magic. The traditional religious and magical practice of Egypt that Thessalos encountered in Thebes, though in transformation, was not yet a moribund and arid shell of its former self. A number of documentary papyri relating to the regulation of native Egyptian priests demonstrate that they

University Press, 1993), 168–76. Janet H. Johnson ("The Dialect of the Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden," in J. H. Johnson and E. F. Wente, eds., *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes,* Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 39 [Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1976]) concludes on the basis of Demotic orthography and morphology and the dialect of Coptic glosses that the Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden (*PDM* xiv) was indeed written in the Theban area. Fowden (*Egyptian Hermes,* 173) links the Theban magical archive, the alchemical papyri of Leiden and Stockholm (P. Leid. x/1 397; P. Holm), and the Nag Hammadi Gnostic library as products of an Upper Egyptian milieu related to Hermetism.

27. For the translation of τι τῆς μαγικῆς ἐνεργείας as "magical operation" (i.e., rather than "power"), see *LSJ,* s.v. ἐνέργεια I.2, and cf. the translation of *PGM* IV.159 in Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri,* 40: "magical procedure."

28. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory,* 179.

29. See note 13 above.

30. Thessalos *proem.* 13 (Friedrich, *Thessalos von Tralles,* 50). Though Friedrich and others have used the Latin MS (Codex Montepessulanus fac. med. 277) to provide restorations, elsewhere it is in general more abbreviated than the Greek, and especially here. Smith (*Map Is Not Territory,* 179 n. 33), however, considers this an apt paraphrase. He also emphasizes that the priest who comes to Thessalos's aid "gives Thessalos the 'assurance' (a term which makes sense only if the interpretation of Thessalos' audacity just offered be accepted) that he has the power to produce a vision." At Thessalos *proem.* 14, however, the term is simply ἐπηγγείλατο, "professed." Perhaps the term παρηγορήσας, "comforted, consoled," in *proem.* 18 is meant. There, however, the context is Thessalos's emotional appeal to the priest.

continued to exist and to function in Roman Egypt despite economic decline,[31] as did the temples serving as the focus of their activities. Indeed, there is even evidence of some building and refurbishment of temples at Dendera, Philae, and Kom Ombo into the third century.[32] Second-century literary discussions in Plutarch and Clement of Alexandria, moreover, portray the religion and priests of Egypt as still vital and active.[33] And as Ritner has pointed out, the elaborate collections of rites in temple inscriptions and in the third-century Demotic magical papyri are more than adequate testimony to continued belief in the efficacy of Egyptian "magic" (Eg. *ḥkꜣ*).[34]

Other scholars had previously proposed that the priests' indignation and unwillingness to help Thessalos are to be explained as fear of prosecution on charges of magic.[35] While it is true that Thessalos seeks τι τῆς μαγικῆς ἐνεργείας, it is doubtful whether Egyptian priests would have viewed the procedure by which Thessalos acquires a revelation as magical in the illicit and subversive sense.[36] A priest such as the one with whom Thessalos claims he dealt in Thebes would have produced this ritual within an entirely different cognitive framework, by virtue of the fact that he was still an Egyptian priest and that the rite he performed fell into a clearly defined sphere of traditional priestly activity.[37] Certain details of the performance confirm that the narrative draws attention to a realistic background of contemporary Egyptian religious practice. Thessalos's priest initially professed that he could procure a vision through lecanomancy (bowl divination). A number of

31. See, e.g., the texts discussed in Lewis, *Life in Egypt,* 90–94. For further evidence of the vitality of Egyptian religion under Roman rule, see also Robert Kriech Ritner, "Egypt Under Roman Rule: The Legacy of Ancient Egypt," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt,* vol. 1, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 9.

32. David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 199. On Egyptian temples as the focus of religious activity in the Roman period, see Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 37–82.

33. Plutarch *De Iside et Osiride;* Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* 6.4.35, 37, *Paedagogus* 3.2.4, *Protrepticus* 2.39.

34. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire," 3357, notes that the Egyptian concept of *ḥkꜣ* continued to be of religious importance in the Roman period. See also ibid., nn. 38 and 39.

35. Cumont, "Écrits hermétiques," 92, writes, "La plupart des prêtres lui reprochent de concevoir des espérances téméraires; car la magie était sous les Romains une science réprouvée, et l'exercice de cet art était sévèrement prohibé par les lois pénales." Cf. Festugière, "L'expérience religieuse," 60 n. 16; Charles Graux, "Lettre inédite d'Harpokration à un empereur publiée d'après un manuscrit de la Bibliotheca naçional de Madrid," *RP* 2 (1878): 67–68. Smith (*Map Is Not Territory,* 179) rejects this interpretation, though it has been revived by Ritner (see below).

36. As Ritner (*Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* 14–28) has shown, the Egyptian concept of "magic" (*ḥkꜣ,* Cop. ϩⲁⲕ) was an important divine attribute and a divinity itself in religious texts as early as the fifth dynasty. Magic in the Egyptian understanding was clearly not illicit.

37. As argued by Ritner, *Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* 219–20, and "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire," 3356–58.

such rituals, called "vessel inquiry" (Eg. *šn hn*), are preserved in the Demotic magical papyri.[38] When the appointed day arrived, however, Thessalos requested a direct interview with the god, face-to-face,[39] and in the description of the revelation that follows, there is no mention of a bowl.[40] In the Demotic magical papyri, such a rite, in which the god is seen in a direct vision, is usually called "god's arrival" (Eg. *pḥ-nṯr*),[41] a term not applied to "vessel inquiry." Thessalos's "magical" revelation of the god Asclepius was an Egyptian *pḥ-nṯr* and therefore belongs to a category of rites that from the New Kingdom onward consisted of oracular petitions to divine images. Such procedures were frequently used as a form of legal arbitration.[42] This was a normal religious method of making decisions and seeking the help or advice of a divinity in Egyptian religion. In the Ptolemaic *Instructions of 'Onchsheshonqy,* the term is mentioned in a context suggesting that even if used for personal inquiries, it was not particularly secretive or illicit: "You should ask three wise men about an individual matter if it is important enough for a *pḥ-nṯr* of the great god."[43] The *pḥ-nṯr* survives at least into the third century C.E. in the Demotic papyri just mentioned. There it is associated with a number of spells that resemble the praxis of Thessalos's revelation experience in the

38. *PDM* xiv.1–92, 239–95, 295–308, 395–427, 528–53, 627–35, 670–74, 695–700, 805–40, 841–50, 851–55, 1110–29.

39. Thessalos *proem.* 22: ἀνακρίνοντος δέ με τοῦ ἀρχιερέως, πότερον ψυχῇ νεκροῦ τινος ἢ θεῷ ὁμιλῆσαι βουλοίμην, ἔφην Ἀσκληπιῷ· εἶναι δὲ τὸ τέλειον τῆς χάριτος, εἰ μόνῳ μοι πρὸς μόνον ὁμιλεῖν ἐπιτρέψειεν. "When the priest asked me whether I wanted to converse with some spirit of the dead or a god, I said to him, 'With Asclepius,' and that it would be the perfection of his favor if he would permit me to converse one-on-one with the god."

40. Smith (*Map Is Not Territory,* 180–81) notes the inconsistency of this description with the professed practice of lecanomancy, since Thessalos is to sit opposite the "throne," where Asclepius is to appear: καθίσαι κελεύσας ἄντικρυς τοῦ θρόνου, εἰς ὃν ἔμελλεν ὁ θεὸς καθέζεσθαι . . . "Having instructed me to sit opposite the throne, in which the god was about to settle . . ." This need not be entirely inconsistent, in light of an oracle of Serapis described in *PGM* v.1–53, in which the god is described as manifesting himself in a throne (ἐὰν εἴπῃ ὅτι 'χρηματίζω' λέγε· 'εἰσερχέσθω ὁ θρόνος τοῦ θεοῦ' . . . κτλ—"If he says, 'I prophesy,' say, 'Let the throne of the god enter . . .'"), but the contrast may be significant for the reasons outlined below.

41. See Janet H. Johnson's original publication of the text, "Louvre E3229: A Demotic Magical Text," *Enchoria* 7 (1977): 55–97, which now appears in Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri,* as a *PDM* supplement. The term appears as follows: *PDM* xiv.117 (5/1), 145 (5/29), 170 (6/20), 176 (6/26), 232 (8/12), 828 (27/24), 833 (27/29), 836 (27/32) (numbers in parentheses refer to column and line number of *PDM* xiv as published in Francis Llewellyn Griffith and Herbert Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden,* 2 vols. [London: H. Grevel & Co., 1905]); *PDM* suppl. 130, 149, 168.

42. See Ritner, *Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* 214–20.

43. Eg. *ỉw=k šn rmṯ rḫ s-3 r wˁ.t mt.t ỉw=s m-šs n pḥ-nṯr nṯr ʾ3.* S. R. K. Glanville, ed., *The Instructions of 'Onchsheshonqy (British Museum Papyrus 10508),* Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri in the British Museum 2 (London: British Museum, 1955), col. 8, line 6. The translation is that of Ritner, *Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* 215; note also the alternate reading by H. J. Thissen, *Die Lehre des Anchscheschonqi (P. BM. 10508)* (Bonn: Habelt, 1984), 21.

use of purified houses and invocations based on the true names of the gods. In fact, two of the *pḥ-nṯr* spells are "god's arrivals" of Imhotep.[44] Given the priestly milieu of these texts, the *pḥ-nṯr* continues to be located firmly in a native religious tradition into the third century and cannot be viewed as illicit from the Egyptian cultural perspective.[45]

If, in fact, these rites were viewed as illicit, it could only have been from the perspective of Roman political and judicial authorities. Despite their own beliefs, Egyptian priests may have feared prosecution through Roman misunderstanding of their religious activities. Ritner has argued that Roman attitudes and legal restrictions drove certain Egyptian religious practices "underground," to be practiced away from the potential scrutiny of Roman officials. Adducing the evidence of the *pḥ-nṯr* spells in the Demotic papyri as well as Thessalos's consultation with the Egyptian priest, he has argued that these represent private, individualistic versions of traditional rites, whose apparent proliferation in the period of Roman rule was a reaction to Roman oppression of Egyptian religion.[46] *Pḥ-nṯr* rituals, formerly practiced openly, had been under attack by the time of the London and Leiden Demotic magical papyrus through the well-known decree of Q. Aemilius Saturninus, prefect of Egypt under Septimius Severus (193–211 c.e.).[47] This decree, issued in 199 c.e., prohibited divination throughout Egypt and referred specifically to native Egyptian practices, such as producing oracles through the procession of cult images (διὰ κωμασίας) or the return of written responses from the god (ἐνγράφων διαγραφῶν ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ θείου διδομένων).[48] A major category of Egyptian religious practices, therefore, apparently became illegal at least for a time.[49] The efficacy of such decrees is not beyond doubt, however, and the practice of processional oracles seems to have continued, though in decline, well after this legislation.[50] The decree against divination, moreover, was promulgated more than a century later than the dramatic date of Thessalos's visit to Egypt. Be-

44. *PDM* xiv.93–114, *PDM* suppl. 168–84.

45. Ritner further argues, *contra* Smith, that the rite might have taken place in a traditional temple context, since the word οἶκος (usually "house, home") could, like the Demotic *ʿ.wy,* signify a room in a temple as well as a profane dwelling. This seems unlikely, since the οἶκος was prepared and purified specifically for the rite, and parallels in the great Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden (*PDM* xiv) suggest that this was an Egyptian procedure for such rites at least by the third century. See, e.g., *PDM* xiv.117–21, 150–52.

46. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire," 3355–56.

47. P. Yale inv. 299; see George M. Paráglossou, "Circular from a Prefect: Sileat Omnibus Perpetuo Divinandi Curiositas," in A. E. Hanson, ed., *Collecteana Papyrologica* (Festschrift Youtie) (Bonn: Habelt, 1976), 261–74 and pl. 12, though his comments and translations for this portion of the text contain some errors.

48. On Roman-period "ticket" oracles, see Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 161–62.

49. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire," 3356.

50. See Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 153–56.

fore Saturninus's decree, Roman regulation of Egyptian religion, despite progressive economic and social restrictions on the Egyptian priesthood, does not seem to have included specific legislation against the practices of Egyptian religion.[51] Although there were occasional Roman imperial decrees against divination and sorcery, most were concerned with the city and politics of Rome,[52] as were outbursts of official hostility toward Egyptian religion in the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E.[53] Within Egypt, before the time of Saturninus, there appears to have been at least uneasy tolerance, despite the distant railing of critics like Juvenal.[54] Thus, there is little reason to suppose that Egyptian priests would in ordinary circumstances have feared prosecution for carrying on traditional religious practices.

An alternative suggestion is more likely. The shocked reaction of the priests in Thessalos's narrative was not intended to represent fear or disbelief so much as chagrin at the "audacity" (Gk. προπετεία) of an outsider who wished entrée into the besieged, yet still privileged, world of the Egyptian priesthood and its ritual secrets.[55] The text focuses attention on the difficulty and therefore the desirability of acquiring the power of Egyptian religion. An existing religious tendency to secrecy and esotericism, perhaps exaggerated by progressive Roman interference in the administration of Egyptian priesthoods and later the practice of Egyptian religion itself, would have made the priests unwilling to allow foreigners to witness the mysteries of their ritual practice. Certainly, the *PDM* spells that so closely resemble the praxis of Thessalos's revelation are written in a Demotic script that clearly belongs to an exclusive priestly milieu. They are consciously archaizing in their frequent use of hieratic, and some passages are written in an Egyptian cipher script; these measures were perhaps intended to protect the underground practice of Egyptian religion even from casual Egyptian knowledge.[56] But well before the historical conditions that produced the Demotic magical spells, there existed a priestly and cul-

51. See pages 43–44 of this essay.

52. See Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World,* 53–55.

53. In the fifties B.C.E., under the first triumvirate, various attempts at repressing the cult of the Egyptian gods were undertaken in Rome. See Michel Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie,* Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 22 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 365–77. Octavian opposed the worship of Egyptian gods in Rome by prohibiting Egyptian cults within the *pomerium,* a prohibition extended by Agrippa in 21 B.C.E. (Cassius Dio, *Histories* 53.2.4, 54.6.6). The most severe repression, resulting from the affair of Decius, came under Tiberius (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.65–80). All of these actions were localized in Rome.

54. Juvenal *Satire* 15, an attack on Egyptian religion and a fine example of Roman bigotry, dated to 127 C.E.

55. This interpretation was originally proposed by Ritner, *Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* 219 n. 1021, and "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire," 3357.

56. See, e.g., Janet H. Johnson, "Introduction to the Demotic Magical Papyri," in Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri,* lv, and Ritner's comments in "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire," 3356.

tural imperative to exclude outsiders from Egyptian sacred rites and spaces. A hieroglyphic and hieratic ritual papyrus of Persian or Ptolemaic date (P. Salt 825–B.M. 10051) contains a passage describing the temple scriptorium, or "House of Life" (Eg. *pr-ᶜnḫ*), as a place that must remain secret and closed to outsiders: "An Asiatic [a general term for foreigners from the East] must not enter it; he must not see it."[57] General injunctions to secrecy were inscribed on the doorposts of passages through which priests would enter the Ptolemaic temple of Edfu: "Do not reveal anything secret that you see in the temple" and "Be discreet concerning the appearance in his sacred throne; do not go out with what you have seen."[58] The latter is especially pertinent to Thessalos's vision of the enthroned Asclepius/Imhotep. An Egyptian text from one of the crypts of the Graeco-Roman temple of Hathor at Dendera reads, "No Phoenician should approach it, no Greek enter it, no Bedouin tread it; one should not see the magic [*ḥkꜣ*] within it."[59] This and other more or less contemporary expressions of the same sentiment provide the best cultural and historical explanation for the reaction of the Egyptian priests to Thessalos's inquiries. Their indignation and unwillingness to provide a direct revelation to the Greek doctor represent traditional Egyptian religious restrictions on entering sacred space and viewing manifestations of the divinity.

Though this evidence of Egyptian ritual antecedents and a traditional priestly tendency toward secrecy supplies the necessary cultural information to understand

57. P. Salt 825 (B.M. 10051) VII.5: *nn ᶜk ᶜꜣm r=f nn mꜣꜣ=f sw;* Philippe Derchain, *Le Papyrus Salt 825 (B.M. 10051), rituel pour la conservation de la vie en Égypte* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1965), 140, 168. In this regard, it is relevant to note that the downfall of Setne Khamwas in the tale of Setne and Naneferkaptah begins just after the phrase "there was no occupation on earth for Setne besides unrolling the scroll [of Thoth] and reading it to everyone" (*iw mn mtw Stne wp.t n pꜣ tꜣ m-sꜣ prḫ pꜣ ḏmᶜ mtw=f ᶜš n-im=f iir-ḥr rmṯ nb*). Setne I 4/38; for an English translation, see Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature,* 133.

58. The former text (*m pr ḥr ḫ.t mꜣꜣ=tn m sšt3 nb m r-pr*) is among the general injunctions on the south doorpost of the eastern entrance to the pronaos (Émile Chassinat, *Le temple d'Edfou,* vol. 3 [Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1928], 361.2; Maurice Alliot, *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées* (*BdÉ* 20, fasc. 2) [Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1949–1954], 185); and the latter (*ḫbs [. . .] tw ḥr mꜣꜣ m s.t=f ḏsr, tm pr ḥr mꜣꜣ=tn*) is among the texts on the north doorpost of the southeastern entrance to the courtyard (Émile Chassinat, *Le temple d'Edfou,* vol. 5 [Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1930], 343.13–344.11). For translations of both texts, see Dieter Kurth, *Treffpunkt der Götter: Inschriften aus dem Tempel des Horus von Edfu* (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1994), 148, 151. Another injunction to maintaining ritual secrecy is found in P. Salt 825 V.10–VI.2; Derchain, *Le Papyrus Salt 825,* 139. Other examples are also noted in Ritner, *Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* 203–4; see esp. the Esna inscription, p. 197, line 20, in Serge Sauneron, *Le temple d'Esna III,* Esna, vol. 3 (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1968), 12: "Do not permit any Asiatic to enter the temple whether he be old or young" (*m rdi ᶜk ᶜꜣm nb r ḫ.t-nṯr m wr m nḫn*).

59. Émile Chassinat, *Le temple de Dendara,* vol. 5 (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1952), p. 60, line 10–p. 61, line 2: *nn tkn s Fnḫw nn ᶜk Ḥꜣw-nbw nn nmt s ḥryw-šᶜ nn mꜣꜣ ḥkꜣ m-ḫnw=s.* In the same volume, see also p. 54, lines 6–8, and p. 97, line 4.

elements of the Thessalos narrative from an Egyptian perspective, it does not explain the nontraditional activity of the one priest who actually does perform the *pḥ-nṯr* rite for the Greek physician. The secrecy that surrounds Thessalos's solicitation of this one priest is neither traditional secrecy, aimed at protecting the rite from nonpriests and outsiders, nor avoidance of Roman prosecution. It is necessitated by the fact that the Egyptian priest is portrayed as transgressing an *Egyptian* restriction in order to provide a ritual service for a nonpriest and a *foreigner.* Thessalos and the priest must be circumspect because of the disapproval already expressed by the other priests. The ritual, and the revelation it is intended to procure, are therefore diverted from their usual place in the traditional structures of Egyptian religion for the purposes of a cross-cultural exchange. Thessalos's narrative of this process—the diversion of an Egyptian ritual revelation normally intended only for Egyptian priests, its commoditization, and its subsequent Graeco-Roman consumption and "repackaging" for further consumption—transforms the character and value of the rite.[60]

A word about "commoditization" as I apply the term in this context should explain how a ritual of revelation can become a commodity and how the transaction between the Egyptian priest and Thessalos can be compared to a commodity exchange. Commodities are conventionally understood as goods created for the purpose of exchange in a capitalist economy, but as Arjun Appadurai has argued, this unnecessarily limits the usefulness of the category to the historical conditions of modern capitalist societies. In discussing the processual dimension of commodity exchange, he includes in the category of "commodity" goods and services that enter a "commodity situation" through a variety of modes of exchange in different social and historical conditions.[61] By his definition "the commodity situation in the social life of any 'thing' [is] defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature."[62] In the case of the Thessalos narrative, the direct revelation the priest is capable of procuring enters a commodity situation when it is valued by the wandering Greek physician for its usefulness in clearing up his problem with the remedies of Nechepso. Though ritual and revelation are normally made inaccessible to nonpriests, and especially foreigners, in traditional religious observance, the priest agrees to provide Thessalos with his much desired revelation. The value of this rite for Thessalos is clear. Not only does he resolve his quest for revealed knowledge, but he gains for his treatise a prestige and authority that Graeco-Roman culture locates in the mysterious creeds and cults of Egypt.

60. Cf. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 181.

61. Arjun Appadurai, "Commodities and the Politics of Value," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

62. Ibid., 13.

Thessalos's voice controls the narrative and thus the representation of the exchange, so the advantages an Egyptian priest might gain through this process are difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, the social and economic position of the Egyptian priesthood in the Roman period may indicate a plausible motivation for the priest's actions. No cash is mentioned in the course of negotiations between Thessalos and the priest, but it should not be ruled out. Some Egyptian priests outside of Egypt, at least, were known to charge a great deal for their initiation services, if the faint criticisms of priestly venality in the final book of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* are to be credited.[63] Certainly, increasing pressures on the Egyptian priesthood at this time would provide sufficient motivation for some priests to seek supplementary income. In the first century of Roman rule, the priesthood was already subject to a number of economic and legal restrictions, especially under the *Gnomon of the Idios Logos*. This document summarizes various laws that came under the purview of a Roman administrator known as the *idios logos* (or "privy purse"), whose authority apparently included certain matters pertaining to Egyptian priests. Though priests were exempt from some taxes, eligibility for this exemption was progressively restricted, and the economic activities of priests were limited.[64] Priests were not permitted to take up any occupation or business other than temple service, and fines were levied against them for failing to wear their distinctive habit.[65] Priests were also inspected for suitability and lineage by Roman officials prior to the circumcision required of them.[66] Private individuals could not control or possess priestly rank.[67] There were restrictions on the inheritance of certain priestly offices and on the conditions under which they could be transferred.[68] The making of votive offerings (Gk. ἀναθήματα)[69] was punishable by a fine of five hundred drachmae. The nature and practice of native Egyptian religion, therefore, changed not only through occasional

63. Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.28; cf. John J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius's Golden Ass* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 219–23; Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 45.

64. On the change in circumstances for Egyptian priests in the transition from the Ptolemaic to the Roman era, see esp. Ritner, "Egypt Under Roman Rule," 4–10.

65. *Gnomon of the Idios Logos,* § 71: "It is not permitted for priests to be involved in any business other than the worship of the gods, or to go about wearing wool, or to sport hair, not even when they are away from the festival of the god." (Gk. Ἱερεῦο[ι] οὐκ ἐξὸν πρὸς ἀλ[λ]ῃ χρείᾳ εἶναι ἢ τῇ τῶν θεῶν [θρ]ησκείᾳ οὐδὲ ἐν ἐρεᾷ [ἐ]σθῆτι προι<έ>ναι ο[ὐ]δὲ κόμην φορεῖν ο[ὐ]δὲ ἐὰν [ξε]νωθῶσιν τοῦ θ[ε]ί[ο]υ ψάου.)

66. See Lewis, *Life in Egypt,* 92–93; the minutes of an inquiry concerning suitability for circumcision are found in Martin David and B. A. van Groningen, *Papyrological Primer,* 4th ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 128–29 (= *BGU* 347).

67. *Gnomon* § 96.

68. *Gnomon* §§ 77, 78, 80, 91, 92, 93.

69. *Gnomon* § 97. The original commentators (Emil Seckel, Wilhelm Schubart, and Woldemar Graf Uxkull-Gyllenband, *Der Gnomon des Idios Logos,* 2 vols. [Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhand-

acts of legislation and the ideological constraints concomitant with foreign rule but also through the Roman fiscal administration of the priesthood.[70] Thessalos, moreover, traveled to Alexandria with a "large amount of money" (Gk. μετὰ συχνοῦ ἀργυρίου—*proem.* 4), intending to get a good education, and yet no mention is made of the payments his lecturers undoubtedly would have demanded. It is possible that mention of payment for the priest's ritual services is simply omitted.

The narrative of the interaction between Thessalos and the priest, however, is constructed more in accordance with conventions of Greek *xenia,* a ritualized guest friendship based on reciprocal exchange rather than purely economic exchange. Thessalos claims he spent time in Thebes cultivating the friendship (Gk. φιλία) of the priests, and though shunned by the others for his impetuous curiosity, he is not shaken from friendship (φιλία, again) with the one priest.[71] This man he supplicates, throwing himself on the priest's mercy in a pitiful scene and begging him for the favor of a divine revelation (*proem.* 15–19). The priest agrees, apparently without compensation. The deferral of reciprocity, however, should not obscure the interests of the Egyptian priest and the strategic dimensions of such an exchange, as Pierre Bourdieu has argued.[72] Despite the risk of censure from his fellow priests, he stands to gain prestige and currency in a wider Hellenistic and Roman cultural milieu through what David Frankfurter calls "stereotype appropriation."[73] By playing the "wise and powerful magus" role expected of him by Graeco-Roman Egyptomania, he stands to gain a certain amount of "cultural capital" in return for the benefits he confers on Thessalos. Unfortunately, the Greek manuscript (Codex Matritensis Bibl. nat. 4631 [T]) breaks off in the fourth chapter of the first book, so the conclusion of the entire process is uncertain. The Thessalos narrative is, however, continued after the revelation in two Latin versions of the epilogue.[74] As we have seen, these manuscripts contain some errors of translation, as is evident where comparison with the Greek text is possible, but their contents are worth cautious consideration. In the epilogues of both texts, Thessalos asks the priest to assist him in proving the efficacy of the remedies revealed by the god, and in the longer of the two this is carried out in Alexan-

lung, 1919–34]), believed this law was aimed at preserving a temple monopoly on the practice, but no such monopoly is identified.

70. In general, see also Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 198–237; Lewis, *Life in Egypt,* 90–94.

71. On the ritual and politics and of *xenia* in the shift from the world of the Greek polis to the context of Hellenistic royal courts, see Gabriel Herman, *Ritualized Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

72. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 4–9, 177; see also Appadurai, "Commodities and the Politics of Value," 12–13.

73. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 225–33.

74. Codex Montepessulanus fac. med 277 (M) and Codex Vindobonensis 3124 (V).

dria.[75] It is tempting, therefore, to imagine the priest, in the last scenes of Thessalos's narrative, drawn into the Graeco-Roman intellectual circles of the city through his services to Thessalos and enjoying the benefits of prestige in that great transcultural center. Both the Greek doctor and the Egyptian priest gain something.

The Latin conclusions to the narrative suggest that Thessalos may have represented the end result in terms of a reciprocal valuation and some implicit agreement on the equivalence of the perceived advantages exchanged, but there is also—as in any story of exchange—a competitive dimension: a desire to demonstrate that one has got the better deal out of the process. Since Thessalos relates the narrative of exchange, he represents himself as the "winner," and this accounts for the omission of any benefits accruing to the priest. Thessalos certainly claims for himself as much advantage as possible in his negotiations. He claims that he circumvented the secrecy of the Egyptian priesthood by finding a priest who was willing to assist him in his inquiries; that he hid on his person papyrus and pen to record the knowledge he hoped to gain (*proem.* 21); and that, at the last minute, he sprang a request for a direct interview with Asclepius, rather than lecanomancy, on the apparently unsuspecting priest (*proem.* 22–23). Thessalos, after all, is telling the tale with the intention of adding value to his treatise on the magico-medicinal uses of plants. This value derives not only from the status and cultural location of the priest as a guardian of exotic Eastern wisdom but also from Thessalos's claimed success in manipulating the process of exchange. These two factors combine to form the "exchange biography" of Thessalos's revelation. It is the successful process of exchange that creates value for the item, in this case a ritual revelation, now embodied in a written text.[76] Put simply, this is Thessalos's story of "how I went to great lengths to trick one of those notoriously tight-lipped Egyptian priests into sharing with me his cultural patrimony of ritual and revelatory secrets—secrets that I can now pass on to you, the reader."

The narrative of exchange that creates value for Thessalos's ritual revelation also transforms its cultural value—that is, the revelation and the rite used to procure it take on a different meaning and use-value in their new cultural context.

75. M (epilogue 16): "Nevertheless, I asked him to come with me, so that we could demonstrate together the powers of the plants transmitted by the god, after the time for gathering came" *(verum tamen rogabam ipsum, ut veniret mecum, ut probaremus simul virtutes herbarum traditarum a deo, postquam venerit tempus collectioni)*. V (epilogue 16–19): "Nevertheless, I asked him to come so as to prove with me the power of the herbs transmitted to me by the god. And after the time for collecting herbs arrived, I came to Alexandria and, collecting plants containing sap, I demonstrated the greater power and found it to be as was proclaimed" *(rogavi tamen ipsum, ut veniret ad probandum mecum virtutem herbarum a deo mihi traditarum. et postquam advenit tempus colligendi herbas, veni in Alexandriam et colligens herbe sucum habentis maiorem probavi virtutem et inveni sicut dictum est)*.

76. For a brief discussion, see Appadurai, "Commodities and the Politics of Value," 18–19; on the "exchange biography" of commodities, see Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in Appadurai, *Social Life of Things*.

To continue the economic metaphor, the ritual revelation acquires a certain polyvalence in the commodity situation as it crosses the gap between the cognitive modes of the producer and the consumer. The exchange of this revelation as a commodity represents a sort of intersystemic religious practice in which the cultural distance between the participants enhances the "coefficient of weirdness"[77] for the consuming culture. To an Egyptian priest, as we have seen, the rite belongs to a ritual repertoire with a traditional Egyptian religious pedigree. But for Thessalos or his Graeco-Roman audience, who would have had little knowledge of the social function or cultural meaning of the *pḥ-nṯr,* the service is "consumed" as though it were a powerful and mysterious *magical* means of procuring a revelation. In this way, the performance of a ritual and its results, which are in any case susceptible by nature to multifarious interpretations, become even more open to the demands of the outside consumer. His requirements reshape the phenomenology of the ritual and the revelation it produces.

The final point I wish to make is that this transformation from religion to magic in the context of an exchange narrative is not solely a passive function of the cultural distance between Thessalos and the priest but a strategy on the part of Thessalos to repackage a revelation experience for further consumption. What began as a traditional Egyptian revelation ritual is fully commoditized when its primary function consists in enhancing the exchangeability of the revealed wisdom with which it is associated. The entire narrative is framed as a letter to the Roman emperor, in which Thessalos professes to have defeated all rivals in his field, including the pseudonymous king Nechepso, thereby establishing himself as the preeminent arbiter of magical knowledge, a connoisseur of the transmundane, and a merchant of foreign wisdom. As a mediating figure between Egypt and the wider Graeco-Roman world, he panders to a demand for the magical powers of "the East," further exacerbating the cultural and cognitive divide between the "producer" and the "consumer." This illustrates the principle that "magic" in the Hellenistic world is not only a polemical category but also an appropriative category. By examining Thessalos's narrative of his encounter and exchange with the Egyptian priest in terms of commodity exchange, I have described the processual and active dimension of the commonplace that one culture's religion is another's magic. This process of appropriation complicates the *locative* and *utopian* axes identified by Smith as characteristic of Hellenistic religions by adding an intersystemic dimension, in which politics of value and cultural exchange transform the nature of religious phenomena.

77. On this marked quality of magical language, see Bronislaw Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic: A Study of the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands,* 2 vols. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935), 2:218–23.

3

The Prayer of Mary in the Magical Book of Mary and the Angels

Marvin Meyer

When the late, great Coptologist Angelicus Kropp, in his study of the Prayer of Mary in a text from Giessen (Papyrus Janda 9 A.B.), raises the issue of authentic prayer and wonders whether there is any of it in the versions of the Prayer of Mary, it may set our ritual teeth on edge, but we understand why he puts the matter like this.[1] The versions of the Prayer of Mary are often referred to as versions of the Prayer of Mary in Bartos, on account of a reference to a locale associated with Bartos—perhaps the Parthians—in some versions of the prayer, for example an Ethiopic version. This Prayer of Mary presents the pious and powerful words of Mary as a prayer, yet the contents of the prayer, or at least large portions of the prayer, seem overwhelmingly magical. Hence Kropp, in his *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte,* has an entire section devoted to versions of the "Gebet Mariae ad Bartos," and Richard Smith and I include a version of the Prayer of Mary in *Ancient Christian Magic.*[2]

In the context of discussion of prayer, magic, and the stars, it is appropriate to reflect on issues raised by the Prayer of Mary. In this essay I examine one version of the prayer, from a parchment codex I have entitled the Magical Book of Mary and the Angels (Heidelberg Coptic text 685 = P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685), in order to (1) analyze its contents, (2) imagine how it was used, and (3) relate it to issues of prayer and magic.[3] Through this examination I hope to address fundamental

1. Angelicus M. Kropp, *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos: Ein koptischer Gebetstext aus den Giessener Papyrus-Sammlungen,* Berichte und Arbeiten aus der Universitätsbibliothek Giessen, vol. 7 (Giessen: Universitätsbibliothek, 1965).

2. Angelicus M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte,* 3 vols. (Brussels: Fondation Egyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1930–31); Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power,* Mythos (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

3. On the Prayer of Mary, see Marvin Meyer, "The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels (P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685)," in Stephen Emmel, Martin Krause, Siegfried G. Richter, and Sofia Schaten, eds., *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit: Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses, Münster, 20.–26. Juli 1996,* Sprachen und Kulturen des christlichen Orients, vol. 6,2

questions of definition and taxonomy: What is prayer, what is magic, and what is the relationship between the two?

THE CONTENTS OF THE PRAYER OF MARY

According to ordinary usage, the Prayer of Mary in the Heidelberg codex seems to present itself as a standard magical text or text of ritual power. The prayer occupies the first seven written pages of the codex (pages 2–8). It is followed (on page 9) by a recipe, typical of magical texts, that provides instructions for the ritual actions that are to accompany the performance of the Prayer of Mary itself. The recipe, like the prayer, refers to the water and oil that are to be used in the ritual, and the other ingredients mentioned include sticks of a plant of Mary. Accompanying the recipe is a drawing of Mary, with ring signs and letters and magical words. Mary is identified with her name, Maria, above her head, and alongside the drawing is a list of names of famous Marys from biblical lore—Mary Magdalene, Mary the daughter (?) of Clopas, Mary of James.[4] This suggests that wand-wielding Mary, clearly identified as the Virgin Mary at the opening of the prayer, is generalized into a universal Mary at the end.[5]

The opening of the Prayer of Mary in the Heidelberg codex, framed with two horizontal lines, describes the utterance as a prayer of power: "This is the 21st prayer [that] the virgin Mary spoke [on] the day [of] her falling asleep. It restrains all the power of the adversary [and] it cures every disease and every sickness, in peace, Amen" (2,1–5). Why this prayer is dubbed the twenty-first prayer of Mary is uncertain, unless the number is connected to traditions regarding the dormition of Mary, which suggest that she died on the twenty-first day of the month of Tobe.[6]

(Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1999), 287–94. For the critical edition, see Marvin Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels (P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685): Text, Translation, and Commentary,* Veröffentlichungen aus der Heidelberger Papyrussammlung, n.s., no. 9 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996). The translations given here are taken from the critical edition.

4. "Mary the daughter (?) of Clopas" may also be translated "Mary whose son is Clopas" (Cop. ⲘⲀⲢⲒⲀ ⲠⲰⲈⲈⲢⲈ ⲚⲔⲀⲰⲠⲀⲤ or ⲘⲀⲢⲒⲀ ⲠⲰⲈ ⲈⲢⲈ ⲚⲔⲀⲰⲠⲀⲤ, 9,9–10).

5. Such a universal figure, who combines features of different figures with the same name, is relatively common in Christian literature. Philip is another example.

6. In the Coptic (and Ethiopic) tradition a distinction is commonly made between the assumption of Mary's soul, which is said to have taken place on the twenty-first day of the month of Tobe, and the assumption of Mary's body, which is said to have taken place somewhat later (perhaps three days later, on 24 Tobe, or perhaps 206 days later, on the sixteenth day of the month of Mesore, on which date it is still celebrated in the Coptic Church). See Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 194–227; Aziz S. Atiya, ed., *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 1.289–93, 7.2256, with discussion of the modern feasts of the Virgin Mary; Philip Sellew, "An Early Coptic Witness to the *Dormitio Mariae* at Yale: P.CtYBR inv. 1788

A recently discovered Greek version of the Prayer of Mary in a crypt dedicated to Archbishop Georgios, within the Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Old Dongola in the Sudan, is associated with a reference in another text there to the death of Mary on 21 Tobe.[7]

In the Heidelberg codex the Prayer of Mary continues with Mary's soulful invocation:

> I entreat you today,
> who exists forever.
> I praise you today,
> Yaō, who is coming upon the clouds of heaven,
> Sabaōth, who is stronger than them all,
> who exists before all the aeons,
> before heaven and earth appeared.
> Heaven became for you a throne
> and the earth a footstool for your feet.
> Listen to me today,
> through your great, blessed name.
> Let all things submit to me,
> for I am Mary,
> I am Mariham,
> I am the mother of the life of the whole world—
> I myself am NN.
> Let the rock split before me today,
> let the iron dissolve before me today,
> let the demons withdraw before me today,
> let the powers of the light appear to me,
> let the angels and the archangels appear to me today,
> let the doors that are bolted and closed [open] for me,[8]
> at once and quickly,
> so that your name may become my helper and life,
> whether in all the day or in all the night.
> (2,8–3,11)

Revisited," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 37 (2000): 37–69, with up-to-date discussion of the dormition of Mary.

7. This Greek version of the Prayer of Mary remains unpublished. See Stefan Jakobielski, "Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Old Dongola—A Short Archaeological Report," in Marek Starowieyski, ed., *The Spirituality of Ancient Monasticism: Acts of the International Colloquium, Held in Cracow-Tyniec, 16–19th November 1994* (Tyniec: Kraków: Wydawn. Benedyktynów, 1995), 35–45.

8. Read ⲘⲀⲢ(ⲞⲨ)ⲞⲨⲰⲚ{ϩ} ⲚⲀⲓ.

Within this prayer Mary identifies herself as Maria, Mariham, "the mother of the life of the whole world," but the prayer allows the client or practitioner to insert herself or himself into the prayer by identifying, in turn, with Mary: "I myself am NN" (Cop. ⲁⲛⲁⲕ ϫⲱⲱⲧ ⲁⲉⲓⲛⲁ ⲁⲉⲓⲛⲟⲥ), probably (if I understand the abbreviated characters correctly) "I myself am so-and-so the child of mother so-and-so."[9] Mary's prayer thus becomes, in this version, the client's prayer; her petition becomes the client's petition. Mary prays for deliverance, specifically that the rock be split, the iron be dissolved, and the locked doors be opened, and she adds the usual words of ritual impatience: "at once and quickly" (Cop. ϩⲉⲛ ⲟⲩⲧⲁⲭⲏ ⲙⲛ ⲟⲩⲥⲉⲡⲏ).

In the present version of the Prayer of Mary, the references to rock, iron, and locks are given without further elaboration. Elsewhere, as in the Ethiopic version, a *historiola* is given to establish the mythic precedent for the ritual power to be invoked, and this *historiola* may help explain where the references come from. The story is told that the Virgin Mary offered a prayer to release Matthias from prison. It is said that her prayer was so efficacious that the iron fetters of his chains dissolved and the prison doors opened. And if this can happen for Matthias, it is said, it can also happen for you—at once, quickly![10]

In the parchment pages following, the Prayer of Mary from Heidelberg employs magical invocations, adjurations, words of power, and lists of maladies to be eradicated—once again from NN, the client using the prayer. The text summarizes the situation for the client as follows, with a little scriptural flourish at the end:

> In short, let whatever he has be eradicated, through your great, holy name, from NN. Let NN become safe in his body, and his entire body become strong, his sinews and his bones, and his flesh become safe from all magic of people and all attacks of the demons of the day and the night, whether fates or gods. Punish the demons of the day and of the night, that they may withdraw from NN and he may become completely safe in his body and his soul and spirit. Let him know that you are God and there is no other besides you, lest the nations say, There is no help for them. For you are the

9. The manuscript, like other Coptic manuscripts in the Heidelberg collection, employs an abbreviation that I take to be a stylized ⲁ with a ⲓ below (written twice, with a supralinear stroke), for δεῖνα δεῖνος.

10. Matthias is most likely the replacement for Judas Iscariot according to Acts 1:26. On the role of the *historiola,* compare David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 129 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 457–76.

> Lord Sabaōth, the great one in the heaven and upon the earth. Everything you wish you do. (4,15–5,12)[11]

Like other magical texts, the adjurations in the present text employ strong language—"I adjure you today" (ϯⲱⲣⲕ ⲉⲣⲁⲕ ⲙ̅ⲡⲟⲟⲩ)—to summon the twenty-four elders, the seven archangels, and Father Bathuriēl seated on the heavenly Merkavah:

> appear to me,
> Marmaruēl,
> Marmaruniēl,
> Marmaruēl,
> Marmaruniēl,
> Marmaruē,
> Marmaru,
> Marmar,
> Marmam,
> you who struck the sea by your holy power,
> come to me today,
> great God who is in heaven.[12]
> (6,16–22)

Additional adjurations of divine powers nicely parallel those in other Christian texts of ritual power, such as Heidelberg Coptic text 686, the recently recovered companion codex to the present text.[13]

In the present version of the Prayer of Mary, the Virgin is involved in the praying and adjuring toward the end of the prayer, as at the beginning, but in the conclusion she is no longer the one praying. The first-person-singular subject of the verbs at the end of the prayer must be the practitioner or, better, the ritualist. This

11. The concluding clauses in this passage recall Isa. 45:5 and Ps. 115:2–3 (113:10–11 Septuagint) or Ps. 79:9–10 (78:9–10 Septuagint).

12. The name Marmaruēl, used here (with variations) to address the divine, seems to derive from the Syriac for "lord of lords," with the Hebraic or pseudo-Hebraic ending *-ēl* (lit. "God"). The list of forms of the name resembles the lists of names of power in wing-formation in magical texts, with names dropping a letter at each subsequent occurrence. In the present instance the impact of the list could be accentuated somewhat by means of a modification of the divisions between names: ". . . Marmaruē, Marmaru, Marmar, Mar, Ma, M."

13. See Angelicus M. Kropp, *Der Lobpreis des Erzengels Michael (vormals P. Heidelberg Inv. Nr. 1686)* (Brussels: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1966); Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic,* 323–41, along with 343–44 (afterword).

is the person ("I") who asks of God that Saint Mary, the Holy Virgin and Theotokos, be sent to assist the client ("NN") with the ritual. The transformation of the prayer is now total. It has become a ritual about Mary:

> I adjure you today,
> by the first word that arose in your heart
> and became your only Son,
> who is Jesus Christ,
> and his holy powers that I have named,
> that you send me our holy Mother of God,
> St. Mary, the holy virgin,
> and she bless them and the water,
> and she consecrate them
> and seal [the] water [and] the oil,
> so that at the moment that I pour the water upon NN,
> he may become strong and healthy and completely well,
> through the power of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
> forever and ever,
> Amen, Amen, Amen,
> yea, yea,
> at once, at once,
> Jesus Christ.[14]
> (8,13–29)

How the Prayer of Mary Was Used

How did the Prayer of Mary come to assume this form? How were changes and transformations incorporated into the several versions of the prayer, and how did the prayer work in the form scrutinized here? These are obviously difficult and complicated questions that go beyond what I can hope to address in this brief essay. Indeed, scholars have yet to gain a full understanding of the texts and the textual tradition of the versions of the Prayer of Mary in Bartos. Versions of the prayer are preserved in Greek, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Arabic, and some texts have not yet been published. One such text, Coptic Museum 4958, still needs to be conserved,

14. On the adjuration by the first word, compare Heidelberg Coptic text 686: "I adjure you today by the first word that came out of your heart and became for you an only begotten son, who is Jesus Christ" (11,171; Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic,* 335). In Heidelberg Coptic text 685 the request that Saint Mary be sent to assist follows the adjuration by the first word.

transcribed, and translated.[15] Here I propose only three points, on the development of the textual tradition, which have to do with the context, form, and adaptation of the prayer.

The Ritual Context of the Prayer of Mary

The general ritual context of the Prayer of Mary seems to be reflected in the wide range of references, particularly in magical texts, to being bound and released. In general, magical texts include an abundance of curses and *defixiones*. Some of these texts concerned with binding and loosing come from the Egyptian world of magic and ritual power. One ancient Egyptian spell, for instance, tells the story (the *historiola*) of Isis releasing Horus from the evil accomplished by Seth and then calls upon Isis to release a client. Apuleius of Madaura, in his *Metamorphoses,* uses similar language to describe how Lucius is released from his bonds of asininity and subsequently humanized.[16]

More specifically, some texts highlight ways in which a person bound in prison may be released—as in the story of Matthias. In Heidelberg Coptic text 686, the second of the twenty-one numbered prescriptions gives instructions on how to get someone, magically, out of prison: "Copy the power [a figure drawn on the manuscript] on sherds [?] of a new jar. Throw them to him. They will force him out onto the street, by the will of God. Offering: mastic, alouth, koush" (14,251).[17] In other words, as the jar is broken, so may one's friend break out of jail. In the New Testament and early Christian literature, for example in the Acts of the Apostles, a number of stories are told of magical or miraculous release from prison. An angel liberates the imprisoned apostles; an angel springs Peter by releasing the chains and opening the iron gate; Paul and Silas are miraculously freed of their fetters and liberated from prison. This last story, as recounted in Acts 16, is especially suggestive of aspects of the story of Mary and Matthias. In Acts, the foundations of the prison—foundations of rock and stone, we can imagine—are shaken, the chains of the prisoners are released, and the locked doors are opened. Luke explains, in his narrative, that the result of all this liberating commotion is conversion to Christianity. Everyone believes, is baptized, shares a meal, and lives

15. A partial translation of this text has been prepared by Marvin Meyer, "Mary Dissolving Chains in Coptic Museum Papyrus 4958 and Elsewhere" (paper delivered at the 7th International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, August 2000—to be published in the congress proceedings).

16. See the Isis spell (mentioned here) in J. F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts,* Nisaba 9 (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1978), 49; on the role of Isis in Apuleius, see *Metamorphoses* 11.15; more generally, compare John G. Gager, ed., *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic,* esp. 178–225.

17. Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic,* 339. Mastic, alouth, and koush are ingredients to be used in the ritual.

happily ever after. Similar stories are told, as the commentaries remind us, in Euripides and Josephus.[18]

The Form of the Prayer of Mary

The versions of the Prayer of Mary, as I have noted, vary in form. Sometimes, but by no means always, a narrative account tells the story of the ritual power of the Virgin Mary and her prayer on behalf of the imprisoned Matthias. The origin of the story is not known, but the many legends and tales of binding and releasing, especially in the Acts of the Apostles, suggest the narrative context within which the story of Mary and Matthias may well be placed. A reasonable case can be made that the story, as *historiola,* was an original part of the Prayer of Mary and that important details in the prayer in the Heidelberg version—rock, iron, locked doors—are remnants from this original story. Or, at the very least, such evidence may suggest that the story of Mary and Matthias, as *historiola,* was generally known and assumed as the mythic precedent for the magical power. Perhaps the story was part of the oral tradition.

The issue of the relationship between *historiola* and ritual power in the prayer becomes somewhat more complicated, however, when we consider other Coptic magical texts that call upon powers to liberate one from rock, iron, locked doors. In these texts powers other than Mary can likewise split rock, dissolve iron, open doors. In Berlin 8314, a love and sex spell, a power (apparently Tartarouchos, the one who controls Tartaros) can do all this and more: "He said to me, If you demand it, I can break the stone, I can make the iron into water, I shall destroy the iron doors, quickly, until I bind the heart of N. daughter of N. to you—me, N. son of N., at once. If she does not come to me, I shall stop the sun in its chariot, the moon in its course, the crown of stars upon the head of Jesus, until I satisfy your demand, at once" (20–31).[19] In the London Hay "cookbook" (10391), with similar interests, a great one, strong in power, declares that he can do the same, and he can break the foundations of a prison:

> He answered, saying,
> What do you ask of me today?
> I shall give it to you. If you ask stone of me, I shall split it;
> if iron, I shall break it off;
> if roots . . . , I [shall] destroy the foundations of the prison.

18. See Acts 5:17–21, 12:6–11, 16:23–29; compare Dionysos's release from prison in Euripides' *Bacchae* and the temple doors' opening by themselves in Josephus's *Jewish War*.

19. Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic,* 160.

> Miak, I press to ask these things of you . . . ,
> I ask, I invoke you,
> that you leave all the places where you are
> [and come] to the place where I am,
> and come down upon the virgin [. . .] oil,
> that it may be for me a prescription for all the things
> that I shall undertake, in order to do them—I, [N. child of N.].[20]
> (22–27)

In Heidelberg Coptic text 686, Jesus is portrayed, in a ritual "life of Jesus," as a source of great power, and these same sorts of things can also be done by him or in his name:

> Fire is extinguished, water is dried up, in the name of Jesus.
> Rocks are split in the name of Jesus Christ.
> All the suffering comes out of the body of NN,
> and his body flourishes like the tree of life
> in the middle of paradise.
> (12,187–190)[21]

Given the several powers, including Mary, who can overcome rock, iron, and prison in Coptic magical texts, we may ask if these motifs have become stylized in the tradition of ritual power. Is such a description a magical topos, a commonplace, which requires no elaboration in the form of a *historiola* in order to be understood?

The Adaptation of the Prayer of Mary

The Prayer of Mary underwent adaptation as it took shape in a prayer of ritual power, a magical prayer, intended to allow the power of Mary to come to expression in the lives of clients and practitioners. The Prayer of Mary was meant to empower. In the case of the Prayer of Mary in the Heidelberg codex, it has been shaped to address the interests and purposes of the compilers of the Magical Book of Mary and the Angels.

The Prayer of Mary from Heidelberg is generalized so that a to-be-named person, with needs that are not identical to those of Matthias, may be empowered

20. Ibid., 265.

21. Ibid., 336. This last example, with its reference to the name of Jesus and its ritual transition from the splitting of rocks to the healing of the body of a client ("NN"), is notably reminiscent of the Prayer of Mary.

through a ceremony involving the prayer and a ritual with water and oil.[22] Most likely another person, a ritualist, is also a part of this ceremony. Initially this application of the prayer to a client is seen in the explicit identification of the person with Mary: "I myself am NN." The prayer then addresses needs beyond the traditional rocks, chains, and locks, and specifies a wide range of problems to be resolved by means of the use of ritual power. The words of prayer and invocation in the succeeding lines, in fact, have little, if anything, to do with Mary. The adaptation of the prayer is made complete at the very end of the invocation. A ritualist, using the first-person-singular "I," just as Mary has used "I" at the beginning of the prayer, speaks to God on behalf of a client and adjures God to send the Virgin Mary to bless the performance of ritual power. To recall Rudolf Bultmann's famous dictum: The proclaimer has become the proclaimed.

It is a long way from a village of Bartos to Heidelberg, but such is the distance of the ritual journey taken in the Prayer of Mary. What may be understood as a prayer of the Virgin on her deathbed concludes with a ritual scene of water, oil, and words of power.

The Prayer of Mary and Magic

This, then, is the magical Prayer of Mary. But, to recall Angelicus Kropp's concerns, is it actually magic, is it actually a prayer? While it compares well with recognized exemplary texts of magic and ritual power, its self-identification suggests otherwise. In the first line of the Coptic text and the codex, in what might be taken as an incipit, the Prayer of Mary identifies itself as a prayer (Cop. ⲡⲣⲟⲥⲉⲩⲭⲏ), with a noun of Greek derivation, and the text goes on to describe the Virgin Mary in the posture of prayer to God. In the lines that follow, God is invoked to banish all evil, including magic (Cop. ⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ, from Greek μαγεία) and sorcery (Cop. ⲫⲁⲣⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ, from Greek φαρμακεία); within the next few lines ⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ is further deplored. Elsewhere in the codex, in a Solomonic spell, not in the Prayer of Mary itself, protection is again sought from magic (Cop. ϩⲓⲕ).[23] Thus the Heidelberg text claims to offer a prayer and sets itself in direct opposition to magic—in two languages. The Prayer of Mary also incorporates a number of standard elements from

22. Heidelberg Coptic text 685 is a ritual handbook with spells that were intended to be used by any client ("NN") who might be able to make use of them. Twice, however, the name of a particular client is mentioned, apparently inadvertently: Joseph son of Paraseu (13,3; 13,9).

23. The Coptic Solomonic spell reads, in part, "I beg and I invoke you today, Nassklēn, who guards and protects the body of King Solomon, all the days [of] his life . . . you must begin guarding him all the days [of] his life, from all evil spirits and unclean spirits and all powers of the devil and all temptations and attacks and all magic [ϩⲓⲕ] and all sorcery [ⲫⲁⲣⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ] {and} of the devil" (10,1–18).

Coptic Church worship and liturgy, including the amen, the Trisagion, and the acclamation Jesus Christ. There is even an apparent reference to "the faith of the Nicaeans" (Cop. ⲡⲉⲡⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ ⲛⲛⲉⲛⲓⲕⲉⲁ, 6,5–6).[24] How does the self-identification of the Prayer of Mary, then, effect its taxonomic status?

Any discussion of the Prayer of Mary in the light of prayer and magic should also take into account the fact that versions of the prayer are used by Coptic Christians to the present day, and the story of the Virgin Mary and Matthias figures prominently in the Coptic Church. This church includes the miraculous power of Mary and her prayer in its cycle of tales about Mary, and the Coptic Church of Saint Mary Who Dissolves the Chains, in Khurunfish in Cairo, displays a modern icon of Mary the Theotokos freeing Matthias from his chains in prison by means of her prayer. There is an older icon of Mary in the so-called Hanging Church, al-Muᶜallaqa, the Church of Saint Mary built over the Roman fortress in Fustat (Old Cairo). Scenes from the life of Mary form a cycle around the central scene of Mary with Jesus, and they show Joachim and Anna, the presentation of Mary, the Annunciation, Mary and Joseph with Elizabeth and Zechariah, the Nativity of Jesus, the three wise men, the flight into Egypt, Jesus with Mary before her assumption, the Assumption of Mary—and, in the upper right corner, before the scene of Jesus with Mary before her assumption, Mary praying and freeing Matthias from prison. The icons have been the object of considerable piety, and they have been touched often, as fingerprints attest. The story of Mary's prayer and the miracle with the chains is also the focal point of a Coptic Church holiday celebrated during the summertime.[25]

Finally, with the Prayer of Mary, miracle and magic, prayer and magic, meet. Except for the politics and the polemics, the ritual power of the magical spell becomes practically indistinguishable from the ritual power of the Coptic Church, and Christian prayer and Christian invocation of ritual power seem to be two sides of the same coin. Or maybe even the same side.

24. This reference remains uncertain and obscure. The fact that it is used along with words of power and ritual acclamations may suggest that it was understood to be a *vox magica*.

25. For a fuller discussion of the Prayer of Mary in the context of the Coptic Church today, see Marvin Meyer, "The Prayer of Mary Who Dissolves Chains in Coptic Magic and Religion," in Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer, eds., *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World,* Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 141 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 407–15.

4

Hebrew, Hebrew Everywhere?

Notes on the Interpretation of *Voces Magicae*

Gideon Bohak

The so-called *voces magicae,* those powerful alien "words" that figure so prominently in the Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Latin, and Arabic magical texts of late antiquity and the Middle Ages, have been the subject of numerous studies.[1] One commentator after another has sought to explicate the origins of this or that *vox* and unearth its original meaning in the language to which it *really* belonged and from which it originally came. One of the most common features of such studies is the recurrent attempt to find a Jewish origin for this or that word and explain it, "etymologically," by way of Hebrew or Aramaic.[2] This error is due in part to the scholarly refusal to accept the fact that the origins of many *voces* still elude us and to the desperation informing the attempts to find a solution, any solution, to a nagging crux. It is also due to the fact that some *voces,* as well as other elements of the "international" mixture of late antique magic, indeed are of demonstrably Jewish origins, and that the Jews had some reputation in antiquity for dabbling in magic, so that scholars are tempted to exaggerate the importance and pervasiveness of the Jewish contribution to the "international" magic of late antiquity and to search for Jewish elements even where none are to be found. Moreover, because we know so much more about Hebrew and Aramaic than about, say, Nubian or Carian, scholars tend to indulge a natural tendency to look for solutions in the languages we happen to know best. Finally, as in other fields of ancient history, one sees here the unique treatment accorded, by Jewish and Christian scholars alike, to issues relating to ancient Jews. Here as elsewhere, the special attention given to all things Jewish mostly obfuscates, rather than clarifies, our picture of ancient Jews and their place within their wider non-Jewish environment.[3]

1. See the recent survey by William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," in *ANRW* II 18.5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 3380–684, esp. 3429–28 and 3576–603.

2. For a sobering reminder of how deceptive etymologies can be, see Michael Adler, "Was Homer Acquainted with the Bible?" *JQR* 5 (1893): 170–74.

3. See also David H. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), 144: "There are many different tunnels in historiography. Among

While the causes of this misguided tendency are evident, its many ramifications are more subtle. First, it is a self-perpetuating process, for the more "Jewish" *voces* one finds, the more one feels right about the enormous importance of the Jewish contribution to late antique magic, a conviction that in turn makes one look for even more such "Jewish" *voces*. Second, the wrong interpretations of many *voces* often prevent future scholars from even looking for the right ones, in the erroneous assumption that these puzzles have already been solved. If the experts in Jewish studies are satisfied with a solution, the reasoning seems to be, then everyone else must follow suit. Thus, one might even say that the pan-Iranian model of the beginning of the twentieth century, which sought to explain much of late antique religiosity as stemming from Iranian "syncretism,"[4] has now been replaced by a pan-Judaic perspective, which leads many scholars to look for Jewish elements even where none are to be found. Like its predecessor, and like the pan-Egyptian perspective occasionally sponsored by a handful of Egyptologists,[5] this pan-Judaic perspective was bound to lead to many untenable claims and assumptions, including some very improbable interpretations of the *voces magicae* of late antique magic.

The following essay challenges this line of scholarship from three different starting-points. First, I study those *voces* that can securely be identified as Hebrew, and note their relative paucity and their likely origins among *Greek-speaking* Jews. Next, I examine one specific text that contains more demonstrably Jewish *voces* but turns out to be so interesting precisely because it is quite unique. Finally, I turn to a more methodological discussion of how one should go about demonstrating the Hebrew or Aramaic origins of any given *vox,* in the hope that future scholarship will take heed of these almost self-evident guidelines.

A. Hebrew Words and Names in Late Antique Magic

In a survey of the different ethnic contributions to the vocabulary of late antique magic, some words may easily be identified as Jewish, namely, those that are well attested in the Hebrew Bible and subsequent Jewish literature. These *voces* may

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the narrowest and darkest are the ethnic tunnels. And of all the ethnic tunnels, none is quite so dark and narrow as that which is called 'Jewish History.'"

4. See Albrecht Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903); Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3423–24; and Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition,* 2d ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1965), 1–2, for Scholem's critique of Reitzenstein's influential interpretation of Gnosticism as Persian in origin.

5. See Robert Kriech Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and Their Religious Context," in *ANRW* II 18.5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 3333–79, esp. 3358–71.

broadly be divided into four different types: divine names and epithets, angel names, the names of biblical figures, and religious terminology and liturgical formulae.

1. Divine Names and Epithets

Although the Jewish god was not myrionymous, as some Egyptian gods were, he certainly was polyonymous, and many of his names and epithets became part and parcel of the "international" magic of late antiquity.[6] These include such divine names as Iaō (= the standard Greek transliteration of the Tetragrammaton, "YHWH"), Adōnai (= My Lord), Elōai (= My God), and Sabaōth (= [of] Hosts), all of which seem to have entered the "public domain" of late antique magic. Some of them even acquired Greek endings and declensions (Adōnai → Adōnaios, Elōai → Elōaios, etc.), a process that may have begun already among Greek-speaking Jews. More interesting, however, is that the non-Jewish practitioners who invoked these divine names often had no sense of their original meanings, and even little sense that they all were the names of a single god.[7] They also had no qualms about using these powerful names as a basis on which to coin new ones, which is why we find such *voces* as *abaōth* (which some scholars view as Jewish) and even *phnoukentabaōth* (which certainly is not Jewish).[8] Once a certain alien word entered the "public domain" of late antique magic, it could spawn many more such words, most or all of which had no connection whatsoever with the language from which the original word had been taken.

2. Angel Names

Among the obviously Jewish *voces* in the non-Jewish magical literature of late antiquity, such Jewish angels as Michaēl, Gabriēl, Uriēl, Raphaēl, play a special role.[9] To these four archangels, one may add a few more known Jewish angels, or names that seem based on Hebrew roots plus the ending *-ēl* (e.g., Melchiēl, Nouriēl, Souriēl, Azariēl). It must be stressed, however, that the Hebrew and Aramaic magi-

6. For the Egyptian gods and their "ten thousand names," see the useful list of names and epithets in Laurent Bricault, *Myrionymi: Les épiclèses grecques et latines d'Isis, de Sarapis et d'Anubis* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1996). For the Jewish god as polyonymous, see Philo, *Decal.* 94.

7. For further discussion, see Gideon Bohak, "The Impact of Jewish Monotheism on the Greco-Roman World," *JSQ* 7 (2000): 1–21, esp. 7–8.

8. For both *voces*, see Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3601.

9. On the other hand, one must note the absence from the Greek magical texts of Metatron, so prominent in late antique Jewish mystical and magical texts and gladly borrowed by Syriac and Arabic practitioners as well—see, e.g., Steven M. Wasserstrom, "The Magical Texts in the Cairo Genizah," in Joshua Blau and Stefan C. Reif, eds., *Genizah Research After Ninety Years: The Case of Judaeo-Arabic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 160–66.

cal texts of late antiquity refer to hundreds of different angels, since virtually any root in the Hebrew language could be turned into an angelic name by adding the suffix *-ēl,* thus creating the angel who was in charge of the activity implied by that Hebrew root.[10] In the Greek and Coptic magical texts, on the other hand, only a handful of *-ēl* names are based on Hebrew roots, while others (e.g., *astrapiēl, barbariēl, marmarēl*) are based on Greek ones and certainly do not stem from Hebrew-speaking magicians. But whereas such names may stem from Greek-speaking Jews, other names show that non-Jewish magicians could add the ending *-ēl* to any word they chose to, as in the lovely Egyptian-Jewish mixture *phtha phtha pthaēl* (*PGM* IV. 972). Once again, the point is that once the Jewish elements entered the non-Jewish world, they could be used to create new, and utterly non-Jewish, *voces.*

3. Names of Biblical Figures

Another set of Jewish words that entered the "public domain" of late antique magic is a handful of biblical personal names, such as Abraam (= the standard Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Abraham), Isaac, Jacob, Israēl, Moses, David, and Solomon. Sometimes one finds them embedded in such set formulae as "the God of Abraam, Isaac, and Jacob," which occasionally was misunderstood to mean that Abraam, Isaac, and Jacob were divine epithets or even names of different gods.[11] On other occasions one finds one or more of these names embedded in contexts that seem to display a magician's ignorance not only of the stories told about them in the Jewish Bible but even of the notion that these were Jewish names to begin with.[12]

4. Religious Terminology and Liturgical Formulae

Given the prominence of some Jewish elements in the magical texts of late antiquity, one might expect to find a long list of Hebrew or Aramaic religious terms and liturgical formulae in the "public domain" of late antique magic. It is thus somewhat surprising to note the paucity of such elements in the "international"

10. For this common Jewish method of generating new angelic names, see, e.g., Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1,* Semitic Texts and Studies 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 36.

11. See Martin Rist, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: A Liturgical and Magical Formula," *JBL* 57 (1938): 289–303, and Bohak, "Impact of Jewish Monotheism," 7–8.

12. See Morton Smith, "The Jewish Elements in the Magical Papyri," *SBL Seminar Papers* (1986): 455–62, reprinted with major improvements in Morton Smith, *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh,* Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 130, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 242–56, esp. 247–48.

magic of late antiquity. Occasionally one encounters such terms as *cherubim* or *saraphim,* but these represent only a tiny sample of the Hebrew and Aramaic religious terms that non-Jewish practitioners *could have* borrowed. More significantly, they are limited mostly to terms that already appeared in a transliterated form in the Septuagint and Judeo-Greek literature, as well as the early Christian writings. The paucity of the Hebrew or Aramaic elements becomes even clearer when one turns to Jewish liturgical formulae, for the only Hebrew liturgical formula that can securely be identified in the Greek magical texts is *barouch aththa adōnai* (= Blessed art Thou, Lord), which is by far the most common opening for Jewish blessings and prayers.[13] Numerous other formulae, however, which are attested in Jewish liturgy and magic in Hebrew and Aramaic, seem not to have become known to, or to have been used by, non-Jewish magicians. But what is most surprising is the complete absence of Hebrew phrases transliterated into Greek as *voces magicae,* and this in spite of the fact that the citation of Biblical verses (which normally were cited in the Hebrew original, even when embedded in Aramaic texts) is perhaps the commonest feature of Jewish liturgy and magic, attested continuously from the Ketef Hinnom amulets of the seventh or sixth century B.C.E. up to our very own days.[14] Thus, the absence from the Greek, Demotic, Coptic, Latin, and other magical texts of late antiquity of transliterations of such verses as Exod. 3:14 ("I-am-who-I-am"), Num. 6:24–26 (the "Priestly Blessing"), Num. 10:35 (a favorite in Jewish liturgy and Jewish curses), Isa. 6:3 (the Trishagion [= "Holy, Holy, Holy," etc.]), Ps. 91 (the so-called "Song of the Afflicted"), and of all the other Biblical passages that were so popular with Jewish magicians,[15] strongly argues against assuming a strong Hebrew or Aramaic influence on the non-Jewish magical traditions of late antiquity.

In sum, we can isolate within the non-Jewish magical texts of late antiquity a few dozen words whose Jewish origin is beyond doubt, words that became part and parcel of many magicians' ritual vocabulary. However, such magicians often used these powerful names without any idea of what they originally meant, and perhaps even without any notion of their specifically Jewish origins. Once Jewish elements entered the non-Jewish magicians' world, they could be, and often were, transformed in decidedly non-Jewish manners. But what is perhaps most inter-

13. For its occurrence in the Greek magical texts, see note 36 below.

14. For the ubiquitous use of biblical verses, see Schiffman and Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts,* 37–40; Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (New York: Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1939; repr., New York: Atheneum, 1977), 104–13; Joseph Naveh, "Hebrew Versus Aramaic in the Epigraphical Finds, Part II" (in Hebrew), *Leshonenu* 57 (1992–93): 17–38, esp. 24–29.

15. For a fuller list, see Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1993), 22–31.

esting is that all the *voces* that may safely be identified as Jewish could easily have come from contact with Greek-speaking Jews and disclose no real sign of borrowing from the world of Hebrew- or Aramaic-speaking magicians. This conclusion becomes even clearer when we note that even in those Greek magical texts that probably reflect the work of *Jewish* magicians (albeit transformed by non-Jewish copyists and practitioners), we find no clear cases of Hebrew or Aramaic magical formulae.[16] Greek and Egyptian magicians, it would seem, had some contacts with Greek-speaking Jewish magicians, and these supplied them with many Jewish names, and even with some useful recipes, but with only a handful of Hebrew words and expressions. This conclusion has some important historical implications, for it could once again point to Graeco-Roman Egypt as the place where such cross-cultural contacts took place, but this issue need not detain us here.[17] For the present study, the important point is that whoever wishes to claim that this or that *vox magica* came from Hebrew and Aramaic must first demonstrate that such a process—the use of transliterated Hebrew and Aramaic words and phrases in the "international" magic of late antiquity—indeed was common and is not mostly a scholarly phantom.

B. Hebrew Liturgical Phrases in a Greek Magical Text

So much for names whose Jewish origin is beyond dispute. But what about all those other *voces* for which a Jewish origin has been offered, though they are not common in the Hebrew Bible and are not standard in "mainstream" Jewish culture? Before considering the value of such identifications, let us look at one intriguing example of the penetration of Hebrew prayer formulae and other expressions into a Greek magical text, namely, the well-known amulet from Wales, recently reedited by Roy Kotansky.[18] To make the linguistic makeup of this text easier to follow, I print here both the Greek text (in italics) and my translation

16. For a list of *PGM* recipes with a likely Jewish origin, see Smith, "Jewish Elements," 249–52, and cf. such famous examples as the Hadrumetum *defixio,* for which see John G. Gager, ed., *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 112–15, with further bibliography, and the brief discussion by Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and Magic, c. CE 70–c. CE 270," in William Horbury et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism,* vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1052–78, esp. 1073–78.

17. For the time being, see Morton Smith, "On the Lack of a History of Greco-Roman Magic," in Heinz Heinen, ed., *Althistorische Studien,* Hermann Bengtson Festschrift, Historia Einzelschriften 40 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983), 251–57; Geraldine Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1994), 161–77; Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3412–22.

18. Roy Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae, Part 1: Published Texts of known Provenance,* Papyrologica Coloniensia 22/1 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), no. 2, pp. 3–12.

(below the Greek). In the translation, italics indicate that the Greek letters transliterate a Hebrew word or formula; roman type indicates a regular Greek word or "words" that make no sense in either language.

adōnaie	*elōaie*	*sabaōth*	*eie esar eie*	*soura arbartiaō*
O Adōnaios,	Elōaios,	Sabaōth,	*I-am-who-I-am,*	soura arbartiaō,[19]

ōn ōn ōn	*zōn*	*kalōs*	*elliōn*	*annōra*	*aggibōr*
is, is, is,	living	excellently,	*Most High,*	*the terrible*	*the mighty,*

bailla laamōth	*barouch aththa*	*oubarouz*	*oudēcha*	*aei ōlam*
bailla laamōth,[20]	*blessed art Thou*	*and blessed*	*is Thy ( );*	*eternal life,*

leōlam	*akkramarachamari*	*amorim*	*phabzana thouth chiii*
forever.	akkramarachamari[21]	amorim[22]	phabzana thouth chiii[23]

(5 lines of magic signs) *diafulatte me Alphianon*
protect me, Alfianus.

In analyzing the Hebrew elements in this Greek charm, we may briefly look at each of the four sequences that can be identified as Hebrew, before returning to the Greek text as a whole.

(1) Greek *eie esar eie* accurately renders Hebrew *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh* ("I-am-who-I-am"): This famous "name," which God gives to Moses in Exod. 3:14, is extremely common in Jewish magical texts in Hebrew and Aramaic and is also well attested in Syriac and Arabic magical texts.[24] Moreover, the Greek words

19. For possible Hebrew derivations of these two "words," see Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets,* pp. 5–6, and for impossible ones, Giuseppe Veltri, "Jewish Traditions in Greek Amulets," *Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies* 18 (1996): 33–47, esp. 34.

20. For impossible Hebrew and Aramaic derivations of these two "words," see Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets,* p. 7, and Veltri, "Jewish Traditions in Greek Amulets," 34.

21. For the numerous attempts to identify this common *vox* as Hebrew or Aramaic, see Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets,* p. 9, and Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3578.

22. For impossible Hebrew derivations of this "word," see Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets,* p. 9; note that the final letter may not be a *mu,* but even so, it does not seem to be a Hebrew word.

23. Are these four Greek letters meant to be a magical *vox,* or do they belong with the magic signs of the next five lines?

24. See, e.g., Kotansky's commentary, *Greek Magical Amulets,* p. 5, and Georges Vajda, "Sur quelques éléments juifs et pseudo-juifs dans l'encyclopédie magique de Bûnî," in Samuel Löwinger and Joseph Somogyi, eds., *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume,* pt. 1 (Budapest, 1948), 387–92; Hayyim Schwartzbaum, "Recipes for Quelling an Angry Sea in Jewish and Arabic Folklore" (in Hebrew), *Yeda Am* 20 (1980): 52–59, and Yitzhak Avishur, "'Ehyeh asher ehyeh' in Arabic, Syriac, and Judeo-Arabic" (in Hebrew), *Leshonenu* 55 (1990): 13–16.

ōn ōn ōn that follow this formula are related to it, since the Old Greek (Septuagint) translation of Exod. 3:14 reads *egō eimi ho ōn* ("I am the One who Is"). This leaves little room for doubt about the identification of the Hebrew formula itself.[25]

(2) Greek *elliōn annōra aggibbōr* accurately renders Hebrew *'elion ha-nora hagibbor* ("[the] Most High, the terrible, the mighty"): This series of Hebrew epithets for God is ultimately derived from the Hebrew Bible, and remarkably similar strings of divine epithets are well attested in rabbinic literature and in the Jewish liturgical and magical texts.[26] Thus, the identification of these three *voces* is secure.

(3) Greek *barouch aththa oubarouz* (rather than *-ouch!*) *oudēcha* renders Hebrew *barouch 'ata u-barouch——'ekha* ("Blessed Art Thou and Blessed is Thy [ ]"): Formulae such as this are extremely common in Jewish liturgy and magic, though I am a bit puzzled by the final word. Kotansky takes it as a rendering of *hodekha,* "Thy Glory," which is quite possible, but other interpretations are equally plausible (e.g., *'uzekha,* "Thy Strength"). Here, it would be difficult to be more precise.

(4) Greek *aei olam leolam* accurately renders Hebrew *ḥayei*[27] *'olam le-'olam* ("eternal life forever"): This is a common Hebrew formula, ultimately derived from Dan. 11:2.

In analyzing the text as a whole, two points readily emerge. First, it seems quite clear from the analysis above that the Hebrew sections, in the way they are arranged, do not add up to one coherent whole. Thus, it is clear that whoever wrote the Greek text was not transliterating a complete Hebrew text, but rather incorporating a disparate set of Hebrew phrases into his Greek text. And yet, it also seems clear that these four fragments were taken from real Jewish scriptural or liturgical contexts. In other words, whoever incorporated them may not have known, or cared, what exactly each expression meant, but he was not entirely ignorant either. The Hebrew expressions he used were not a random mixture of Hebrew words but fragments from ancient Jewish liturgy, the likes of which are well attested in Jewish religious and magical texts. These are, of course, precisely the kinds of expressions we would expect a conscientious magician to use. A second point that emerges from this analysis is that while some of the *voces* used in the text were Jewish, others clearly were not. For the final sequence, *phabzana thouth chiii,* in fact quite likely derives from an Egyptian context,[28] and several other se-

25. As noted by Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets,* p. 6.

26. See, e.g., Deut. 10:17; TB *Ber. 33b;* TY *Ber. 9:1 (12d);* the beginning of the "Eighteen Benedictions" prayer; and cf. Veltri, "Jewish Traditions," 34, and Peter Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur,* Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 6 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984), no. 1, p. 13, and no. 4, p. 69, etc.

27. Cf. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets,* p. 7, who takes *aei* not as Hebrew but as Greek ("forever") and interprets it as the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *le-'olam.*

28. As noted by Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets,* p. 9.

quences can hardly be interpreted as Hebrew, in spite of some ingenious reconstructions offered by several previous scholars. Moreover, it is precisely the accuracy of the transcriptions of the Jewish liturgical fragments that should render suspect any claim that such clusters as *bailla laamōth* also are Hebrew, but Hebrew so corrupt as to be unrecognizable. While some of the *voces* in this amulet are Hebrew words transliterated into Greek, others clearly are not.

Considered within the wider context of the Greek magical texts of late antiquity, this intriguing text is unusual, for it is almost the only example of a late antique magical text that is not written in Hebrew or Aramaic yet contains recognizable Hebrew phrases.[29] Other texts contain more Hebrew words, but none of them has as many Jewish liturgical fragments as this one.[30] Furthermore, the Hebrew phrases that appear on the Wales amulet *do not* appear as *voces* in the other Greek, Demotic, Coptic, or Latin magical texts of late antiquity. Neither the *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh* ("I-am-who-I-am") formula nor such divine epithets as *'elion* ("Most High"), *ha-nora* ("the terrible"), or *ha-gibbor* ("the mighty") seem to have entered the "public domain" of late antique magic, in spite of their ubiquitous appearance in liturgical and magical texts in Hebrew and Aramaic. Once again, we are forced to conclude that the penetration of Hebrew or Aramaic formulae into the non-Jewish magic of late antiquity was a relatively rare occurrence and that most of the Jewish contributions to the "international" magic of late antiquity were transmitted through Greek-speaking Jews. Only in rare instances do we encounter a Greek-speaking magician, Jewish or non-Jewish, who incorporated Hebrew terms and phrases—beyond the standard materials examined in the previous section—into his Greek magical texts. In light of this conclusion, one must be wary of any zealous attempt to interpret enigmatic *voces* as somehow derived from Hebrew or Aramaic.

C. Identifying Hebrew and Aramaic *Voces*—Methodological Reflections

The Roman-period amulet from Wales provides us with clear examples of *voces magicae* whose Hebrew origins are beyond any doubt. The reason for this cer-

29. But cf. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets,* p. 8. Medieval and later Christian magical texts provide more examples of Hebrew liturgical fragments embedded in Greek and Latin texts, but such late texts lie outside the scope of the present essay.

30. See, e.g., Sergio Sciacca, "Phylakterion con iscrizione magica Graeco-Ebraica proveniente dalla Sicilia sud-occidentale," *Kokalos* 28–29 (1982–83): 87–104, which is Kotansky's no. 33, pp. 155–66. But note that Sciacca, and to a lesser extent Kotansky, identify even some non-Hebrew *voces* as Hebrew.

tainty is that the identification of the Hebrew words passes the test of three strict criteria that rule out any possibility of coincidental phonetic similarity: First, there is more than one Hebrew word involved. Statistically, the chance of finding a randomly generated "word" of two or three consonants that looks like some Hebrew word is far from negligible. But the chance of finding two such words in a row already is much smaller, and the more Hebrew-sounding words, the greater the certainty that they are, indeed, Hebrew words. Second, the sequence of two or more words actually makes sense in Hebrew; in other words, the text does not merely present two or more supposed Hebrew words together, but a combination of words consistent with Hebrew syntax. And third, the resulting Hebrew word sequence is documented in the Hebrew Bible or later Hebrew religious or magical texts, or at least can be shown to fit within such a context. Thus, not only do we find Hebrew words and phrases, but they also happen to be precisely the kinds of words and phrases we would expect to find embedded in a magical text.

Here, then, is a set of criteria that could help us determine that certain *voces magicae* indeed are Hebrew in origin. Such cases, however, are very rare, for most cases present isolated *voces,* devoid of any linguistic context in the texts where they appear and without any obvious parallels in the Hebrew Bible or in later Jewish literature. What, then, are we to do in these more common cases? The first problem, of course, is that *voces magicae* rarely advertise which language, if any, they may have come from. The magicians sometimes claim that a certain combination is "in Hebrew," "in Aramaic," "in Egyptian," or in some other language, but such claims cannot be trusted: first, because in some cases they are demonstrably false (which only proves once again how free the ancient magicians felt to fabricate fancy linguistic data), and second, because the magicians also claim that some words are written in "baboonish" or in "bird-glyphics."[31] We cannot, in other words, trust the magicians' own testimonies, and must devise other criteria for assessing the possible Hebrew or Aramaic derivations of our *voces magicae*. I offer the three main guidelines that follow.

1. Linguistic Criteria

Both Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic are well documented and well studied. Thus, every attempt to offer a Hebrew or Aramaic derivation for this or that *vox* should take into consideration what is possible within the parameters of these languages and what is not. Moreover, much evidence, literary and epigraphic, has survived for Hebrew and Aramaic words that entered Greek in other contexts, so we can

31. As noted by Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3434–35.

use their transformations when pronounced and transcribed in Greek as guidelines for what to expect when such words are adopted by Greek-speaking magicians. Finally, while many *voces* might resemble Hebrew words, it must always be borne in mind that there was more than one Semitic dialect in the ancient world and that some of them were quite akin to Hebrew. Note, for example, Lucian's description of how Alexander of Abonoteichus, wishing to establish a new oracular shrine in the 160s C.E., tried to draw a crowd's attention: "Uttering a few meaningless words, which could have been Hebrew or Phoenician (*hoiai genointo an Hebraiōn ē Phoinikōn*), Alexander dazed the people, who had no idea what he was saying, except that he brought in Apollo and Asclepius on every occasion."[32] Lucian's description of Alexander's speech as resembling *either* Hebrew *or* Phoenician is highly significant. Born in Samosata and describing himself as a Syrian, Lucian certainly was at least familiar with some Semitic languages, and the assumption implied in his description—that Phoenician and Hebrew were not that different—is supported by other ancient writers as well.[33] Even words ending with *-ōth,* for example, cannot *a priori* be taken as Hebrew or pseudo-Hebrew, for this feminine-plural ending was common to Hebrew, Phoenician, and other Semitic languages.[34] More important, Lucian, who knew Alexander quite well, was certain that the "words" uttered by him were not real Hebrew or Phoenician words but his own playful inventions. Presumably, if some modern scholar had been present in the crowd, he or she would have insisted upon finding the "correct" Semitic etymologies of these "words," to Lucian's great delight.[35]

2. Distortion Through Transmission

One of the processes that took place in the ancient magical texts is that the *voces magicae* that entered the "public domain" of late antique magic were often corrupted by copyists and practitioners who had no idea what a given word meant or what its correct form was. Thus, to give one example, the above-mentioned

32. Lucian *Alex.* 13. Unfortunately, this passage is not well treated by Ulrich Victor, *Lukian von Samosata: Alexandros oder der Lügenprophet,* Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 132 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 142, and is mostly ignored by those scholars who insist that by the Roman period Phoenician already was a dead language.

33. The similarity is also implied in Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.172–74, and stated explicitly (for Punic) by Augustine, *On the Gospel of John* 15.27 (*PL* 35, col. 1520), and is easily confirmed by browsing through such works as Charles R. Krahmalkov, *Phoenician-Punic Dictionary,* Studia Phoenicia 15 = *OLP* 90 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

34. For *-ôth* words in Greek and Latin, see, e.g., Plautus *Poenulus* 930 and 940, "alon(i)uth" (goddesses), and Edward Lipinski, *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicienne et punique,* Studia Phoenicia 16 = Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 64 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 61.

35. For Alexander's linguistic games, see also Lucian, *Alex.* 51, 53.

Hebrew phrase transliterated as *barouch aththa adōnai* at one point and among some magicians became *barouch ambra adōnaiou* (and was understood as *barouch,* the *ambra* of Adōnaios?).[36] Unfortunately, this demonstrable fact is often used by scholars as an excuse for great liberty, as they first amend the *voces* they encounter into their "correct" forms and then provide their supposed Hebrew or Aramaic derivations. This is, of course, a highly dubious procedure, for while any strange-sounding *vox* could be a corrupt Hebrew word, it could also be a corrupt Egyptian, Thracian, or Nubian word, or a word from a host of other languages. It could also be a crafty magician's creative invention, intended to daze a human audience, and perhaps a divine audience too. We, however, should not be dazed, and must avoid assuming that a certain *vox* must have some meaning, all the more so that it must have some meaning in Hebrew or Aramaic.[37]

3. Parallels in Known Jewish Texts

The corpus of Hebrew/Aramaic religious and magical literature is large, and new texts are being published at a breathtaking pace.[38] We have not only the prayers, blessings, and curses of the standard Jewish liturgy but also the magical texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the (mostly Palestinian) amulets and the (Babylonian) demon bowls, and the seemingly endless stream of magical texts from the Cairo Genizah, not to mention such texts as *Sepher Ha-Razim* (The book of mysteries), *Harba de-Moshe* (The sword of Moses), or the mystical-magical mix-

36. *Barouch aththa adōnai:* see the examples provided by Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets,* 8. *Barouch ambra adōnaiou:* David G. Martinez, *A Greek Love Charm from Egypt (P. Mich. 757),* P. Michigan XVI = American Studies in Papyrology 30 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1991), 26, 76–77. And cf. Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3582, and *PGM* XLV.3: *Barouch daula Adōnaia.*

37. For the great liberty taken by previous scholarship with regard to the etymology of *voces magicae,* see also the cogent remarks of Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 187, and Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker, "From Sense to Nonsense, from Incantation Prayer to Magical Spell," *JSQ* 3 (1996): 24–46, esp. 26. Rohrbacher-Sticker's essay provides an illuminating example of corruption through transmission, but in the opposite direction—namely, from Greek into Hebrew and Aramaic.

38. For a broad survey, see P. S. Alexander, "Incantations and Books of Magic," in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* revised and edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman, vol. 3/1 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1986), 342–79. For the most important corpora, see Mordecai Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Akharonot, 1966), English translation by Michael A. Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983); Schiffman and Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts;* Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1985); idem, *Magic Spells and Formulae;* Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza,* 3 vols., Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 42, 64, 72 (Tübingen: Mohr, vol. 1, 1994; vol. 2, 1997; vol. 3, 1999); Yuval Harari, *Harba de-Moshe (The Sword of Moses): A New Edition and a Study* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Academon, 1997).

tures of the Hekhalot/Merkavah literature. Thus, when offering a Hebrew derivation for a *vox magica,* we should try to examine the use of that word or phrase within the Semitic corpus itself. If the Hebrew or Aramaic phrases that supposedly lurk behind the *voces magicae* are unattested not only in the Hebrew Bible and "mainstream" Jewish literature but also in all the magical texts now available (most of which are relatively late, but some of which date from the Second Temple period), we must be even more suspicious of the veracity of these postulated etymologies. Moreover, the Hebrew and Aramaic magical texts of late antiquity display the penetration of the *voces magicae* of the "international" magic at the time, and this process provides yet another angle from which to examine the supposed "Jewishness" of many of these *voces*. Unfortunately, we do not yet have a full analysis of the *voces magicae* embedded in these Hebrew and Aramaic magical texts, but even the most superficial survey of these texts reveals two points that are of extreme significance for the present study. First, while supposedly Jewish *voces* such as *ablanathanalba, abrasax/abraxas, akrammachamari, marmaraōth,* and *semeseilam* are indeed found in these Jewish magical texts, many of the other *voces* found there, such as the *sēmea-konteu* formula, *yesemmigadōn,* or various *thoth*-words, certainly do not stem from any Jewish origins.[39] Thus, the appearance of any known *vox* in the Jewish magical texts of late antiquity is no guarantee of its Jewishness, only of its popularity within the "international" magic of the time. Just as these *voces* entered the Coptic and Syriac magical texts, and some Gnostic texts as well, they also entered the Jewish branch of late antique magic.[40] Second, in all the places where supposedly Jewish *voces* are used by these Jewish magicians, there is not even a hint that they understood the "correct" etymologies of these words or even saw them as specifically Jewish. Admittedly, this is no guarantee against the original Jewishness of these *voces*—witness the occasional reentry into the Jewish magical texts of the name *y'w,* which is nothing but the Hebrew transcription of the Greek transcription of the Jewish god's name, *Iaō*—but if in no case do the Jewish magicians understand what their *voces magicae* mean, we should at least take their ignorance into consideration.

Where, then, do all these methodological considerations leave us? Of course, the difficulty is that the claim that a certain *vox* is not likely to be Hebrew or Aramaic immediately raises the question of its real origins. Thus, once a Jewish derivation of a certain *vox* has been suggested, it is only by securely identifying that

39. For a preliminary survey, and of the Hekhalot texts alone, see Gideon Bohak, "Remains of Greek Words and Magical Formulae in Hekhalot Literature," *Kabbalah* 6 (2001): 121–34.

40. For the magical *voces* that entered the Gnostic literature, see H. M. Jackson, "The Origin in Ancient Incantatory *Voces Magicae* of Some Names in the Sethian Gnostic System," *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989): 69–79.

vox within some other culture that one can prove that it is not Hebrew. To give just one obvious example, when we note that *šmš 'lm,* "eternal Sun," is an old Phoenician deity, who appears already in the Karatepe inscription, we can easily dismiss all the fanciful attempts to explain *semeseilam* as Jewish.[41] However, it is only because we are relatively well informed about Phoenician religion and the Phoenician language that this *vox* can correctly be identified.[42] Thus, our inability to identify the origins of many other *voces* should not make us feel obliged to accept the Jewish "etymologies" offered by previous scholars, but rather should encourage us to admit that many of the ethnic contributions mixed into late antique magic are irretrievably lost and that many of the *voces magicae* embedded in these magical texts were born in the magicians' fertile imagination. It would be better to admit that the origins of many *voces* still elude us than to end up like the Ancient Mariner in Coleridge's famous poem, with Hebrew, Hebrew everywhere, and not a word makes sense.

41. For the claims that *semeseilam* is Jewish, see Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3598. For the correct identification, see Wolfgang Fauth, "SSM BN PDRŠŠA," *ZDMG* 120 (1970): 229–56, esp. 253–54 (the rest of the essay is much less convincing); Lipinski, *Dieux et déesses,* 265. And cf. A. I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos,* Études préliminaires sur les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain 99 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 147. The solar connections of this *vox* have often been noted—see, e.g., Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets,* 58–59. Note, however, that it is not impossible that some late antique Jewish magicians understood *semeseilam* as "my name is peace" (as suggested by Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 134), just as the Greek word *charaktēres* was transliterated in Hebrew and Aramaic magical texts as *klqtrs* and occasionally interpreted as *kl qtry',* "all the knots"! This is, however, a secondary interpretation and has nothing to do with the word's real origins.

42. Similarly, because the Persian origins of the name *Mithras* are well attested, no attempt has been made to claim it as Jewish; see Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3423–24.

5

Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq

Michael G. Morony

> Salvation from the heavens for Dadbeh the son of ʿAsmandūk and for Šarqōī the daughter of Dāda, his wife, and for their sons and their daughters and their house and their possessions, that they may have sons, that they may live and be established and be protected from demons, from devils, from bands, from satans, from curses, from liliths, and from monsters which appear to them.[1]

What is this and what does it represent? This text, in Aramaic, is found on the interior of a clay bowl from late Sasanian Nippur in lower Iraq. Such bowls have a rather narrow chronological range. Based on the script of the text, comparisons with other pottery, and the context of those found *in situ,* they appear to have been in fairly popular use from the fifth to the eighth centuries C.E. Since this practice seems to have begun and ended rather abruptly, its narrow chronological range is useful for eliminating changes over a longer period of time as a variable, but it needs to be explained.[2]

What kind of information do these bowls provide, and what can be done with

1. Charles D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature, Scholars Press, 1975), 71.

2. The description of incantation bowls goes back to Austin Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London: John Murray, 1853), 509–26. Aramaic incantation bowls were first published by Thomas Ellis in Layard's volume, pp. 434–38. A significant number of incantation bowls were published by Cyrus Gordon and his students in the twentieth century. For general discussions of these bowls and their texts, see Cyrus H. Gordon, *The Living Past* (New York: John Day Co., 1941), 196–217; Charles D. Isbell, "The Story of Aramaic Magical Incantation Bowls," *BA* 41 (1978): 5–16; and Shaul Shaked, "Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 21 (1977): 103–17.

it? The purpose here is to suggest some strategies for identifying and analyzing the different kinds of information these bowls contain. Far more has been done with the content of the texts than with the bowls themselves as objects. It will be argued here that these texts should not be divorced from the objects on which they appear. Thus, it is appropriate to start with the identification of the physical variables—size, shape, fabric, images, and the patterns of writing—as well as the geographical provenance of the bowls and why they constitute a corpus in spite of physical, linguistic, and religious variables among them. The possibility of correlations among language, shape, fabric, and writing patterns will be explored in order to demonstrate some of the ways in which these variables can be treated. Although only some variables will be correlated here, all of the variables that will be identified deserve to be correlated. This will be followed by a discussion of the magical practices revealed by these texts, of how these relate to the images on some of them, of how the bowls were probably used, and why they were used that way. Finally, it will be argued that the texts themselves provide a social context through their wording that enables the reconstruction of sex ratios and at least seven different types of households.

The texts of the incantation bowls have been studied for their magical, religious, and linguistic content. They have not been treated effectively yet as artifacts or images, or exploited as a source for social history. The procedure here has been to create a computerized database of 855 published and unpublished bowls that were identified by the author in the 1980s,[3] to combine the information about published bowls with the physical characteristics of their originals in museums as far as possible, to enter all of the variables in a spread sheet, and to run correlations among selected variables. The sample sizes given here were produced by the computer. The comments that will be made here are based on those bowls that the author has surveyed and examined in museum collections, both published and unpublished, which constitute a sample. They are intended to demonstrate what can be done with this material and to suggest some of the questions that might be asked of it. Ratios and percentages should be regarded as suggestive rather than absolute. Any conclusions are preliminary, tentative, and subject to revision.

To begin with the physical variables, these bowls vary in size, shape, and type of clay. They average sixteen centimeters in diameter by five centimeters in depth, although some are twenty centimeters or more in diameter. In shape they are either hemispherical with round or flat bottoms (Type 1—Fig. 1), or truncated cones with flat bases and wide flaring rims (Type 2—Fig. 2). There appear to be about four times as many hemispherical bowls (162 out of 203, 80 percent) as there are flat-bottomed, flared-rim bowls (41, 20 percent). The clay is either rather light-

3. The museum numbers of the bowls used for this study are available upon request.

Fig. 1 Hemispherical bowl with spiral Syriac text. (Yale Babylonian Collection 2411)

weight and pinkish beige or fairly dense and grayish yellow-green. There appear to be somewhat more of the latter (57 percent of 280) than of the former (38 percent) (see Table 1a).

They also vary in their surface design, with the presence or absence of geometric designs (Figs. 3a and 3b), the images of bound demons (Fig. 4) or of sorcerers with their arms raised (Fig. 5). The writing on each can be organized in a spiral (Fig. 6), concentric circles (Fig. 7), registers (Fig. 8), or radii (Figs. 9a and 9b) and may be read in some cases by turning the bowl clockwise and in others counterclockwise. There are also differences in language and script: the texts on extant bowls are in rabbinic Aramaic (Fig. 7), Mandaic (Figs. 6, 8), Syriac (Fig. 1), Middle-Iranian (Figs. 9a and 9b), and Arabic. The fact that these languages are written in different scripts contributes to the visual difference among these bowls.

Nevertheless, the texts written on these bowls are viewed as constituting a genre because of what they have in common: a set of shared assumptions about the causes of evil and how to avert it. The content of these inscriptions reveals traditions going back to Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian protective rituals[4] and therapeutic

4. Erica C. D. Hunter, "Incantation Bowls: A Mesopotamian Phenomenon?" *Or* 65 (1996): 226–27.

Fig. 2 Truncated-cone bowl with a flat base and a wide flaring rim (side view). (Ashmolean 1931.179)

magic. Ancient male and female demons survived, such as the nocturnal *lilith,* who as a succubus in dreams preyed on men, was jealous of their human children, and dangerous to women and children during pregnancy and childbirth.[5] However, Babylonian *šedu,* signifying a protective spirit represented as a winged bull in ancient Mesopotamia, became the generic term for a demon in these incantation texts,[6] while the ancient Babylonian deities survived, changed into evil spirits, mainly because of their association with the planets in Chaldaean astrology.[7] These texts thus provide precious evidence of how these ancient religious traditions survived or were transformed in one corner of the late antique world.

Although the practice of writing protective incantations on pottery bowls does not appear to have been predominant in ancient magic, such objects are ubiquitous on several late Sasanian sites in Iraq, but not on all of them, and are discontinuous on large sites.[8] Thus far, incantation bowls have been found *in situ* only at sites in central and southern Iraq: from Medain Ruqba and Warka in the Southeast to Tell Ibrāhīm, Tell Baruda (Coche) at Madā'in, and the Diyala region in the

5. Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts* (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1967), 23–26.

6. Cyrus H. Gordon, "Two Magic Bowls in Teheran," *Or* 20 (1951): 307–8; Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Aramaic Magic Bowls," *JAOS* 85 (1965): 518.

7. James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1913), 238–40; Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts,* 63.

8. Robert McC. Adams, *Heartland of Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 157.

Table Ia

Physical and Linguistic Variables		
Language		
Sample	411	
Aramaic	256	(62%)
Mandaic	96	(23%)
Syriac	54	(13%)
Arabic	5	(1%)
Shape		
Sample	203	
Type 1	162	(80%)
Type 2	41	(20%)
Color		
Sample	280	
Pinkish beige	105	(38%)
Grayish yellow-green	160	(57%)
Mixed	15	(5%)
Arrangement		
Sample	196	
Spiral	141	(72%)
Concentric circles	26	(13%)
Registers[1]	21	(11%)
Radial	8	(4%)
Direction bowl turns to be read		
Sample	164	
Clockwise	19	(12%)
Counterclockwise	145	(88%)

[1] Of the registers, four were Aramaic and seventeen Mandaic.

north. Many come from Nippur and its environs—Bismaya, Kish, and Borsippa. They also come from Khafaje and Khuabir, thirty miles northwest of Musayyib, west of Baghdad, on the right bank of the Euphrates. These places appear to define the region with hemispherical bowls. Flat-bottomed, flared-rim bowls have been found at Kish and Nippur, so there is some territorial overlap. The locations where incantation bowls occur deserve to be mapped in order to define the population that used them and the significance of the texts' social information. Another strategy would be to collect the bowls from particular sites and compare them with those from other sites, such as Nippur, Kish, or Khuabir.

It is estimated that thousands of such bowls are extant, in or on the ground in Iraq. Over 302 complete texts and numerous fragments have been published, some of them multiple incantations for the same person or household. There are many more unpublished bowl texts in museums and thousands in private possession. There are at least 885 such bowls in twenty-seven museums, including 142 in the

Image not available

Fig. 3a Fragment of a bowl with a magic circle in the center. (The Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago A33998)

Image not available

Fig. 3b "Snake"-like design in the center of a bowl. (The Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago A32675)

Image not available

Fig. 4 Image of a bound demon in the center of a bowl. (The Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago A32778)

Image not available

Fig. 5 Image of a sorcerer with raised arms in the center of a bowl. (The Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago A33763)

Image not available

Fig. 6 Spiral Mandaic text. (Yale Babylonian Collection 15334)

Image not available

Fig. 7 Concentric Aramaic text. (The Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago A32675)

Image not available

Fig. 8 Mandaic text in registers. (Ashmolean 1930.41)

Image not available

Fig. 9a Radial text, said to be Middle Iranian (top). (Yale Babylonian Collection 2360)

Image not available

Fig. 9b Radial text, said to be Middle Iranian (bottom). (Yale Babylonian Collection 2360)

British Museum[9] and 565 in the Iraq Museum; the latter group remains largely unpublished. The corpus of incantation bowls therefore represents an open-ended source of information that eventually could be statistically significant. For instance, out of a sample of 411 bowl texts (both published and unpublished), nearly two-thirds are Aramaic (62 percent), while most of the rest are divided between Mandaic (23 percent) and Syriac (13 percent) (see Table 1a).[10] But these proportions might be skewed because the predominance of Jewish and Mandaean religious content in the published texts may reflect the interests of the scholars who have worked on them. Nevertheless, it would be worth determining whether there are any significant correlations among the linguistic and religious orientations of the texts and the physical characteristics of the bowls.

There does not seem to be any correlation between the language and the shape of the bowl. The shape of the bowl does not appear to have made much difference to the people who wrote Aramaic and Mandaic on them.[11] Between the language and the type of clay, correlations vary in significance. A slight majority of Aramaic bowls are grayish rather than pinkish, but the difference is less than that of the overall sample, while a substantial majority of Mandaic bowls are pinkish rather than grayish, which is the opposite of the overall sample.[12] It is surely significant that 21 of 22 Syriac bowls (95 percent) are grayish. If the source of this clay could be found, it might help to locate the origin of these bowls. But this is based only on visual observation. There may, in fact, be more than two types of clay or ceramic composition, and each and every bowl should be assayed scientifically. Apparently, no technical analysis of the clay used in these bowls has so far been performed.

Whether the bowl's text is written in a spiral, circular, or radial pattern or in registers, the bowl must be turned in order to read it easily, presumably in the same

9. The 142 bowls in the British Museum, including four Syriac bowls, have been published recently by J. B. Segal in *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 2000), with a contribution by Erica Hunter on the physical characteristics of the bowls.

10. The number of Middle Persian and Arabic magic bowls is minuscule, and none of them has ever been published.

11. Out of a sample of 131 Type-1 bowls, 69 percent (91) are Aramaic, while 27 percent (36) are Mandaic, which is fairly close to the overall language ratio. Of 41 Type-2 bowls, 76 percent (31) are Aramaic, and 22 percent (9) are Mandaic, a difference that is slightly greater than the overall language ratio. Viewed another way, 75 percent (91) of 122 Aramaic bowls are Type 1, while 25 percent (31) are Type 2, a difference that is slightly less than the overall sample (80 percent to 20 percent). Out of a sample of 45 Mandaic bowls, 80 percent (36) are Type 1, while 20 percent (9) are Type 2, which is almost exactly the same as the overall sample (Tables Ia, Ib).

12. Out of a sample of 120 Aramaic bowls, 45 percent (54) are pinkish and 50 percent (60) are grayish, a ratio that is significantly less than the overall sample (37 percent to 57 percent). Out of 37 Mandaic bowls, 54 percent (20) are pinkish and 35 percent (13) are grayish, a ratio that is the opposite of the overall sample (Table Ib).

TABLE IB

Physical and Linguistic Variables
(where the language of the bowl can be determined)

	Sample	Aramaic		Mandaic		Syriac	
Shape							
Type 1	131	91	(69%)	36	(27%)	4	(3%)
Type 2	40	31	(78%)	9	(22%)		
Color							
Sample[1]		120		37		22	
Pinkish		54	(45%)	20	(54%)	1	(5%)
Grayish yellow-green		60	(50%)	13	(35%)	21	(95%)
Mixed		6	(5%)	4	(11%)		
Direction bowl turns to be read							
Sample		88		61			
Clockwise		8	(9%)	9	(15%)		
Counterclockwise		80	(91%)	52	(85%)		

[1] In the rest of Table Ib the percentages should be read down, not across.

direction it was turned when it was written. Every legible bowl turns either clockwise or counterclockwise, and turning the bowl may have been part of the magical ritual. Out of a sample of 164 bowls, 12 percent (19) turn clockwise, while 88 percent (145) turn counterclockwise. Language seems to correlate with the direction the bowl needs to be turned in order to read it. Out of a sample of 88 Aramaic bowls, 9 percent (8) turn clockwise, while 91 percent (80) turn counterclockwise, a difference that is slightly greater than the overall sample. Out of 61 Mandaic bowls, 15 percent (9) turn clockwise, while 85 percent (52) turn counterclockwise, a difference that is slightly lower than the overall sample (see Table Ib). But this ratio may be affected by the fact that Mandaic bowls written in three registers all turn clockwise. It remains to be seen if these ratios will hold up with larger samples.

The remainder of the discussion will focus on the magical praxis and social information contained in these texts. Some aspects of the praxis appear to be very old indeed and indicate the survival of ancient polytheistic traditions in the confessional religions of late antiquity. Proper names and religious referents in the texts themselves testify to the mixed religious and ethnic population of Sasanian Iraq.[13] There were Jews, Mandaeans, Zoroastrians, Christians, and polytheists, divided ethnically between Aramaeans and Persians, sometimes in the same house-

13. For the ethnic and religious diversity of Sasanian Iraq, see Michael G. Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 169–430; for religious communities in the Sasanian empire, see Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 199–216.

hold. Aramaean and Persian proper names are probably a more reliable index of ethnicity than the language of the text, and a great deal could be done with naming patterns within households. Polytheist, Jewish, proto-Mandaean, Zoroastrian, and Christian contents tend to be mixed in the same text, two or more of these being represented.[14] This mixture of religious content might indicate either the presence of different religious traditions in the same household or the existence of syncretistic sorcerers. According to Julian Obermann, the incantation texts of the bowls show a "complex religious-cultural syncretism" of "Chaldaean" magic and astrology, Iranian eschatology and demonology, and Jewish monotheism.[15] More recently Tapani Harviainen has argued that syncretism is greatest with regard to demonology and shared external dangers but that beneficent beings and formulae tend to be more distinctive to particular religious groups, Jewish in the Aramaic texts and Mandaean in the Mandaic texts, while the Syriac texts tend to be more syncretistic and "pagan."[16]

How were such bowls used? The great majority of those now in museums and private possession were either found on the surface of the ground or turned up on the antiquities market without an exact provenance, so it is impossible to tell. But when they have been found *in situ*, they usually have been either under a threshold or built into the wall of a house or in a cemetery.[17] In the first case, a custom of placing an inscribed lead scroll beneath the threshold during the fourth and fifth centuries may have anticipated the similar placement of pottery bowls.[18] Incantation bowls are usually found turned upside down, sometimes with two or more bowls stacked on top of each other, less frequently in pairs, with an upper bowl inverted over an upright bottom bowl.[19] As early as 1898 Henri Pognon suggested that the bowl was overturned to imprison evil spirits, and W. S. McCullough

14. For Iranian content in these texts, see Shaked, "Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia."

15. Julian Obermann, "Two Magic Bowls: New Incantation Texts from Mesopotamia," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 57 (1940): 29.

16. Tapani Harviainen, "Pagan Incantations in Aramaic Magic Bowls," in M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield, and M. P. Weitzman, eds., *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 53–60; idem, "Syncretistic and Confessional Features in Mesopotamian Incantation Bowls," *SO* 70 (1993): 36.

17. Roger Moorey, *Kish Excavations, 1923–1933* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 123. On the exterior of the bowl that contains the text quoted at the beginning of this article is written, "of the inner room of the hall." See Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 71–72.

18. An inscribed lead scroll was found under the threshold of a door to one of the rooms in a fifth-century Sasanian building at Kish (SP-7) (Moorey, *Kish Excavations,* 141).

19. See "Excavations in Iraq, 1985–86," *Iraq* 49 (1987): 250–51 (Umm Keshm); Moorey, *Kish Excavations,* 123, 143; Henri Pognon, *Inscriptions mandaïtes des coupes de Khouabir* (Paris, 1898; repr., Amsterdam: APA-Philo Press, 1979), 3. Two sets of bowls, with one bowl inverted over an upright bottom bowl, were found beside the hearth of an Old Babylonian house at Nippur, without any (surviving) inscription and only clean sand inside. See McGuire Gibson, *Excavations at Nippur: Twelfth Season* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1978), fig. 43:2, 3.

repeated this in 1967.[20] More recently Harviainen has suggested that a bowl buried in a house was meant to be a microcosm of cosmic bowls buried in heaven and earth based on the text of a Syriac bowl that reads: "The mystery amulet of heaven is buried in heaven and the mystery amulet of earth is buried in earth, and this is the mystery amulet of the house."[21] The overturned bowl might also have represented a microcosm of the vault of the heavens, as suggested by the text on a Mandaic bowl: "I . . . placed as a cover over them the great vault which is over the sorceries."[22] This explanation should, of course, only apply to the hemispherical bowls, but it might be related to the Babylonian myth of Marduk's binding of the demons as planets in the firmament. The pairs of inverted and upright bowls might then be seen as microcosms of the universe. Another possibility, however, is raised by an Aramaic bowl text that refers to the overturning of the earth, heaven, stars, planets, the talk of people, and curses.[23] Erica Hunter points out that spells are commonly undone in the incantation texts by being "overturned" and suggests that the practice of burying bowls upside down may have been an act of sympathetic magic to overturn evil.[24] In all of this it tends to be assumed that one explanation applies to all, and it is entirely possible that the act of overturning and burying the bowl had multiple significance or meant different things to different people.[25]

In any case the incantation bowls were a form of defensive, protective magic, sometimes, but not necessarily, against a particular curse or demon. They are often generic and ward off every imaginable evil, and some are explicit about being permanent. As protective magic they are similar to amulets, and the textual traditions are related. Although a few Aramaic bowls are called the amulet (Aram. *qemiʿa*) of a particular person in the text,[26] there are two important differences that make the bowl texts a useful source for social history. First, instead of being

20. W. S. McCullough, *Jewish and Mandaean Incantation Bowls in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), xiii. McCullough (p. xiv) also quotes a Babylonian spell that was meant to thwart a house demon: "May a bowl which ought not to be opened cover him."

21. Tapani Harviainen, "A Syriac Incantation Bowl in the Finnish National Museum, Helsinki—A Specimen of Eastern Aramaic 'Koiné,'" *SO* 51 (1981): 12, 16. A similar idea is expressed in another Syriac bowl text for Huna son of Kupitay. See Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1985), 124–25.

22. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts,* 522.

23. Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls,* 134–35.

24. Hunter, "Incantation Bowls: A Mesopotamian Phenomenon?" 231.

25. Both Isbell (*Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 12) and Harviainen ("An Aramaic Incantation Bowl from Borsippa—Another Specimen of Eastern Aramaic 'Koiné,'" *SO* 51 [1981]: 17) regard them as food bowls, which is highly unlikely, since the bowls were placed upside down and the texts rarely refer to food and then only in order to protect it.

26. Harviainen, "Pagan Incantations," 54.

worn on one's person, they were placed in a location, to protect it and the people who lived there. Second, most incantation bowls are for groups of people rather than for individuals. Out of a sample of 151, 79 percent (119) are for households, and 21 percent (32) are personal (see Table III below).[27] In addition, as Hunter points out, amulet texts tend to use "adjure" in the first-person-active and rarely use the motif of sealing, while the bowl texts use passive participles to compel or restrain demons.[28]

In the incantations themselves some powerful supernatural being or beings is/are invoked by name (Jewish angels, YHWH, Mandaean *uthras*).[29] The power of the name forces the demons to obey. The demons are also named (to know the name of a demon is to be able to compel it). The demons are either expelled or bound and sealed, sometimes both, and curses are overturned or turned back on the cursers. For instance, the incantation on an Aramaic bowl from Nippur declares that the hands and feet of men and women who have been working evil on Berīkyahveh are bound, evil arts[30] are uprooted, spells are scattered, and arts are turned back on those who work them.[31] Sometimes demons are depicted on the bowls with their hands and/or feet shackled. The evil devil and evil Satan called SPᶜSQ, who in killing takes the man from beside his wife, the wife from beside her husband, sons and daughters from their father and mother, is represented on an Aramaic bowl with his feet chained, holding a sword in his right hand and a spear in his left (Fig. 10).[32] Presumably this served actually to bind the demon. The imagery of binding demons also occurs outside of the bowl texts, in Christian Syriac literature. According to Dionysius of Tell Mahre, in the mid-660s a small bronze cauldron was found beneath an inscribed stone slab in a village on the Euphrates in the district of Serug in northern Syria. Inside the cauldron was a bronze figurine with a chain around its neck. The people assumed that it had been buried by sorcerers, and brought to the site fortune-tellers and sorcerers, who whispered spells over the figurine until it spoke and told them that sixty-thousand demons were imprisoned

27. Bowls are determined to have been "personal" by the absence of any reference to a house or a threshold in the text.

28. Hunter, "Incantation Bowls: A Mesopotamian Phenomenon?" 222–23.

29. According to Montgomery (*Aramaic Incantation Texts,* 100–101), this form of exorcism goes back to that used by the *ašīpu* priests of Babylonia, who adjured demons in the name of one of the gods.

30. *Ḥiršīn bīšīn*. Gordon translates this as "evil black arts," and elsewhere he, Isbell, and Yamauchi translate *ḥiršīn/ḥiršē* as "black arts." This word is cognate with a Hebrew word that occurs in Gen. 4:22 with the meaning of "artificer" in brass and iron. In Aramaic it is used with the sense of "craft," with the same ambiguity that "craft" has in English. *Ḥiršē* is the word for "sorcery" in Aramaic, and a *ḥārāšā* is a sorcerer. (This information was provided by Yona Sabar.)

31. Cyrus H. Gordon, "Aramaic Magical Bowls in the Istanbul and Baghdad Museums," *ArOr* 6 (1934): 326.

32. Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 34–37.

Fig. 10 Image of the demon SP^{c}SQ with his feet shackled.

within it. The sorcerers then unfastened the chain from its neck and told the demons to go and possess the monks at the monastery of Qenneshre.[33] There is also a reference to John of Daylam (a native of northern Iraq) expelling Satan from a monastery in Arrajan, in Fars, in the early eighth century and binding him so that he would never enter it again.[34]

Long-haired sorcerers with arms upraised in invocation and wearing star-covered robes are also depicted on some bowls (Fig. 11). This may have been meant as an actual and permanent performance of the exorcism. There is no way of knowing whether the sorcerer actually recited the incantation aloud himself (or murmured it), either before or after writing it on the bowl, although that might have been part of the ritual. Shaul Shaked assumes that the text was not recited, based

33. Andrew Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 171–72.

34. Sebastian Brock, "A Syriac Life of John of Dailam," *Parole de l'Orient* 10 (1981–82): 149–50.

Fig. 11 Image of a sorcerer on a bowl from Tell Abu Sarifa.

on the existence of bowls with simulated writing on them: "an illiterate practitioner in antiquity would sometimes scribble some gibberish on a bowl, and sell it off to his innocent customer as a valid text." But he admits that the charlatan could also have faked an oral recitation.[35] It is fairly certain, however, that in most cases the sorcerer wrote the text on the bowl, turning it as he did so.[36]

This was not the only kind of magic being practiced. Although we do not actually have examples of the curses the incantation bowls were intended to counteract, the texts themselves refer to curses, knots, knocking, and the evil eye. A

35. Shaked, "Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia," 104.

36. But many Mandaic incantation texts appear to have been written by the beneficiaries themselves, and magicians do not seem to have been very prominent. See Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts,* 15.

Mandaic bowl text dissolves the curses and incantations of women who have cursed and made incantations at the gates of the temple.[37] Other Mandaic bowl texts refer to aggressive or harmful forms of magic by way of defending against them such as melting wax figures of someone living,[38] using egg charms to separate a wife from her husband,[39] the use of spittle for cursing,[40] and women who cursed in the name of Ishtar the queen and crawled on their backsides.[41] An Aramaic bowl text seals and fortifies the families and houses of ʾAḥāt daughter of ʾImmā and of her sister Šīltā daughter of ʾImmā against the male demon, female *lilith,* spells, curses, incantations, knocking, the evil eye, evil arts,[42] the arts of mother and daughter, the arts of daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, those of the presumptuous woman who darkens the eyes and blows away the soul, the evil arts performed by men, and everything bad.[43] This tendency to protect against everything, as well as the eclectic nature of magic, is well illustrated by an Aramaic bowl text that protects Farrukdad son of Zebinta from Aramaean, Jewish, Tayyi (Arab), Persian, Indian, and Roman arts.[44] Outside the bowl texts Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) refers to nominal Christians who murmur incantations, tie knots, and make amulets.[45]

What was the social context of these magic practices? The incantation texts themselves provide social information for a population about which there is virtually no other source of knowledge. This population falls between the cracks of the literary traditions and includes people living in towns and villages away from major urban centers. The social content in the text was most probably supplied by the client, who told the sorcerer what to write. The magical and religious content was most likely supplied by the sorcerer, possibly to suit the religious identity of the client. On the basis of "duplicate" texts written in the same hand for the same client, Hunter has argued that the production of incantation texts was spontaneous, flexible, and improvised for each occasion.[46] The nature of the sam-

37. Ibid., 171.

38. Ibid., 57.

39. Ibid., 19, 61. A later Mandaic text describes how a day-old hen's egg with a spell written on it should be buried at the gate of a person being cursed. One can imagine what happened as the egg rotted.

40. Ibid., 59.

41. Ibid., 165.

42. See note 30 above.

43. Gordon, "Aramaic Magical Bowls in the Istanbul and Baghdad Museums," 324–25; Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 110.

44. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts,* 62. For *ḥiršīn* as "arts" or "crafts," that is, sorcery, see note 30 above.

45. Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 162.

46. Erica C. D. Hunter, "Combat and Conflict in Incantation Bowls: Studies on Two Aramaic Specimens from Nippur," in M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield, and M. P. Weitzman, eds., *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62, 74–75.

ple has been determined in two ways. First, it has been determined by the accidents of discovery and preservation. Second, the sample is self-selective in that it only comes from people who patronized sorcerers or were sorcerers themselves.

The beneficiaries were also people who feared hostility. A minority were better off or more fortunate than others and therefore were afraid of being objects of resentment. Most were worse off and blamed their misfortunes on social hostility: someone had cursed them. Jealousy and hatred were mobilized by the evil eye. An Aramaic incantation text gives protection "from the jealousy with which the evil eye of evil men are jealous,"[47] while in a Mandaic text the "evil eye and the envious and dim-seeing eye of poverty" are the objects of therapeutic magic.[48] These people suffered from poverty, plague, disease, and childlessness. The texts express their desire for heirs, especially sons, and their fear of miscarriages, stillbirths, and infant mortality. The texts also attest to social tensions among close relatives and in-laws, to divisions between males and females in the household, to brothers who did not divide the inheritance fairly among themselves, and to the employer who stole his employee's wages.[49] There was evidently a high level of insecurity and of concern for the well-being of the household as a group.

The incantation texts open a window into the problems of a particular population in a particular place and time. Apart from the generic nature of the problems and the fact that many of the same problems are also listed in ancient Babylonian incantations, could the degree of insecurity have been related to the social structure? The incantation texts contain sufficient specific information about the clients and beneficiaries to make it possible to reconstruct sex ratios and the nature and composition of households. The latter are not necessarily coextensive with families. For all we know, some immediate family members may have lived outside the household. What we have is a group of people forming a socioeconomic unit defined by a common residence. The relationships of the people in the group to each other are specified in the text as son, daughter, husband, or wife. On this basis, out of a sample of 298 individuals (not including their parents' names) named as beneficiaries of the incantations, 59 percent (175) were male and 41 percent (123) were female (see Table 11). This roughly 60:40 ratio of males to females appears to have remained fairly stable as the size of the sample has increased. A remarkably similar ratio has been found in ancient Assyria, where out of a sample of 176 persons in forty-five households, 70 (39.8 percent) were female and 106 (60.2 percent) were male.[50]

47. Mark Geller, "Eight Incantation Bowls," *OLP* 17 (1986): 108–9.

48. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts,* 275.

49. Ibid., 17–18, 175, 179, 214.

50. Martha T. Roth, "Age at Marriage and the Household: A Study of Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Forms," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (1987): 733. This information comes

TABLE II

Social Variables

	Sample	Males	Females	
Named individuals	298	175 (59%)	123 (41%)	
Households	(119)	Male Heads	Joint	Female Heads
Monogamous couples	79 (66%)	48 (61%)	24 (30%)	7 (9%)
Polygamous	6 (5%)			
Multiple	3 (3%)			
Single woman	11 (9%)			
Single man	20 (17%)			

In bowl texts where all of the children are named, living sons outnumber daughters by more than three to one. Arguably this reflects the desire for sons and the nature of inheritance, but it is difficult to say whether this was a cause or consequence of tensions over inheritance. However, the parallel with ancient Assyria is striking: of 72 children of the heads of thirty-five households, 48 (66.7 percent) were sons and 24 (33.3 percent) were daughters, while one-half of the households with children had no daughters.[51] Martha Roth remarks that both the overall sex ratio and that among children in households defy demographic expectations, and she suggests that older daughters may have married out of the household, while married sons remained in it.[52] This does not appear to apply to the households named in the bowl texts, however, where the "extra" women are almost never married to sons of the heads of the households but are their mothers. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that two totally different forms of documentation should have produced such similar sex ratios. The *Assyrian Doomsday Book* used by Roth is an official listing of households, written on cuneiform tablets and produced by government scribes in about 700 B.C.E., that gives the number of male and female adults and the number, sex, and age group of children living in the household. This is clearly a useful source for reconstructing and comparing households. But it does not indicate the relationships among members of the household, and none of the females is named.[53] The advantage of the bowl texts over the source used by Roth is that the bowl texts specify the relationships between parents and children, and often between spouses. Neverthe-

from a collection of cuneiform tablets dating from ca. 700 B.C.E. cited by Roth and found in C. H. W. Johns, *An Assyrian Doomsday Book* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1901).

51. Roth, "Age at Marriage," 733, 735.

52. Ibid., 735, 736.

53. Ibid., 722, 732, 739.

Table III

Social and Linguistic Variables

Household type			Aramaic		Mandaic		Syriac	
Monogamous couples								
Total	79		35	(68%)	19	(24%)	5	(6%)
Male heads	48		31	(64%)	13	(27%)	4	(8%)
Joint	24		22	(91%)	2	(9%)		
Female heads	7		2		4	(57%)	1	
Polygamous	6		3		2		1	
Multiple	3		3					
Single woman	11		9	(81%)	2			
Single man	20		17	(85%)	2		1	
All households	119	(79%)	87	(73%)	25	(21%)	7	(5%)
Personal	32	(21%)	19	(59%)	9	(28%)	4	(12%)

less, the similarity in sex ratios between Assyrian households and those in late Sasanian Iraq is intriguing. What would explain it, and how did these societies perpetuate themselves?

So far some 119 households have been identified in bowl texts (28 from Nippur). According to the language of the text 73 percent (87) were Aramaic, 21 percent (25) were Mandaic, and 5 percent (7) were Syriac (see Table III). Since it is unlikely that all of these texts were written at the same time, this information cannot be used as a census would be. They are more likely to represent different households at different moments of time, possibly over a century or two. Each of the households may have been larger or smaller or structured differently before and after the incantation was written, and there are examples of multiple bowl texts written for the same client, or for some of the same people, in which the group of beneficiaries changes.[54] Any one bowl text can only indicate the composition and structure of a particular household at a particular time.

However, it is worth noting that most households were two-generation nuclear families[55] and that there are few textual indications of ties between households. Nine appears to have been the practical upper limit for the number of immediate family members in a household.[56] There is some evidence for larger households, if one includes the servants. A Mandaic incantation text for Shrūlā son of Dūktānūbā and his wife, Qāqāī, protects him, his house, sons and daughters, cattle,

54. For a possible example, see Pognon, *Inscriptions mandaïtes,* 4.

55. So far only two three-generation households have been identified, both Mandaic, one of which includes the brothers and sisters of the husband. See Cyrus H. Gordon, "Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Or* 10 (1941): 356–57, and Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts,* 227, 229.

56. Again, it is remarkable that Roth's upper limit is eight.

property, slaves, and handmaids.[57] An Aramaic text for Parrūkdad son of Zebīntā and Qāmōī daughter of Zāraq protects his house and threshold, everything they have, their sons and daughters, oxen, donkeys, camels, steeds, large and small cattle, male and female slaves, and handmaids.[58] Obviously these people were well-off, and such texts should also be used for economic history.

Out of a sample of 119 households, 66 percent (79) were monogamous couples, with or without children. Only 5 percent (6) were polygamous,[59] and these occur in Aramaic, Mandaic, and Syriac texts in the same proportions as the languages themselves (see Table III), while 2.5 percent (3) were "multiple" households (the children of different mothers living together). A single woman or a single man, with or without dependents and no reference to a spouse, constitute 9 percent (11) and 17 percent (20) of the households respectively.[60] The percentage ratio according to the language of the text for monogamous and polygamous households is close to that for all households; all three of the "multiple" households are Aramaic, as are 81 percent (9) of the single-woman and 85 percent (17) of the single-man households (see Table III). In these last two categories, those with children are likely to have been widows, widowers, or divorced. A literary source refers to an old widow living with her only son in a village in northern Iraq in the early seventh century.[61] In some cases a household consisted of the (surviving?) children of the same woman; such a household might have been the remnant of a monogamous household or a fragment of a polygamous household that stayed together after both parents had died.[62] "Multiple" households are something of an enigma. One good example comes from an Aramaic text for the five daughters, one son, and two granddaughters of four different women.[63] This might have been the remnant of a polygamous household that stayed together after all the parents had died, or it might have been simply a matter of convenience and mutual support. There is a literary reference to two apparently unrelated women, one of them with an infant, sharing a house in a Christian village (probably in Syria) in about 655 C.E.[64] However, the possibility that households stayed together

57. Cyrus H. Gordon, "Aramaic and Mandaic Magical Bowls," *ArOr* 9 (1937): 103–5.

58. Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 112–13.

59. The bowl text for one of them, Parrūk-Kōsrō son of Sīsnōī, his wives, sons, daughters, and possessions, names five of his sons by three different mothers (Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 137).

60. In these cases the client's house or threshold is mentioned in the text.

61. E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Histories of Rabban Hôrmîzd the Persian and Rabban bar-'Idtâ* (London: Luzac & Co., 1902), I:182; II:275. They lived in the village of Bēth ʿArbāthā below the monastery of Rabban Bar-ʿIdtā in Margha. The woman was poor and needy, and her son tended the village cattle.

62. Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 84, three daughters of the same mother.

63. Gordon, "Aramaic Incantation Bowls," 121–22.

64. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle,* ed. and tr. J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioch (1166–1199)* (Paris, 1899–1924; repr., Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963), II:449; IV:433.

after one or both of the parents were gone is significant. It suggests that the solidarity of such households tended to retard fragmentation from one generation to the next, which has implications for the nonfragmentation of property through the division of the inheritance.

The wording of the texts makes it possible to categorize the monogamous households according to who the head of the household was, since the texts identify to whom the house, possessions, and children belonged. Assuming that clients gave the sorcerer this information, it probably reflects how they saw their circumstances. Of the 79 monogamous households 61 percent (48) had male heads (in which everything belonged to the man). However 30 percent (24) of monogamous households were what might be called joint families, in which the house, possessions, and children belonged to the man and woman equally (see Table 11). A good example is the household indicated by an Aramaic incantation from Nippur that protects Brīk-Marīā son of Rīšīndūk and Dūstāī daughter of Dōdāī, his wife, "their sons, their daughters, his threshold, their cattle, their possessions, and the entire threshold of their house."[65] It is probably significant that among the texts with these kinds of expressions are described one household consisting of a brother and sister, one of a brother with two sisters, and one of a man with three women, possibly half sisters.[66] Of particular interest is the joint household of 'Adaq son of Ḥātōī and 'Aḥāt daughter of Ḥātōī, whose Aramaic incantation bowl seeks protection for their archways and thresholds, their house, their doors, their roof, and their children.[67] Unless there were two women named Ḥātōī, this was a brother-sister couple, and although the names of these people are Aramaic, this kind of joint household may have something to do with the Persian joint family.

But the distinction between households with a male head and joint households is not always clear. A good example is the case of two Aramaic bowls commissioned by 'Epra son of Šabordūk and Bahmandūk daughter of Samā. The bowl commissioned by 'Epra for himself and Bahmandūk is against the *lilith* in their house, while that commissioned by Bahmandūk is to get 'Epra to come to Bahmandūk, his wife, inside his house so she will give birth.[68] Another is the Mandaic incantation for Hormiz son of Mahlapta (the client) and his wife, Ahata daughter of Dade, that protects his house, dwelling, mansion, and buildings, and their bed, and their sons and daughters.[69] Evidently the property belonged to the husband, but the social relationships were shared. Sometimes it is difficult to know how far to press the wording of the text.

65. Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 100–101.
66. Gordon, "Aramaic Incantation Bowls," 46–47; Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 40–43.
67. Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 42–43.
68. Ibid., 17–18, 75–76. This part of the second text is on the exterior of the bowl.
69. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts,* 321, 233.

About 9 percent (7) of monogamous households had female heads; everything belonged to the woman even though a man was present (see Table II). For example, the Mandaic incantation for Mārīā daughter of 'Azīā protected her, her sons, her daughters, her husband (unnamed), and her house, in that order.[70] In this case Mārīā might have been a remarried widow (who had inherited the house?) or a divorcee. Another Mandaic incantation, for Duktan Pruk daughter of Bzurguntai, protects her house, dwelling, and building, the spouse [*sic*], sons and daughters, the house and family, and the fetus in her womb.[71] Changes in the handwriting of this text, and the continuation of the text on the outside of the bowl, have led McCullough to suggest that this incantation might reflect two or three phases in the life of Duktan Pruk.[72]

In households with male heads the percentages of texts written in the various languages closely matches those for all households, roughly 65 percent in Aramaic and 25 percent in Mandaic, whereas the percentages for joint households are 91 percent (22) in Aramaic and only 9 percent (2) in Mandaic. Among households with female heads, four of the seven (57%) are Mandaic, but the sample is too small to be significant (see Table III). Although these distinctions may reflect differences in personality and in marital lifestyles, there appears to have been substantial diversity in the nature of households.

Was such diversity threatening? Could it have contributed to insecurity? It is easy to understand insecurity in a single-parent household or among individuals living alone (about one-quarter of the total sample). But nuclear family households (two-thirds of the total sample) may also have had difficulty supporting themselves without extended family networks (for which there is little evidence in the texts).[73] They were on their own. This explains the importance of children and of conflicts over property among heirs as former households/families split up to form new ones from one generation to the next.

These circumstances were not necessarily new or unique in sixth-century Iraq, but may have been aggravated by contemporary changes. One working hypothesis would relate the proliferation of incantation bowls in certain places to increased social tensions resulting from agricultural development during the sixth century, to its effect on the native rural population, and to the insecurity of forcibly

70. Mark Lidzbarski, "Mandäische Zaubertexte," in *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik* (Giessen: J. Ricker'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1902), 1:98–99.

71. McCullough, *Jewish and Mandaean Incantation Bowls,* 11–15. This bowl is specified as "of the outer gate."

72. McCullough, *Jewish and Mandaean Incantation Bowls,* 13–15.

73. There is only one example so far of solidarity between two households. In the same text 'Aḥāt daughter of 'Immā and her three sons and daughter, together with her sister, Šīltā daughter of 'Immā, her daughter and grandson, seek protection for their houses, children, and possessions (Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls,* 110–11).

imported labor. Social tension and insecurity may also have been increased by socioreligious changes among these populations, including the effect of religious change on the social position of women, and the mortality caused by the great plague pandemic of the sixth century and recurring outbreaks of plague that lasted until the mid-eighth century. The disappearance of the particular custom of burying incantation bowls to protect the household may signify the completion of social, economic, and religious changes, and greater stability, or it may signify the disappearance or replacement of the people who used them. They may have died out.

However that may be, this custom was undeniably a particular form of magic practice that responded to particular historical and social circumstances. The most important social information revealed by these texts relates to sex ratios and to types of households, the most surprising being the 60:40 ratio of males to females and that two-thirds of the households (among those who patronized sorcerers) were two-generation nuclear families. There were at least seven types of households: those with male heads, joint, and those with female heads among monogamous couples, polygamous, multiple, and those with a single woman or a single man. The fact that most types of households are attested in texts in all three of the languages surveyed here—Aramaic, Mandaic, and Syriac—suggests that the social structure transcended linguistic boundaries. It remains to be seen if it also transcended ethnic and religious boundaries. The fact that joint households are overwhelmingly attested in Aramaic texts is surely significant, but it remains to be seen what that might mean. Although one should be cautious about generalizing the social structure described here to the rest of Iraqi society, the evidence for nuclear families constituting households could at least be used to qualify assumptions that households were invariably composed of extended families in premodern western Asia.

With regard to methods of research, it is hoped that scholars working on this material will be encouraged to extend their scope to consider and record the physical characteristics of incantation bowls, to remember that they are physical objects, and to relate the size, shape, fabric, images, and writing patterns to the information in the texts. Incantation bowls should always be published with photographs that show the entire object. There should be technical analysis of the ceramic fabric. There should also be a concerted effort to seek out and publish the multitude of incantation bowls that reside in private possession and pass through the hands of antiquities dealers. The significance of the results of such multivariable analyses as proposed here depends on increasing the size of the sample. We are fortunate that the corpus of potentially accessible incantation bowls makes this possible.

PART III

Dreams and Divination

6

The Open Portal

Dreams and Divine Power in Pharaonic Egypt

Kasia Szpakowska

That holy dream—that holy dream,
  While all the world were chiding,
Hath cheered me as a lovely beam
  A lonely spirit guiding.
    —Edgar Allan Poe, "A Dream"

The divine world in ancient Egypt was inhabited by the gods and by the dead. While the Egyptians went to great lengths to ensure their entry into this world after death, in life it remained out of the reach of most mortal beings. Dreams, however, offered one channel for communication between those on earth and those dwelling in the afterlife. Reports of dreams of any kind were generally rare in Egypt, as were reports of direct divine contact. This essay focuses on the few New Kingdom documents that have survived to inform us of the possibility of dreams as a mode of divine communication available even to the common man. One of these is a Dream Book, while the other two are private inscriptions. These texts are of particular significance, for while divine discourse had always been the prerogative of the pharaoh (himself semidivine), it was a relatively late development for those outside the royal sphere. In order to provide a context for these New Kingdom private texts, it will be useful to provide a short synopsis of the royal dreams, followed by an overview of the earliest dream reports.

Written almost a thousand years earlier than the pharaonic dream reports, the "Letters to the Dead"[1] provide the earliest recorded attempts at direct communi-

1. The major references to these texts are Alan H. Gardiner and Kurt Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead: Mainly from the Old and Middle Kingdoms* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1928); Alan H. Gardiner, "A New Letter to the Dead," *JEA* 16 (1930): 19–22; W. K. Simpson, "The Letter to the

cation (through dreams) with the occupants of the beyond. They have been found in sites throughout Egypt and date predominantly from the end of the Old Kingdom (ca. 2325 B.C.E.) to the early Middle Kingdom (ca. 1990 B.C.E.). These approximately twenty texts were addressed to the authors' deceased relatives or acquaintances, requesting favors in this world or the next. Centuries later, similar petitions or prayers would be addressed, not to the dead, but to the other inhabitants of the same sphere—the gods. But in the early third millenium, direct access written to the gods was restricted to the pharaoh, so the writers of these letters addressed them to the dead instead.

Dreams appear in these letters as a venue for otherworldly visual communication. In one letter (known simply as "Letter on a Stela" and dating to approximately 2160 B.C.E.), the writer begs his late wife, "Please be beneficial to me in my presence while I see you fighting on my behalf in a dream."[2] In other words, the writer is requesting her help and hopes that she will confirm this in a dream. In the Letter to the Dead Nag' ed-Deir 3737 another writer refers to unwanted dream visitations from a dead acquaintance.[3] To stop them, he writes a letter to his deceased father, urging him to intervene and to prevent the other man from watching him forever. These examples treat the dream as a two-way window between the realms of the living and the dead. The evidence suggests, however, that, before the New Kingdom, dreams could not be used by an individual to access the gods directly.

Beginning with the eighteenth-dynasty pharaoh Amenhotep II (ca. 1429 B.C.E.), the dream makes its way into royal discourse as a medium for a god to communicate personally with a pharaoh. In an account of a military campaign, Amenhotep II describes how the god Amun "came before His Majesty in a dream."[4]

Dead from the Tomb of Meru (N 3737) at Nag' ed-Deir," *JEA* 52 (1966): 39–50; idem, "A Late Old Kingdom Letter to the Dead from Nag' Ed-Deir n 3500," *JEA* 56 (1970): 58–62; M. Guilmot, "Lettre à une épouse défuncte (Pap. Leiden I, 371)," *ZÄS* 99 (1973): 94–103. Translations can conveniently be found in Edward F. Wente, trans., *Letters from Ancient Egypt,* ed. Edmund S. Meltzer, vol. 1, *Society of Biblical Literature: Writings from the Ancient World* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990).

2. See Edward F. Wente, "A Misplaced Letter to the Dead," *OLP* 6/7 (1975/76): 595–600.

3. See Simpson, "Letter to the Dead from the Tomb of Meru."

4. *Urk.* IV 1306–7; Elmar Edel, "Die Stelen Amenophis II. aus Karnak und Memphis mit dem Bericht über die asiatischen Feldzüge des Königs," *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 69 (1953): 97–176; Wolfgang Helck, "Überlegungen zur Geschichte der 18. Dynastie," *Oriens Antiquus* 8 (1969): 281–327; A. J. Spalinger, "The Historical Implications of the Year 9 Campaign of Amenophis II," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 13, no. 1 (1983): 89–101; Peter Der Manuelian, *Studies in the Reign of Amenophis II,* ed. Arne Eggebrecht, Hildesheimer ägyptologische Beiträge 26 (Gerstenberg: Hildesheim, 1987); Hans Goedicke, "Amenophis II in Samaria," *SAK* 19 (1992): 133–50. Useful references for these pharaonic dream texts within their military and literary contexts are A. J. Spalinger, *Aspects of the Military Documents of the Ancient Egyptians,* Yale Near

Approximately twenty years later, the text of a stela placed between the paws of the Great Sphinx describes how Thutmosis IV falls asleep by the Sphinx[5] and finds the god Ra-Harakhty speaking to him. Later in the New Kingdom, Merneptah describes his vision of Ptah standing before and speaking to him in a dream right on the battlefield (ca. 1210 B.C.E.).[6] These pharaohs were able to see gods in their dreams, but they could also hear them and at times be in immediate proximity to them. Even in the royal sphere, however, these visions of the divine were a rare and unusual event.

It is in the New Kingdom Dream Book (also known as P. Chester Beatty III)[7] that we find further indications of a closer contact between nonroyal Egyptians and the divine. The manuscript was discovered as part of a collection of texts owned by an Egyptian craftsman named Qenherkhopshef. He lived in the village of Deir el-Medinah—a village inhabited for most of the New Kingdom by the craftsmen and workers who built and decorated royal tombs. Much of our knowledge of daily life in ancient Egypt is based on the finds from this village. The Dream Book offers insights into the hopes, fears, cares, and worries of the villagers, as well as an indication of their codes of behavior. This manuscript dates to the reign of Ramses II, ca. 1290 B.C.E. (a few centuries after the first recorded royal dream), and is the earliest known listing of dreams and interpretations found to date in Egypt.

The Dream Book contains 226 dreams, although the beginning and end of the document is missing, rendering it impossible to say what the original number might have been. Each passage is composed of the initial premise "If a man sees himself in a dream," written in a vertical column, followed by horizontal lists of dream images, an evaluation of the dream as "good" or "bad," and finally an interpretation. Both the image seen and the interpretation of each of the dream passages refer to events or images that were within the realm of possibility in the Egyptian worldview. This New Kingdom Dream Book provides evidence of the possibility of direct contact between an ordinary man and his god, stimulated by a dream. For example:

Eastern Researches, 9 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982); Antonio Loprieno, "The 'King's Novel,'" in Antonio Loprieno, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms,* Probleme der Ägyptologie 10 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 277–95.

5. See C. M. Zivie, "Giza au deuxième Millénaire," *BdÉ* 70 (1976); B. M. Bryan, *The Reign of Thutmose IV* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

6. Libyan War, Karnak, 28–31; *Kitchen Ramesside Inscriptions* IV, 5 L.10–15; J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), § 582.

7. The manuscript was originally published by Alan H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, Third Series: Chester Beatty Gift,* 2 vols. (London: British Museum, 1935), and is housed today in the British Museum. The paleography and terminology suggest it was written in the early years of the reign of Ramses II, perhaps ca. 1290–1268 B.C.E.

If a man sees himself in a dream seeing god who is above,
good; it means a great meal.[8]
(recto 2.14)

This couplet clearly and irrefutably declares the possibility of an individual other than a king seeing a god in a dream.[9] In addition, it is interpreted as a "good" omen, thus indicating that seeing a god in a dream was permissible and allowed.

Other dream images reveal the potential for even more insistent appeals to the god and the possibility that these calls will be heard by the god.

If a man sees himself in a dream gazing through a window,
good; it means his call will be heard by his god.[10]
(recto 2.24)

If a man sees himself in a dream when an homage present is given to him,
good; it means his call will be heard.[11]
(recto 2.25)

If a man sees himself in a dream [. . . r]iver,
good; it means his call will be heard by his god.[12]
(recto 5.2)

In the first dream, the dreamer sees himself gazing through a window. By gazing through a window—by definition a transparent boundary—the viewer is able

8. Eg., *jr mɜɜ sw s m rsw.t ḥr mɜɜ nṯr ḥry; nfr, ḏfɜ.w pw* [ꜥɜ]

9. This particular dream has drawn comment from Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many,* trans. John Baines (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 130–31, who translates "seeing the upper (or: chief?) god: good. It means much food." Passages of the Dream Book have been cited by a number of scholars in a variety of contexts. John Romer, *Ancient Lives: Daily Life in Egypt of the Pharaohs* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1990), and Nicola Hensel, "Papyrus Chester Beatty III—A Dream-Book as a Source of Conception of Social and Religious Values of the 19th Dynasty," in Stephan Johannes Seidlmayer, ed., *Religion in Context: Imaginary Concepts and Social Reality in Pharaonic Egypt* (Fribourg, forthcoming), use specific passages as a window onto the social life of New Kingdom Egyptians. A linguistic analysis can be found in Sarah Israelit-Groll, "A Rameside Dream Book of a Technical Language of Dream Interpretation," in Sarah Israelit-Groll, ed., *Pharaonic Egypt: The Bible and Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1985), 71–118. In *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (American Oriental Series; New Haven, Conn., in press), Scott B. Noegel makes the case for a full investigation of wordplay in the Dream Book. A recent translation and analysis of the Dream Book can be found in Kasia Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes: Dreams and Nightmares in Ancient Egypt* (Classical Press of Wales, 2003).

10. Eg., *jr mɜɜ sw s m rsw.t ḥr ⸢nw⸣ m sšd; nfr, sḏm ⸢š=f jn nṯr=f.*

11. Eg., *jr mɜɜ sw s m rsw.t ḏj n=f mnḫ.t; nfr, sḏm ⸢š=f pw.*

12. Eg., *jr mɜɜ sw s m rsw.t* [. . . *j*]*tr.w; nfr, sḏm ⸢š=f jn nṯr=f.*

to look from one sphere into another. The third dream may be explained in a similar fashion, for rivers also represent a form of boundary or transition. All three are interpreted as excellent omens, for they indicate that the dreamer's own god will hear the call of the individual.

These dreams are all examples of the positive effect that a god could have on an individual, but a god also had the potential to impact the dreamer negatively.

> If a man sees himself in a dream placing incense on the flame for god,
> BAD; it means that the power of god is against him.[13]
> (recto 8.26)

The connection between image and interpretation in this couplet is clear. This has been explained as a case of the "retrospective value of a dream."[14] The Egyptians would have recognized the image of the burning of incense as part of a propitiatory ritual performed by the victim after the god had unleashed his power against him—thus leading to the dream's negative value.

The following passages indicate that any attempt at close contact with a goddess initiated by the dreamer is interpreted as inauspicious.

> If a man sees himself in a dream entering the temple of a female deity,
> BAD; . . .[15]
> (recto 7.1)

Although the interpretation of this dream is missing, its evaluation as a bad omen is clear. Simply dreaming of going through the threshold of a goddess's temple would have negative results.

> If a man sees himself in a dream after he had driven away his [god's] tears for god,
> BAD; it means fighting.[16]
> (recto 7.12)

13. Eg., *jr mȝȝ sw s m rsw.t ḥr rdj.t snṯr* [*ḥr*] *ḫt n nṯr; DW, bȝw* [*nj*] *nṯr r=f.*

14. J. F. Borghouts, "Divine Intervention in Ancient Egypt and Its Manifestation (*bȝw*)," in R. J. Demarée and J. J. Janssen, eds., *Gleanings from Deir el-Medina* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1982), 56 n. 100.

15. Eg., *jr mȝȝ sw s m rsw.t ḥr ⸢r⸣q r ḥwt-nṯr⸣ nj nṯr.t ḥm.t; DW,* [. . . *f* . . . *r* . . .].

16. Eg., *jr mȝȝ sw s m rsw.t dr.n=f n nṯr rmj.w=f; DW, ʿḥȝ.w pw.* The pertinent phrase seems literally to be "a god while he was weeping." Alternatives for the unusual protasis are offered by Israelit-Groll, "Ramesside Dream Book," ex. 23b ("after he has driven a god to tears"); Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum,* 1:16 ("the god making his tears cease for him"); and Robert Kriech

If a man sees himself in a dream snatching the wood of a god from his hand,
BAD; it means his own crimes will be discovered by his god.[17]
(recto 9.26)

Although the god is not named specifically in any of the dream interpretations, the New Kingdom Dream Book does provide multiple examples of the effect of dreams, which, though unsolicited, nevertheless provide a venue for more intimate contact and access to the celestial world than was normally publicly expressed.

While the Dream Book refers to the possiblilty of access to gods via dreams, for much of ancient Egypt's history the actual descriptions of such events had been restricted to the royal sphere. The public expression of such divine contact on a plebian level seems to have remained outside the boundaries of convention until the New Kingdom, possibly even until after the Amarna period (ca. 1350 B.C.E.). Even then the evidence is slim—only two hymns are currently attested: one is found on the stela of a man named Ipui, the other as part of the tomb decoration of a man named Djehutiemhab.

In both these hymns, the gap between royalty and laypeople once again becomes visible when we examine which god deigns to contact the two men. While the New Kingdom warrior-pharaohs are visited by the male state deities Amun, Ra-Harakhty, and Ptah, more ordinary citizens are visited by one of the most friendly and beloved goddesses in the Egyptian pantheon: Hathor. A plethora of shrines, votive offerings, prayers, and dedications testify to this goddess's enormous popularity in the New Kingdom. Epithets of Hathor extol her virtues as mistress of love, music, dance, and joy, to name just a few. Both Ipui and Djehutiemhab were filled with bliss by their encounter with the goddess, and indeed this personal rapture, whether instigated by a private audience or inspired by the mere thought of her, is one of the hallmarks of the cult of Hathor.

The first text is the inscription written on the front and back of a stela (Wien Env. Nr. 8390) of a man named Ipui, a craftsman from Thebes.[18] (See Appendix 1 for Egyptian transliteration.)

Giving praise to Hathor, who lives in Thebes

Ritner, "Dream Oracles," in W. W. Hallo and J. K. Lawson Younger, eds., *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 54 ("God dispelling his tears").

17. Eg., *jr mȝȝ sw s m rsw.t ḫr tȝw.t ḫ.t nj nṯr m d.t=f*; *DW, gm btȝ.w m-ˁ=f jn nṯr=f*.

18. The stela was published in Helmut Satzinger, "Zwei Wiener Objekte mit bemerkenswerten Inschriften," in Paule Posener-Kriéger, ed., *Mélanges Gamal eddin Mokhtar* (*BdÉ* 97/2 II) (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1985), 249–54. This unprovenanced stela is broken at the top, but is otherwise in good condition. The text is written in columns on both sides. The verso of the stela contains a relief of Ipui kneeling before a large bulbous flask with a water-lily blossom on top, as well as a bunch of lettuce.

Kiss the earth for [. . .] in all her forms.
May I pray to her
  for the greatness of her name,
  for the strength of her striking power.
Love of her is in the hearts of the people.
Her beauty is with the gods.
The ennead shall come to her, bowing down
  for the greatness of her eminence.

It was on the day that I saw (her) beauty—
  my mind was spending the day in celebration thereof—
that I beheld the Lady of the Two Lands in a dream
  and she placed joy in my heart.
Then I was revitalized with her food;
  without that one would say, "Would that I had, would that we had!"

He [. . .]
[. . .] festival[?]
that which gives teaching to [. . .]
[. . .] pure food[?]
  by the servant in the Place of Truth

Ipui, the Justified, says:

[. . .] solve the problem

The wonders of Hathor, [which she] did, should be related
  [to the] ones who don't know it and the ones who do know it.

A generation should tell a generation
  how beautiful [. . .]
[. . .] her face to the sky.

One is bathed and inebriated by the vision of her.

Her father, Amun, shall listen to all her petitions
peace [. . .]
[. . . wh]en he rises, carrying her beauty.
He made lapis lazuli for her hair
  and gold for her limbs.
The Two Banks of Horus were made for her
  that the god [mother(?)] may prepare [. . .]
[. . .] the land to its limits, because love of her is so great
  her brow shall bind with the beauty of his beloved face [. . .]

The inscription begins in a typical fashion for the genre, announcing itself as a hymn and then proclaiming the power and beneficence of the goddess toward people in general. The composition quickly changes its tone, however, becoming personal, presented in the first person. Ipui reveals the setting of the momentous occurrence that prompted him to write this stela: his divine vision of Hathor. He does not see the goddess in a nocturnal dream, but rather in the day, while his "mind (Eg. *ib*) was spending the day in celebration" of the goddess. He relates that in this semiconscious state he actually beheld the Lady of the Two Lands. This is one of the first attested descriptions of a *nonroyal* individual's experiencing a vision of a deity in a dream. Although the Dream Book mentions the potential of seeing a god in a dream ("If a man sees himself in a dream seeing god who is above, good; it means a great meal"; recto 2.14), this is one of the earliest extant records of the actual event.

Ipui's intense reaction to the episode stresses the extraordinary nature of this encounter with an ordinary man.[19] Although he cannot remember or chooses not to relate the details, his vision of Hathor arouses an ecstasy and religious fervor, as the goddess places joy directly into the worker's heart. She does not bestow this gift upon the world in general, but exclusively to Ipui. The dream of Hathor and her "wonders" has such an impact on the workman that he wants the experience to be related not only to everyone in the world but to future generations as well.

Whereas Ipui's stela portrays a man in awe at his good fortune in seeing the goddess in a dream, the other hymn describes a divine verbal communication received in a dream. The Ramesside official Djehutiemhab, by trade an overseer of the fields of the temple of Amun, engraved in his Theban tomb (TT 194)[20] a detailed description of his intimate encounter with the goddess Hathor.[21] In many respects, his tomb is unique among those of his peers, and this hymn is an example of the originality of texts chosen to appear on the walls of his tomb.[22] (See Appendix 2 for Egyptian transliteration.)

19. It must be stressed that although I use here the term "ordinary man," both Ipui and Djehutiemhab (see below) were not representatives of the lower classes of society. Both were members of the literate elite—"ordinary" when compared to the royal class yet representative of a rather small proportion of ancient Egyptian society.

20. See K.-J. Seyfried, *Das Grab des Djehutiemhab (TT 194),* ed. Jan Assmann, vol. 7, *Theben* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1995), for more details on the tomb of this nineteenth-dynasty man.

21. Ibid., 111–15. The hymn is part of Text 119.

22. This text, along with a detailed discussion of it as evidence of personal piety, can be found in Jan Assmann, "Eine Traumoffenbarung der Göttin Hathor," *Revue d'égyptologie* 30 (1978): 22–50.

A hymn of the Golden One, Eye of Ra,
who kisses the earth for her *ka*.
A prayer to her beautiful face, applauding her every day,
[by Osi]ris, the overseer of the fields of the temple of Amun,
Djehuti[emhab, the justified.]

[He said:
"I have come] before you, Lady of the Two Lands, Hathor,
Great of Love.
Behold [I . . .] for your beautiful face,
and I kissed the earth for your *ka*.
I am a real priest of yours
and I am upon the waters of your command.
I don't cast aside the speech of your mouth;
I don't ignore your teachings.
I am upon the path of that which you yourself have given,
upon the road that you have made.

How happy is the moment for the one who knows you;
every one who sees you is praised.
How joyful it is, when the one who enters your shadow
rests by your side!

You are the one who predicted my tomb chapel at the beginning,
as it was first decided.
That which you said, has happened;
your plan [is carried out]
and a place [is made] for my mummy.
You will give me old age, and my rest,
while I [am] healthy and satisfied with life,
my eye able to see, and all my limbs complete.

You are one who has spoken to me yourself, with your own mouth—
'I am the beautiful Hely,
my shape being that [. . .] of Mut;
I have come in order to instruct you:
See, your place—fill yourself with it,
without traveling north, without traveling south'—
while I was in a dream,
while the earth was in silence,
in the deep of the night.

At dawn, my heart was delighted, I was rejoicing
and I gave myself over to the West
in order to do as she said.
For you are a goddess who does what she says,
a noble lady to whom one owes obedience.

I have not neglected your speech;
I have not transgressed your plans.
I perform only according to that which you said.

Place your face in order to let me bow down to it.
Reward [with] your beauty
that I may perceive your form within my tomb
in order that I may recount your power
in order to make young men know [of it]."

The text begins by praising the greatness and beauty of the goddess, much as Ipui's does, but then Djehutiemhab embarks on a litany emphasizing the dependent nature of his relationship with Hathor. She is his mentor, his guide, and his director, while he is her avid student and obedient disciple. According to Djehutiemhab, this unswerving devotion does not go unrewarded, for he is privileged not only to see the beauty of the goddess but to receive a direct communication from her—a privilege previously extended only to pharaohs. The overseer's statement is unequivocal; Hathor has truly spoken to him herself: "You are one who has spoken to me yourself, with your own mouth." This is not an oracle or a figure of speech or a hallucination, for again Djehutiemhab unambiguously states that she spoke while he was "in a dream."

Following the direct speech of the goddess, Djehutiemhab eloquently provides details of the time of this event; it occurred "while the earth was in silence, in the deep of the night." This specificity serves to frame the direct speech of the goddess and to spotlight the unprecedented nature of the communique, setting it outside of the ordinary.[23] He wants to emphasize that the goddess Hathor came to him in a dream and talked to him. The momentousness of Djehutiemhab's divine visitation is substantiated by the very discreet placement of the text deep within his tomb—on the north wall at the very entrance to the burial chamber.[24] Both

23. Particularly illuminating is the contrast between the introductions to the two "speeches." In the New Kingdom, hymns and prayers could provide textual frameworks for the insertion of autobiographical statements (Andrea Gnirs, "Die ägyptische Autobiographie," in Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms,* 235).

24. Bertha Porter and Rosalind L. B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings,* 8 vols. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1929–1952; 2d ed., ed. Jaromír Málek, vols. 1–3, 1960–81), 1:301; Seyfried, *Das Grab des Djehutiemhab.*

Djehutiemhab and Ipui are filled with ecstasy after their epiphanies and break with tradition in recording these momentous occurrences for posterity.

It is not surprising that more mundane descriptions of dreams were not recorded, for it was the images of the dead or of gods that had an emotional impact on the dreamer. The visions of deities in particular were the dreams deemed important enough to record in detail, for they established the dreamer as a member of an exclusive club—as one who had gained direct access to the otherworld while still alive. The genuineness of these New Kingdom dreams is substantiated by the fact that neither Ipui nor Djehutiemhab had need of a third party to clarify the dreams for them. Their dreams are not symbolic or mysterious, but, like the dreams of New Kingdom pharaohs, they are transparent and clear. The dreams of both men may have been the result of participation in a festival of Hathor,[25] or they may have been accidental. In either case, it is implausible that these Egyptians were the first ever to dream of gods; but they were the first to document these dreams in detail.

The cosmopolitan nature of the New Kingdom engendered innovation and new attitudes in virtually every aspect of Egyptian society, including religion. The New Kingdom began with a reunification of the country, after a period when it had been both divided and partially ruled by foreigners. The belief in the invincibility of Egypt and its pharaoh had been shaken to the core. At that time, Egyptians both required and were granted recourse to mediums of religious discourse previously not at their disposal. These included public prayer facilities, oracles, and omens. When examined closely, texts such as the New Kingdom Dream Book can disclose an unsuspected private relationship between a man and his god that is as complex as that found in a theological treatise. In dreams a god could be seen by the dreamer; dreams could trigger a god to play the role of personal listener or could channel his divine power. The texts of Ipui and Djehutiemhab confirm that dreams were added to the expanding repertoire of modes of divine communication. Whereas divine contact had previously been the prerogative of the kings, the deities now deigned to visit even their nonroyal worshipers within the milieu of a dream. The fact that the documented divine dreams were unsolicited simply adds to their impact, since the contact was seemingly instigated by the goddess herself. The ancient Egyptians had finally discovered that dreams could be used as a portal to the gods.

25. Some of the most important works on this goddess are C. J. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth: Two Key Figures of the Ancient Egyptian Religion,* Studies in the History of Religions, 26 (Supplements to Numen) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973); idem, "Isis and Hathor: Two Ancient Egyptian Goddesses," in Carl Olson, ed., *The Book of the Goddess Past and Present: An Introduction to Her Religion* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 29–48; Geraldine Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 1993). A readily accessible overview can be found in B. S. Lesko, *The Great Goddesses of Egypt* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

Appendix 1: Egyptian Transliteration of the Hymn of Ipui

rdj.t dwꜣ.w n Ḥwt-ḥr ḥrj.t-jb Wꜣs.t
sn tꜣ n [. . .] *m ḫpr.w=s nb.t*
dj=j n=s jꜣ.w
n ꜥꜣ.w n rn=[*s*]
n wsr.t tꜣy=s pḥ.tj ꜣ.t
mrw.t=s m jb nj rmṯ
nfr.w=s ḫr nṯr.w
jw n=s psḏ.t m k[*s*]*.w*
n ꜥꜣ.w n šf.t(*5*)*=s*

ḫr jry ḥrw ptrj=j nfr.wt
wrš jb=j m ḥb jry
mꜣ=j nb.t tꜣ.wy m qd
ḫr dj=s rš.w m jb=j
wn.jn=j ‹*ḥr*› *wꜣḏ m kꜣ.w=s*
nn ḏd‹*.tw*› *n=f ḥnr n=j =n*

ntf [. . .]
[. . .]
[. . .] *ḥb*
ddj.t sbꜣ.tj n [. . .]
[. . .]*ḏ*[*f*]*ꜣ.t*
*jn sḏm-*ꜥ*š m st-mꜣꜥt*

jpwy mꜣꜥ=ḫrw ḏd=[*f. . . (15) . . .*]

[. . .] *wḥꜥ mdw.t*
jḫ s:ḏd.tw tꜣ bjꜣ.wt n Ḥt-ḥr
jrj [. . .]
[*ḫ*]*m sw rḫ sw*

ḏd ḏꜣmw n ḏꜣmw
nfr.wy [. . .]
[. . .]*r*[*?*] *ḥr=s r pt*

jꜥj.tw tḫj.tw n mꜣꜣ=s

sḏm n=s jtj=s Jmn spr.wt=s nb
ḥtp [. . .]
[. . .*wb*]*n=f ḫr nfr.w=s*
jrj=f ḫsbd n šnj.w=s

nwb n ˁt.y=s
jrj n=s jdb.y Ḥr
sꜣy nṯr [*mwt. . .*]
[*. . . tꜣ r-ḏr=f n ˁꜣ.w mr.wt=s*
snsn ḫꜣ.wt=s ˁn.w nj ḥr=f mry [*. . .*]

Appendix 2: Egyptian Transliteration of the Hymn of Djehutiemhab

dwꜣ nb.wt jrj.t Rˁ.w
snty tꜣ n kꜣ[*=s*]
[*rdj.t jꜣ.w n ḥr=s nfr swꜣš=⌜s . . . rˁ.w nb⌝*
[*jn(?) Ws*]⌜*jr*⌝ *jmj-rꜣ sḫtj nj pr-Jmn Ḏḥwtj*[*-m-ḫꜣb mꜣˁ-ḫrw*]

[*ḏd=f*
jj=kw] *ḥr=ṯ tꜣ nb.t tꜣ.wy Ḥwt-ḥr wr.t mr.wt*
mk⌜.wj⌟[*. . .*] (*5*) *n ḥr=ṯ nfr*
sn=j tꜣ n kꜣ=ṯ
jnk ḥm=ṯ n wn-mꜣˁ
twj ḥr mw n wḏ=ṯ
bw ḫꜣˁ=j jḏd rꜣ=ṯ
bw ḥm=j sbꜣ.wt=ṯ
tw=j ḥr wꜣj.t n‹t› ddj.t ḏs=ṯ
ḥr mṯnw nj jrj.n=ṯ

ḫy pꜣ sp nfr n nty m rḫ=ṯ
pꜣ ptrj=ṯ nb ḥsj.w
rš.wj ḥtp r gs=ṯ
pꜣ ˁq n šwyt=ṯ (*10*)
mntṯ sr mˁḫˁ.t=j m-šꜣˁ
jw=s m šꜣ.w r-ḫpr
jḏd=ṯ ḫpr
sḫrw=ṯ [*, . . .*]
[*. . .*] *st n ḏ.t=j*
jw=ṯ r ddj n=j njꜣ.w ḥtp=j
jw=j wḏꜣ=[*kw*] *sꜣꜣ=kw m ˁnḫ*
jrj.t=j ḥr gmḫ ˁw.t nb.t tmm‹.tj›

mntṯ j:ḏd n=j m rꜣ=ṯ ḏs=ṯ
jnk Ḥnrjj nfr.t

jw jrj.w=j [. . .] *n Mwt*
jrj=j jj‹.t› r mtr=k
ptr st=k jmḥ.tw jm=s n ḫd n ḫnty

jw=j m qd
jw t3 m sgr
m nfrw grḥ

ḥḏ t3 jb=j ḥᶜ.w tw=j m ršrš
dj.n=j ‹wj› ḥr jmj-wr.t
r jrj.t mj jḏd=ṯ

mntṯ nṯr.t n jrj.t jḏd.t=s
šps.t n sḏm n=s

bw wn=j r3=ṯ
bw sn=j sḫr.w=ṯ
jrr=j mj jḏd=ṯ (15)

jm ḥr=ṯ r dj.t ḫ3m.w=j sw
mnq ‹n› n3y=ṯ nfr.w
ḫt=j jr(w)=ṯ m-ḫnw js=j
r s:ḏd=j pḥtj=ṯ
r dj.t ᶜm ḏ3mw

7

Viscera and the Divine

Dreams as the Divinatory Bridge Between the Corporeal and the Incorporeal

Peter Struck

Dreams are perhaps the ancient world's most-traveled bridge between the heavens and the individual. As a form of divination, dreams play a pivotal role from Homer through the late Neoplatonist Synesius (ca. 370–413 C.E.). The dream serves as a conduit for a message from the world beyond. According to the traditional view, on which there are a hundred variations, the source is an authority figure or a god who either appears in person at the head of the sleeper or generates a phantom drama with a hidden message. In the medical corpus, dreams also produce ties between the individual and the larger cosmos. In incubation rites that were widely practiced in Greek and Roman times, the dream served as a vehicle for the god Asclepius to make his visitation to the patient. In the Hippocratic corpus also, as I discuss shortly, dreams remain a linking agent between the individual and the larger cosmos. When these traditions of divination, incubation, and medicine are placed alongside one another, a somewhat counterintuitive fact emerges. While it is perhaps no surprise that dreams reach outward toward the furthest reaches of the stars and the gods—as is customary with divinatory systems—it *is* somewhat of a surprise to see that ancient dreams also consistently reach inward, inside the human body, toward the extreme reaches of the internal organs. In fact, many testimonia on dreams from the ancient world display a certain fixation on internal organs. One cannot but recall the sad tales from the Roman period of Aelius Aristides (117–89), who writes page after page on absinthe-induced dreams and diseases, documenting divine intrusions into nearly all his bodily organs. In this movement, dreams do not stand outside the rather common Mediterranean tendency, exhibited in extispicies of all kinds, to see the divine in the viscera.[1] But I will take a closer look

1. See Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 49–51.

at three of our earliest detailed attestations of this double movement from the self, outward toward the gods and inward toward the organs. After a brief look at the famous stela from the Asclepian temple at Epidaurus (second half of the fourth century B.C.E.), I will examine more closely the Hippocratic treatise *On Regimen* (likely early fourth century B.C.E.) and Plato's *Timaeus* (first half of the fourth century B.C.E.).

INCUBATION

Since practices of incubation have been so well known for so long, they may have become somewhat domesticated in the range of evidence on ancient dreaming. I begin by recalling the obvious: taken as a whole, the phenomenon of incubation makes the point that dreams are intimately connected with the corporeal. The evidence from Epidaurus adds a few details to this general picture. One sees in the physical evidence a stark reminder that devotees went to Epidaurus with their flesh in mind as much as the divine: the holy site is literally littered with body parts, small effigies of various limbs and organs, which presumably stood in need of relief.[2] Once asleep in Asclepius's temple, a patient received his or her cure not through fairy dust or a divine nod. The preserved textual records leave no room for doubt on the subject. The dream served primarily as a vehicle for the god to perform an invasive procedure and manipulate the patient's body parts. The extant stelae include harrowing accounts of sliced eyeballs, severed heads, cleaved chests, as well as the extraction of a spearhead from a jawbone, an eye socket, or a lung and the removal of bucketsful of worms or pus. One fuller example will suffice:

> Aristagora of Troezen. She had a tapeworm in her belly, and she slept in the Temple of Asclepius at Troezen and saw a dream. It seemed to her that the sons of the god, while he was not present but away in Epidaurus, cut off her head, but, being unable to put it back again, they sent a messenger to Asclepius asking him to come. Meanwhile day breaks and the priest clearly sees her head cut off from the body. When night approached, Aristagora saw a vision. It seemed to her the god had come from Epidau-

2. See Lynn R. LiDonnici, introduction to *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995); for images of such evidence, see E. D. Phillips, *Greek Medicine* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), pl. 7, between pp. 72 and 73.

> rus and fastened her head on to her neck. Then he cut open her belly, took the tapeworm out and stitched her up again. And after that she became well.[3]

When put in context with other Greek dream testimonia, the incubation texts, predicated on connections between the divine and body parts by means of a dream, is not so exotic as it may first appear.

Hippocratic Medicine

The scientific approach to dreaming in the Hippocratic corpus also presents evidence of dreams as a conduit between the bodily organs and the heavens. Here the mechanisms are more complicated, but equally remarkable. The author of the Hippocratic treatise *On Regimen* claims that the dreamer is a supersensitive instrument for diagnosing bodily pathologies.[4] Diseases, in this author's opinion, result from an imbalance between the two basic elements in the human body, fire and water. These imbalances set in stealthily (1.2) and are hard to discern before they have gotten out of hand. But when the body is asleep, the soul can detect more subtle somatic conditions. Bodily conditions induce the soul to produce a dream that acts as an aperture into the viscera and provides an early warning from which to judge how a patient should adjust his or her level of heat and moisture in order to bring the body back into equilibrium. The medical advancement of dream reading allows a doctor to take heretofore impossible preventive measures and to begin treatment even before the disease manifests itself visibly.

The observation that dreams reveal irregularities in the body's physical condition is sound science and is the first attestation of a view upheld by Aristotle and even surviving through Freud to our own time. This satisfies the visceral, bodily side of the two poles that I am claiming for ancient thinking on dreams. But what of the outward movement toward the stars? After all, the author explicitly dissociates himself from diviners and those who spend their time only asking the god

3. For the text, see Emma J. Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 225; for the translation, see 234.

4. Werner Jaeger discusses the tract in *Paideia,* vol. 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 33–40. Recent commentary by Robert Joly and Simon Byl, eds., Hippocrate[s], *Du régime,* Corpus medicorum Graecorum 1 2,4 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984); see also Robert Joly, *Recherches sur le traité pseudo-hippocratique "Du régime"* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960), and Wesley D. Smith, *The Hippocratic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 44–60.

for help,[5] and casts a skeptical eye on supposed divine dreams that predict the future (IV.86). The author, however, expects our dreams to speak in a peculiar language. Dreams manifest bodily conditions, the *On Regimen* author claims, by showing us images of large cosmological phenomena. For example, disease of the belly is signified by a dream about a star plunging into the sea. A star falling into the earth is a symptom of nascent tumors in the flesh. Dreaming of a rough surface of the earth indicates impure flesh; dreaming of high or low rivers indicates high or low blood levels.[6] So dreams once again bring the larger cosmos to bear on the viscera. The situation has obvious differences with incubation. The dream here is a symptom and not a cure. This cosmos is not a proper divinity, as Asclepius is in the incubation texts, although it still carries some trace of the divine. In the incubation accounts, the connection between body and divine is spelled out in gruesome detail, whereas in the Hippocratic text it is more subtle.

The Hippocratic author lays a foundation for his views on dreams in a detailed anatomy and cosmology, for which he draws heavily on the thought of the Pythagoreans and Heraclitus (ca. 500 B.C.E.). Book I of the *On Regimen* generates, in quite striking detail, a theory of the human body as a mirror of the cosmos. Similar microcosm-macrocosm models appear elsewhere in the Hippocratic corpus.[7] The great principle of fire, the author tells us, constructs each individual as an imitation (Gr. ἀπομίμησις) of the cosmos. Heavenly circuits (Gr. περίοδοι) and revolutions are mirrored by circuits (περίοδοι) and movements in the body. The belly is an imitation of the sea, the flesh an imitation of the earth; the body's inner circuit imitates the circuit of the moon; its outer circuit mirrors that of the stars. The diagnostic dreams that are this author's interest speak in a language that matches these correspondences.[8] This microcosm-macrocosm theory provides part of an explanation for how dreams connect viscera and stars, but not a complete one. The theory that the universe and the human body relate to one another as model and copy is not quite the same as a theory that they interact as signifier and signified. The first position suggests only a theory of production, where a human is molded according to structures that can be found throughout the cosmos as a whole. The second suggests an ongoing communication between the two. The question remains why the soul produces dreams using the cosmos as a language. Just because the soul is itself an imitation of the cosmos does not mean that it

5. "Prayer is good," he says in good Hippocratic fashion, "but a person should call upon the gods while lending himself a hand" (*On Reg.* 4.87).

6. The author tells us that his basic principle is that anything that accords with a situation in nature (Gr. κατὰ φύσιν) is good, whereas anything that is contrary to the way it appears in nature is bad.

7. See Jaap Mansfeld, *The Pseudo-Hippocratic Tract* περὶ ἑβδομάδων *Ch. 1–11 and Greek Philosophy* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971), 103–7.

8. As already noted, a star plunging into the sea means disease of the belly; a star falling earthward is a symptom of nascent tumors in the flesh.

should imitate the cosmos in return during its dreams. Something slightly more elaborate is at work.

The author gives us a few clues for understanding what supports this semantic system. First, he envisions the cosmos and the individual not just as model and copy but also as a pair of coinciding and interconnecting opposites, such as Heraclitus used to put forward. Section 4 of book 1 relates the coincidence of several pairs of opposites. Humans customarily consider coming to be and passing away opposites—as they do other pairs like mixture and separation, increase and diminution. But on this point, custom and nature are at odds. The author suggests that a closer look at the universe reveals that nothing perishes or comes to be, but that there is only change. Many pairs of opposites, he goes on to say, are in actuality "the same," including becoming and perishing, mixture and separation, increase and diminution. Oddly enough, the author considers a similar relation to hold between the individual and the wider cosmos. While they appear to lie at opposite poles, the individual (Gr. ἕκαστον) and everything else (Gr. πάντα) are actually "the same" when one considers their relations with one another: "Coming to be and passing away are the same thing, mixing and separating are the same thing, growth and diminution are the same thing . . . the individual in relation to the universe and the universe in relation to the individual is the same thing."[9]

The author elaborates with the example of two men sawing a log. Although one pushes and the other pulls, they are both doing the same thing. In fact, both of the opposite motions are required for the outcome of sawing to take place (1.7). Similarly, day completes and depends on night, as does winter summer and, provocatively, the individual the whole. Like Heraclitus's views, this is suggestive, but hardly lucid. But the Hippocratic author gives a further clue. Near the beginning of book 1, he lays down perhaps his most general theoretical principle: "Everything, both divine and human, goes up and down, exchanging places. . . . The things of the other world come here, the things of this world go there, always and everywhere those things fulfill (Gr. διαπρησσόμενα) things here, and these things in turn fulfill things there.[10]. . . As the things of the other world come to this and these go to that and they combine with one another, each fulfills its allotted destiny."[11]

9. Gr. γενέσθαι καὶ ἀπολέσθαι τωὐτό· συμμιγῆναι καὶ διακριθῆναι τωὐτό· αὐξηθῆναι καὶ μειωθῆναι τωὐτό . . . ἕκαστον πρὸς πάντα καὶ πάντα πρὸς ἕκαστον τωὐτό (Hippocrates, *On Reg.* 1.4). All texts are taken from Hippocrate[s], *Du régime.*

10. Among the modern translators, W. H. S. Jones in the Loeb series renders "the things of the other world do the work of this, and those of this world do the work of that"; Joly opts for the more elegant, but less exact, "jouent le rôle."

11. Gr. Χωρεῖ δὲ πάντα καὶ θεῖα καὶ ἀνθρώπινα ἄνω καὶ κάτω ἀμειβόμενα. . . . φοιτᾷ κεῖνα ὧδε, καὶ τάδε κεῖσε, πᾶσαν ὥρην, πᾶσαν χώρην διαπρησσόμενα κεῖνά τε τὰ τῶνδε, τάδε τ' αὖ τὰ κείνων. . . .

The author lines up the pair "divine things" and "human things" along the axis between what is "out there" and what is "in here," recapitulating in the opposition of κεῖνα and τάδε the kind of pair he was discussing in ἕκαστον and πάντα in the earlier section. His positioning of θεῖα and ἀνθρώπινα makes the strong suggestion that, as noted earlier, the dream at the least brings the viscera into some contact with the divine. While the dream speaks the language of cosmology, the vocabulary of this language is made up of θεῖα. Of course, the divine plays a more attenuated role than that seen in the Asclepius texts. Nevertheless, the divine is once again present, and once again it is particularly the dream through which the divine interacts with human flesh.

In the citation above, the middle form διαπρησοόμενα is worth pausing over for a moment, since, within the Hippocratic corpus, it is idiosyncratic to this treatise, appears in several significant contexts, and lies at the very heart of our author's theory of links between the body and the cosmos. The verb appears only a handful of times in the entire rest of the Hippocratic corpus—it appears twenty times in the *On Regimen*.[12] In book I, forms of διαπρήσσομαι are used to indicate a human art insofar as it is related to some other analogous process in the larger cosmos (I.14, 23, 24). Various τέχναι—such as writing, physical training, and carding wool—accomplish (Gr. διαπρήσσονται) "the same thing" as some other process in the cosmos as a whole. All of human activity, in fact, is said to mirror unselfconsciously the great processes of the cosmos. In book II, the verb most often indicates the medicinal effects of particular foods or forms of exercise on the body. Here a food or activity is said to produce particular results (διαπρήσσεται) for the patient (II.40, 45, 54). The term appears with near equal frequency in these two contexts. The same verb, then, that lies at the heart of his understanding of the connection between microcosm and macrocosm also links human τέχναι to cosmological activity and links human diet and exercise to human health. The author's use of the term suggests a large interconnected cosmos of which the patient is very much a part—in keeping with the basic premise of such an important treatise as *Airs, Waters, Places*. The term διαπρήσσομαι appears in a third context also—it regulates the connection between body and soul during a dream. Just before his treatise moves into a consideration of specific examples of dreams and the maladies they indicate, the author says twice that during dreams the soul herself διαπρήσσεται all the functions of the body during the night.

Φοιτώντων δὲ κείνων ὥδε, τῶν δέ τε κεῖσε, συμμισγομένων πρὸς ἄλληλα, τὴν πεπρωμένην μοίραν ἕκαστον ἐκπληροῖ (*On Reg.* 1.5).

12. *LSJ* cites several possibilities for the term: In Homer it is "pass over" (*Il.* 2.785) or "finish" (*Od.* 2.213); in Herodotus, "bring about" or "accomplish" (9.94); and "make an end of" or "destroy" in Aeschylus (*Pers.* 260).

> As many as are the functions of the body or the soul, the soul accomplishes all these effects in sleep.[13]
>
> Whenever the body is at rest, the soul, set in motion and awake, manages its own household and itself completes all the activities of the body.[14]

Given the other contexts in which the term appears, the author's use of διαπρήσσεται in discussing dreams carries several further suggestions. First, the author treats the soul and the body as behaving like a Heraclitean pair of distant cousins that complete each other's work. The soul brings the whole cosmos to bear on an individual's bodily condition, using the larger cosmological processes as a system of signs that carry meaningful connections to processes in the bodily organs. Interestingly enough, this means that the author places the production of dreams along a precise parallel with the physiological development of the human body. Whereas the great cosmological principle of fire produces individuals by copying the cosmos as a whole, the soul "produces" a cosmos within the dream by imitating the body's internal corporeal condition. The two processes, then, physiological production of the human individual and the dream production of a cosmos, are put into the Heraclitean relationship of opposites that complete each other and are in some sense "the same." Dreaming recapitulates ontogenesis.

Second, the effect of the dream on the body is likened to the effect of a drug on the body. Both dreams and drugs (as well as particular forms of exercise) διαπρήσσονται their effects on the human being. While this runs counter to the author's implicit claim that the dream is related to the disease as a symptom and not a cure, he nonetheless suggests, since he uses identical terminology, that the dream has some sort of direct efficacy in healing. A further suggestion in this direction appears in the opening line of book IV. As he begins his consideration of dreams, he tells us: "Whoever has a correct understanding concerning the signs that appear in sleep will find that they have a great effect upon everything."[15]

The term "effect" (Gr. δύναμις) is also a favorite of this author. It appears thirty-eight times in the treatise, and in the vast majority of cases it refers specifically to the medicinal properties of particular foods, exercises, and climates on the health of an individuals (see II.39, where the general programmatic statement is made). So dreams behave, from the point of view of vocabulary at least, a good deal like

13. Gr. ὁκόσαι τοῦ σώματος ὑπηρεσίαι ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς, πάντα ταῦτα ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ διαπρήσσεται (*On Reg.* 4.86).

14. Gr. Ὁκόταν δὲ τὸ σῶμα ἡσυχάσῃ, ἡ ψυχὴ κινευμένη καὶ ἐπεξέρπουσα τὰ μέρη τοῦ σώματος διοικέει τὸν ἑωυτῆς οἶκον, καὶ τὰς τοῦ σώματος πρήξιας ἁπάσας αὐτὴ διαπρήσσεται (*On Reg.* 4.86).

15. Gr. Περὶ δὲ τῶν τεκμηρίων τῶν ἐν τοῖσιν ὕπνοισιν ὅστις ὀρθῶς ἔγνωκε, μεγάλην ἔχοντα δύναμιν εὑρήσει πρὸς ἅπαντα (*On Reg.* 4.86).

various other factors that have real effects on a person's health. Such a language of efficaciousness is telling in that it is consonant with the theory of dreams operative in the Asclepian texts. In those texts, as noted above, the dream is not an opportunity for interpretive activity but a divine visitation that produces its own result. The Hippocratic author of course disavows this notion, but it lingers in his language. He may simply be groping imperfectly for a new language, but another possibility is worth considering as well. In book 1, as already noted, the author places the individual and the cosmos in the relationship of opposites. In the dream the individual makes use of the cosmos (the individual's opposite) as a pivotal part of the healing process. Such a use of opposites in healing would have dovetailed nicely with traditional allopathic medical practices. Treatment of a disease with its antithesis approached Hippocratic common sense. By this principle, it is a short step to suggest that what lies opposite to the viscera, that is, the cosmos according to this author's grand vision, might have a role to play in producing a cure. In these respects dreams behave like foods and exercises in the bodily regimen of the patient. They have an important and, in a sense, efficacious role to play in generating a cure. Despite the appearance that dreams are only a symptom, then, these considerations suggest a capacity to bring the body back into balance.

The mechanisms by which this whole practice proceeds remain somewhat vague. Perhaps they are an example of how basic ontological structures continually manifest themselves at many different levels throughout the universe, without any particular agency needed on the part of those places where they are manifested. A parallel from the *On Regimen* supports this reading. When the author discusses how human crafts mirror larger celestial and terrestrial processes, he says specifically that humans do this unawares: "For though humans employ arts that resemble human nature, they are unaware. For the mind of the gods taught them to imitate their own functions—while they know what they are doing, even still they do not know what they are imitating."[16]

Maybe, then, the soul simply performs its allotted functions in the larger cosmos and unconsciously reproduces universal structures in a sort of natural language of microcosm-macrocosm. On this reading, it would be the divine intention (Gr. *νόος θεῶν*), and not the soul, that is the real agent behind the dreams, since it is the underlying force that turns the world of models and copies into a world of signifiers and signifieds—in other words, it is the divine that speaks through dreams. If this is true, and this is my best estimate of what Hippocrates has in mind, the author is only a stone's throw from divination. In fact, although the Hippocratic system differs in its sophistication, compared to early theories of

16. Gr. τέχνῃσι γὰρ χρεόμενοι ὁμοίῃσιν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει οὐ γινώσκουσιν: θεῶν γὰρ νόος ἐδίδαξε μιμέεσθαι τὰ ἑωυτῶν, γινώσκοντας ἃ ποιέουσι, καὶ οὐ γινώσκοντας ἅ μιμέονται (*On Reg.* 1.11).

divination, it is a noteworthy precursor to later Stoic ideas on the subject, such as those Cicero makes out in the *De divinatione*. And while the author is careful to distinguish his own art from divination, divination takes first place in a list of the human arts, which mirror the functioning of the cosmos, and no hint of skepticism inhabits his accounting of it (1.13).

Plato's *Timaeus*

Plato's *Timaeus* strikes several common chords with the Hippocratic text. They share the same Pythagorean influences. They share a very similar notion of the body as a microcosm that imitates the universe as a whole (e.g., 44d). They even describe the same mysterious bodily circuits (Gr. περίοδοι) that are said to mirror circuits in the larger cosmos (44a–d). Plato also has a few words to say about dreams, though his thoughts in this direction are less developed than those of the Hippocratic author. Absent is the theory that the large forces of the cosmos somehow intervene to make the cosmos and body, as model and copy, interact in the dreaming process. But Plato does consider seriously the role of both the human viscera and the divine in dreaming. In Plato's version, the gods communicate with us in dreams by reaching into the very center of the body cavity.

He situates his consideration of dreaming inside a discussion of human physiology. The divine creators, Plato says, make people by wrapping a material body around a dual soul made up of immortal and mortal components. The immortal soul partakes of reason and dwells in the head; the mortal one contains the passions and is quartered in the chest (Gr. ἐν τοῖς στήθεσι, 69e). Plato further subdivides this chest-bound soul, placing courage and spiritedness above the midriff and the lower urges below it. The lowest region is dominated by the appetites for food and drink and all other wants that are due to the nature of the body. It is chained down, Plato goes on, like a wild beast (Gr. ὡς θρέμμα ἄγριον, 70e). In order that this part of the soul not run riot, the gods inserted an organ that could keep it under guard. The liver, Plato says, is created as a mirror that picks up and reflects stern threats from the reasoning center in the head. It changes its shape, manipulates its natural bitterness, sweetness, and shininess, and thereby sends a warning sign to the chained passion center. Now, this lowest part of the soul, dominated by appetites, together with the liver, also makes up the complex of organs that govern divine messages through divination. Plato's physiology, though its vantage point is different from Hippocrates', is once again clear testimony to the curious Greek involution of the corporeal and the divine through the dream.

The liver takes a prominent position in Plato's scheme, though the precise meaning of the *Timaeus* is somewhat opaque. The liver plays an indirect role in dream

divination by facilitating the soul's reception of divine messages. When the lower part of the soul becomes inflamed with passions, it is the liver's job to frighten it into submission. It can soothe it with calming images or bear down on it with threats. Plato says (71d) that when the liver produces calmness and serenity, the hunger-driven part of the soul spends its time during the night performing divination through dreams. He goes to noteworthy lengths to explain the effect of the stern threats on the liver. The warnings and threats cause the liver to change color, to contract, and to take on a wrinkled appearance. Plato goes on: "And with respect to the lobe and passages and gates of the liver, the first of these it bends back from the straight and compresses, while it blocks the others and closes them up, and thus it produces pains and nausea."[17]

As is known from Euripides (ca. 485–406 B.C.E.), this discussion of lobes, passages, and gates is distinctive of the science of divinatory liver reading, where the disposition of these elements, along with the liver's overall appearance, make clear the divine will (*El.* 826–29).[18] Plato here transforms the language of hepatoscopy—perhaps the quintessential expression of a general Mediterranean tendency to find the gods in the viscera—into an underlying physiological component of dream divination. But one can also find a stronger position in Plato, which seems to go beyond simply suggesting the liver as a kind of mirror to regulate the lower soul. Plato's language also suggests that the dreamer's liver itself receives divinatory signs and does not just facilitate their reception by the soul. In his summary of the liver, he says that it was created for the sake of divination (Gr. χάριν μαντικῆς, 72b) and that, when the individual creature is alive, this organ "has/sustains" signs that are rather clear (Gr. τὸ [ἧπαρ] τοιοῦτον σημεία ἐναργέστερα ἔχει, 72b), but, when stripped of life, it becomes blind and the omens it presents are too obscure to indicate something clear (Gr. τὰ μαντεῖα ἀμυδρότερα ἔσχε τοῦ τι σαφὲς σημαίνειν, 72b). Here the verb ἔχω, "to have, hold," is ambiguous. It could mean something like the facilitating role that is spelled out in 71d, but it could also be read as saying that the liver itself holds the signs that are significant divine omens. This ambiguity invites comparison of the liver to another image-producing thing, the mirror. The liver is like a mirror that receives impressions and furnishes phantoms (Gr. εἴδωλα) for the eye to see (Gr. οἷον ἐν κατόπτρῳ δεχομένῳ τύπους καὶ κατιδεῖν εἴδωλα παρέχοντι, 71b). Since dream images are typically called εἴδωλα, this text suggests that the liver is the stage upon which the gods perform the dream's

17. Gr. λοβὸν δὲ καὶ δοχὰς πύλας τε τὰ μὲν ἐξ ὀρθοῦ κατακάμπτουσα καὶ συσπῶσα, τὰ δὲ ἐμφράττουσα συγκλείουσά τε, λύπας καὶ ἄσας παρέχοι (Plato, *Tim.* 71c).

18. The connection with Euripides is noted by both A. E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's "Timaeus"* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1928), and R. D. Archer-Hind, *The Timaeus of Plato* (repr., New York: Arno Press, 1973).

portentous shadow play. This stronger theory is even more provocative, but both of Plato's views on the liver borrow well-established, traditional thought structures from the field of sacrificial divination and resituate them in the service of a newly theorized dream divination.

Conclusions

By this early evidence, then, dreams consistently blend the individual's corporeal world with traces from the furthest regions of the cosmos and the divine. Evidence on dreams from the later periods introduces more nuance into this picture. Neither Cicero's *De divinatione* nor Artemidorus's *Interpretation of Dreams* exhibits quite this level of interest in the viscera. And yet Aelius Aristides' tales are simply transfixed on the divine and body parts—remaking a divinatory approach in the image of an incubatory one. In addition, Aristotle's *On Divination Through Dreams* and the *On Dreams* of the late Neoplatonist Synesius show that Plato's search for the organ of divination was carried forward in later centuries. At this point, we are safe in saying that in many of the ancient testimonia the dream stands as a durable link between the human viscera and human aspirations for the divine—the very bookends of imagined human identity.

Two avenues seem open for investigation at this point. First, from the standpoint of the history of religions, divination in itself is a transgressive business. It is made to regulate and control human and divine interaction. It may well be that divinatory thinking precipitates a kind of extremism in the binaries that it necessarily places under threat. The wide popularity of extispicies of all kinds is also most suggestive in this direction. The bodily and the divine assert themselves all the more vehemently for being placed in proximity. If one is going to find divine messages in this world, asserting that one will find them by foraging around in the viscera perhaps reinforces, in a graphically negative way, the divinity's utter transcendence. Second, from a semiotic perspective, some of the authors mentioned here read "inside out." The methods of Plato and the diviners tend to move from the viscera outward to some larger truth. The *On Regimen* reverses this movement. Here the larger cosmological or divine appearances are the "signifiers," and somatic conditions are the "signifieds." The Hippocratic authors tend to read "outside in." The Asclepian texts, to the extent that they make semiotic claims, would also have to be placed within the category of the "outside-in" processes. But this difference also highlights a similarity. The two poles of the semantic system remain constant. The medical theorist, the philosopher, and the diviner all generate knowledge by crossing the boundary between "inside" and "outside." Whichever

pole is the goal of knowledge, all these thinkers agree that *translation* between them is the means, and that the dream is a uniquely potent vehicle, to facilitate these movements from one language to the other. If translation makes meanings, then translations between realms farthest apart will stand the best chance of making the greatest meaning, since the vast distance between signifier and signified stands the best chance of keeping tautology at bay.

8

Stars and the Egyptian Priesthood in the Graeco-Roman Period

Jacco Dieleman

With the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.E., Egypt was to be dominated for three centuries by a Macedonian Greek ruling class that would bring with it its own language and way of life.[1] At the same time, a large Jewish community gradually developed in several cities throughout the country, a process that had already started during the first period of Persian domination (525–404 B.C.E.). The encounter between the autochthonous population and the newly arrived foreigners resulted unavoidably in processes of cultural assimilation, producing new forms of kingship, religious practices, art, and so forth. An important factor in the forms and directions of cultural exchange was, of course, the hegemony of the Greeks. However, in analyzing the process of cultural assimilation, it is important not to restrict attention to the dominant political class as if change was dictated from above. Processes of assimilation are best described as negotiations between a dominant and several subordinate cultures, governed by resistance and incorporation from both sides.[2] The relationship among prayer, magic, and the stars in antiquity, from the perspective of the Egyptian priesthood, is a topic well suited to a discussion and critical analysis of the signifying processes at work in the encounter between Greek and native pharaonic culture. In the following pages, the biography of Harkhebi, an Egyptian priest, and a ritual from a Demotic magical manuscript will be analyzed in the light of cross-cultural exchange. The former source can be attributed to the Ptolemaic period, whereas the ritual text is from the Roman period. Both cases

I would like to thank Dr. J. F. Borghouts, Dr. W. J. J. Schipper de Leeuw, and Dr. H. S. Versnel for giving valuable comments on earlier drafts. I am also indebted to Dr. Jan den Hartog, who patiently corrected my English and improved my argumentation. Any faults or omissions that remain are, of course, my own responsibility.

1. All dates derive from John Baines and Jaromir Málek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1980).

2. John Storey, *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture,* 2d ed. (London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997), 125. See also the telling subtitle of David Frankfurter's *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

illustrate fairly well the creative incorporation of foreign elements into an Egyptian mold.

The Christian apologist Clement of Alexandria (second century C.E.) provides a vivid portrait of an Egyptian procession in honor of the god Osiris in Alexandria during the Roman period. In *Stromateis* (ca. 200 C.E.) he describes the priests walking in the procession, specifies their functions, and enumerates the books that contain their sacred knowledge. At the front of the procession a singer recites hymns in honor of Osiris.

> Behind the singer comes the hour-priest [Gk. ὡροσκόπος], who is holding his insignia, the hour-measure [ὡρολόγιον] and the astronomical palm leaf [φοῖνιξ ἀστρολογίας], in his hand. He must always have in his mouth the astrological books of Hermes, being four in number, of which the first is about the arrangement of the fixed stars, the second about the movements of the sun and the moon and the five planets, the third about the encounters and illuminations of the sun and the moon, and the last about the rising of the stars.[3]

The hour-priest is followed by the sacred scribe, who is an expert on hieroglyphs, carrying a book and a scribal palette. The stolist, knowledgeable in markings on animals and prescriptions for rituals, is followed by the prophet, the chief of the temple, who is well versed in the hieratic writings and knows all rules and regulations pertaining to temple life, its personnel, and its rituals. The priestly train is finally closed by priests carrying offerings for the ensuing ritual.

In the above citation, Clement describes a priest who holds the office of "hour-priest" and who is, according to the four astrological books of Hermes, in charge of observing the movements of different celestial bodies. Because of this reference to the stars and planets, one is tempted to identify an hour-priest as a priest whose duty was to cast horoscopes, predicting a person's fate by determining the relative position of the stars and planets at the moment of birth. However, this title and its synonym, "hour-measurer" (Gk. ὡρολόγος), should be identified with the Egyptian titles *ỉm.y wnw.t,* literally "he who is within the hour," known from the New Kingdom (1550–1070 B.C.E.), and *wnw.tỉ,* meaning "he from the hour," known already from the Middle Kingdom (2040–1640 B.C.E.).[4] Such priests ap-

3. Clement of Alexandria, *Stomateis,* VI, chap. 4, 35–36. For a discussion of this passage from an Egyptological perspective, see Philippe Derchain, "Un sens curieux de ἔκπεμις chez Clément d'Alexandrie," *CdÉ* 26 (1951): 269–79.

4. For a useful discussion of these two terms, see Alan H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica,* 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 1:61*–62*. An overview of hieroglyphic writings can be found in Khaled Daoud, "An Early Ramesside Stela of a Chief of Hour Watchers in the

pear to have had two tasks in the pharaonic period. First, it was their duty to observe a proper division of day and night into twelve hours each in order to perform the temple rituals at their specific and prescribed moments. During the night, the succession of the hours was established by observing the succession of the decanal stars.[5] Two priests sitting face to face on a temple roof, along a north-south axis, used a wooden stick and a rod with a dependent plumb line to determine the hours.[6] The former instrument can be identified with Clement's "astronomical palm leaf," which was called *bꜥ n ỉmy-wnw.t* in Egyptian, "the palm leaf of the hour-priest."[7] The latter instrument was known as (Eg.) *mrḫ.t* and is certainly identical to the "hour-measure" in the above citation.[8]

The second task of hour-priests was to determine for each day of the year whether it would bring good or ill fortune to businesses or persons. This art, known as hemerology, was not based on astrological assumptions but on mythological arguments.[9] The Egyptian hour-priests were only interested in the stars as far as

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Memphite Temple of Ptah," *JEA* 79 (1993): 261–65. Note the addition of the eye-determinative from the eighteenth dynasty onward. A list of occurrences in Demotic documents can be found in Günther Vittmann, *Der demotische Papyrus Rylands 9,* 2 vols., Ägypten und Altes Testament 38 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 323–24.

5. The term "decanal stars" designates those stars or clusters of stars that mark by their rising the succession of hours during the night. Every ten days (a week, or decade, according to the Egyptian calendar), a different combination of twelve successive stars defines the twelve hours of the night. The order of succession of these twelve stars changes throughout the year as a result of the earth's rotation on its axis and its revolution around the sun.

6. A chart accompanying a star clock in the tomb of pharaoh Ramses VII gives specific details for the procedure. See Richard A. Parker, "Ancient Egyptian Astronomy," in D. G. Kendall and F. R. Hodson, eds., *The Place of Astronomy in the Ancient World: A Joint Symposium of the Royal Society and the British Academy* (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1974), 51–65, 58.

7. Wilhelm Spiegelberg, "Der Name des astronomischen Visierstabes," *ZÄS* 53 (1917): 113–14.

8. In the Ptolemaic period the Egyptian word *wnw.t,* "hour," could be written with a hieroglyphic sign representing such an instrument. Logically, the word *mrḫ.t* has the same determinative. In a Ptolemaic temple scene depicting a foundation ritual for a new temple, the word *mrḫ.t* refers to two wooden sticks held by the pharaoh and the goddess Seshat. These wooden sticks may be identified with the astronomical palm leaf, since the accompanying text speaks about observing the stars. See R. W. Sloley, "Primitive Methods of Measuring Time, with Special Reference to Egypt," *JEA* 17 (1931): 166–78, 170. A pair of these instruments has been preserved: Berlin Mus. inv. 14084 and 14085. Originally it formed part of the burial equipment of "the hour-priest Hor son of Horudja," a member of the royal family. According to Ludwig Borchardt, the pieces can be attributed to the twenty-sixth dynasty on the basis of a queen's name: Borchardt, "Ein altägyptisches astronomisches Instrument," *ZÄS* 37 (1899): 10–17.

9. Herodotus *Histories* II, 83, refers to the Egyptian practice of determining a person's fate at the moment of birth and is sometimes taken as a proof of the existence of astrology already in this early period. However, this is not an instance of astrology but of hemerology; see Alan B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II, Commentary 1–98,* Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 43 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 343–44. For an example of a calendar of good and bad days, see Christian Leitz, *Tagewählerei: Das Buch ḥꜣ.t nḥḥ pḥ.wy ḏ.t und verwandte Texte,* Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 55 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994).

they could help them with the general measurement of time for calendrical and ritual purposes. As for predicting the future, the Egyptians preferred recourse to mythological precedents instead of the regular movements of the stars. Therefore, Egyptian mythology does not contain any references to the underlying ideas of astrology. This may then also help explain why mathematical astronomy had only been developed in rudimentary form during the pharaonic period.[10]

In the time of Clement of Alexandria, Egypt was nevertheless generally seen as the cradle of astronomy and astrology.[11] It is clear today that the origin of astronomy and astrology is to be found in Mesopotamia, which had a long tradition of writing down the position of celestial bodies and of collecting data of celestial phenomena such as eclipses. Eventually these carefully established lists led to the ability to predict the movements of the stars and planets and the idea that occurrences in the sky had a direct effect on earthly events.[12] In spite of these facts, the Chaldaeans, the name by which the astronomer-priests of Babylonia were known in Graeco-Roman usage, were not seen as the sole originators of the art of astrology in the Roman period: they had to share this honor with the Egyptian priesthood.[13] In light of the above, the attribution of the invention of astrology to the Egyptians certainly poses a paradox.

This mistaken attribution can only be explained within the context of the encounter of Greeks with Egyptian culture. This encounter, starting with Herodotus, is characterized by a feeling of respectful admiration. The Greeks credited Egypt with wisdom, resulting from its supposed overwhelming antiquity. This positive image of Egyptian culture is particularly apparent in the areas of religion and the constitution of the state. Herodotus describes the Egyptian pantheon as the original, pure model for the Greek one, and Plato and Isocrates see the Egyptian constitution and legal code as an example of a just political order.[14] In the Hellenistic period, these ideas became a fixed representation and even took on a constitutive

10. Otto Neugebauer, "The History of Ancient Astronomy," in *Astronomy and History: Selected Essays* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1983), 33–98, 40 and 57–58.

11. For a useful overview, see Briant Bohleke, "In Terms of Fate: A Survey of the Indigenous Egyptian Contribution to Ancient Astrology in Light of Papyrus CtYBR Inv. 1132(B)," *SAK* 23 (1996): 11–46, esp. 11–19.

12. Ulla Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination,* Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications 19 (Copenhagen: Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 1995).

13. See Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 135: "But to the Greek and Roman mind Babylon and Egypt stood *jointly* for the wisdom of the East, so naturally they were compared, and questions of priority or possible mutual influence much discussed, especially in the fields of astronomy and astrology" (Fowden's italics).

14. Jan Assmann, *Weisheit und Mysterium: Das Bild der Griechen von Ägypten* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000), 31–32 and 44–51.

role. The combination of "antiquity" and "origin of true religion" eventually led to the idea that Egypt was the cradle of hidden knowledge and divine revelations. Thanks to this Greek representation, Egypt came to be known not only as the source of powerful magic but also as the birthplace of astrology. Many Greek authors of the Hellenistic period who wrote about the principles of astrology based their arguments on books revealed by the supreme god Hermes Trismegistos[15] or written by the famous Egyptian astrologers Nechepso and Petosiris, who were both ostensibly writing during the early Hellenistic period.[16] The names of these authors are certainly to be interpreted as instances of pseudepigraphy, a common and widespread phenomenon in antiquity and even earlier periods.[17] Their names and books form part of a Hellenistic discourse on the origin and legitimacy of divine knowledge and have to be analyzed as such. They are the result of a lively dialogue between Egyptian and Greek culture in the Hellenistic era.

If the representation of Egypt as the land of powerful magic and divine knowledge is not to be taken at face value and the Egyptian priesthood is consequently not to be regarded as the originator of astrology, the following question must be asked: to what extent and in what way was the Egyptian priesthood prepared to incorporate into its own tradition the new discipline of astrology, a discipline that became of major importance during the Hellenistic and Roman period? Horoscopes can be found in Egypt from the Roman period onward, proving that the art of casting horoscopes did indeed exist in Roman Egypt. The earliest horoscope found to date is from 37 B.C.E. and is written in Demotic, a cursive script for writing the vernacular, which, interestingly enough, was used almost solely by the native priesthood during this late period.[18] Horoscopes written in Greek are known from 9 B.C.E. onward and abound in the first two centuries of the

15. Hermes Trismegistos is the Hellenistic rendering of the Egyptian god "Thoth, the thrice great," the god of wisdom and sacred writing in the Egyptian pantheon. See Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 22–31.

16. Their names are indeed Egyptian. Petosiris, which means "the one whom Osiris has given," is frequently attested from the Late Period onward; cf. Hermann Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen I* (Glückstad: J. J. Augustin, 1935), 123, 1. The etymology for Nechepso is unclear: maybe *Nb-k3.w N(y)-sw.t,* "Necho the King"; Rolf Krauss, "Nechepso," in Wolfgang Helck and Eberhard Otto, eds., *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972–), 4:367–68.

17. Wilhelm Gundel and Hans Georg Gundel, *Astrologumena: Die astrologische Literatur in der Antike und ihre Geschichte* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1966), 9–40; for Nechepso and Petosiris, see 27–36. See also Otto Neugebauer and Richard A. Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts III* (London: Lund Humphries, 1969), 216, who refute the idea that Petosiris, the owner of the famous tomb in Hermopolis, would be identical with Petosiris the astrologer.

18. Only seven Demotic horoscopes have been published to date: Otto Neugebauer, "Demotic Horoscopes," *JAOS* 63 (1943): 115–26; Otto Neugebauer and Richard A. Parker, "Two Demotic Horoscopes," *JEA* 54 (1968): 231–34; Richard A. Parker, "A Horoscopic Text in Triplicate," in Heinz-J. Thissen and Karl-Th. Zauzich, eds., *Grammata demotika: Festschrift für Erich Lüddeckens zum 15. Juni 1983* (Würzburg: Zauzich, 1984), 141–43. The ostraca O.Med.Madi 1060 and 1154, discussed in the latter publication, might have been found in a temple school.

common era.[19] By that time astrology had apparently also become a thriving discipline in Egypt.

To gain an idea of the extent to which the Egyptian priesthood was engaged in the art of astrology in the Ptolemaic period, one might consider the biography of Harkhebi (see Appendix I). The biography is inscribed on the back pillar and left side of a statue found at Tell el-Fara'in, the ancient Buto, in 1906.[20] The statue, which can be dated to the second half of the second century B.C.E.,[21] represents a standing figure with its hands alongside its body, dressed in a *šndy.t* cloak, thus conforming to the traditional way of rendering an Egyptian male. The text is written in so-called later Classical Egyptian, an obsolete yet canonical dialect of the Egyptian language in those days,[22] and structured in a highly sophisticated, maybe even poetical, form. According to the inscription, which presents a summary of his professional abilities, Harkhebi was a priest who combined the disciplines of astronomy and medicine in one person. The following programmatic lines introduce the honorific enumeration of his abilities:

> Open of heart toward the sacred writings,
> Who observes everything observable in heaven and on earth.

The competence of Harkhebi is based on the two pillars of traditional knowledge, preserved in the sacred books of the temple, and observation of natural phenomena. In his case these natural phenomena appear to be stars (in heaven) and snakes (upon the earth).

The classification of poisonous snakes and treatment of their bites were traditionally assigned to the priestly office of "Leader of Serket" (Eg. *ḫrp Srḳ.t*), a title indeed held by Harkhebi.[23] A handbook for such a priest is preserved on a papyrus from the Ptolemaic period, and in this handbook the same constitutive elements

19. Otto Neugebauer and H. B. van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1959).

20. The statue is known under the number Cairo JE 38545. Unfortunately no photo has been published. Ahmed Bey Kamal, "Rapports sur quelques localités de la Basse-Egypte," *ASAE* 7 (1906): 232–40, 239–40; Georges Daressy, "La Statue d'un Astronome," *ASAE* 16 (1916): 1–5; Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts III,* 214–16 (with important contributions of Herman de Meulenaere); Philippe Derchain, "Harkhébis, le Psylle-Astrologue," *CdÉ* 64 (1989): 74–89.

21. The heliacal rising of Venus in the first decan of Pisces, as alluded to in the text, points at the first days of March 154, 146, 138, or 130 B.C.E.: Derchain, "Harkhébis, le Psylle-Astrologue," 88.

22. Later Classical Egyptian is nothing other than standard Middle Egyptian and was used for those (mainly religious) texts written from the New Kingdom until the Roman period, when Middle Egyptian was no longer a spoken language.

23. Serge Sauneron, *Un traité égyptien d'ophiologie: Papyrus du Brooklyn Museum no. 47.218.48 et .85*, Publications de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Bibliothèque générale 11 (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1989), 198–206; Frédérique von Känel, *Les prêtres-ouab de*

of observation and revealed knowledge can be discerned.[24] It is divided into two sections: a section on the classification and description of snakes, followed by a section on the medical treatment of snake bites with the help of drugs and, in some cases, incantations. The catalog reveals a profound knowledge of different subspecies based on careful observation of a snake's anatomy, color, size, and behavior, accompanied by a description of the symptoms of its bite. The medical section, on the other hand, is presented as a copy of an ancient manuscript that was found during the reign of pharaoh Nefer-ka-Re, presumably Pepi II of the sixth dynasty (2246–2152 B.C.E.).[25] Several of the treatments are rather straightforward and look like first aid. Others, however, must be accompanied by incantations and ritual actions, thus forming part of the priestly tradition of sacred knowledge.

It can be deduced from the section on astronomy, which is more elaborate and is placed prominently before the section on snake charming, that Harkhebi also served as a traditional hour-priest, although this title does not actually appear in the text. The following verses refer to the above-mentioned practice of determining the succession of hours during the night.

> He who divides the hours into the two periods [day and night] without a mistake in the night,
> [. . .] concerning everything that is brought on the first day of every month.

In line with his priestly office, Harkhebi was also knowledgeable in the course of the star Sirius, called Sothis by the Egyptians. He boasts of being able to predict its heliacal rising, which was an important moment for Egypt for two reasons. First, every year in July-August the reappearance of Sirius in the early morning dawn, after a period of invisibility, was anxiously awaited by the Egyptians, since its rising was believed to have a direct effect on the fertility of the land. Because the rising of Sirius coincided with the beginning of the rising of the Nile, the Egyptians had established a causal relationship between these two phenomena. Second, the reappearance of Sirius announced the beginning of a new year and a new cycle of religious festivals.

Besides this traditional knowledge, Harkhebi reveals a new attitude toward the stars by calling the planets "the gods who foretell the future."[26] At the same time,

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Sekhmet et les conjurateurs de Serket (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984); Joachim F. Quack, "Kontinuität und Wandel in der spätägyptischen Magie," *SEL* 15 (1998): 77–94, esp. 80–81.

24. See Sauneron, *Un traité égyptien d'ophiologie*.

25. Ibid., 60–61.

26. Though Egyptian astronomers had always viewed the planets as gods, the concept that the planets could also predict the future was new. See, for example, their names: Horus the Bull (Saturn),

he boasts of knowing everything Sirius predicts and of announcing all the sun disk's omina, implying that he was able to foretell the future with the help of celestial bodies. These utterances certainly lend the inscription an astrological flavor, although the modern distinction between astronomy and astrology was presumably nonexistent in Harkhebi's days. Unfortunately, the inscription is no more explicit on the underlying assumptions of these predictions than it is on the question of whose interest he served in observing the movements in the sky. Priestly secrecy is apparently, and for a modern scholar unfortunately, a constituent of Harkhebi's identity as hour-priest:

> He who does not disclose [anything] at all concerning his report after judgment,
> Whose mouth is closed concerning all he has seen;
> He who does not give a bow because of that [?],
> Who opens his speech [only] to the lord of the two lands.

Hellenistic astrology presupposes a geocentric vision of the cosmos and the existence of seven concentric planetary spheres around the earth, a vision incompatible with the traditional Egyptian subdivision between heaven, world, and underworld. It is therefore very unlikely that the description of the planets as "the gods who foretell the future" points to the assumptions of Hellenistic astrology. Harkhebi was certainly not in charge of casting personal horoscopes, a practice whose existence can only be proved for the Roman period in Egypt. However that may be, Harkhebi is the earliest known representative from Egypt to make reference to the movements of the stars for predicting the future.

A divinatory text on eclipses and lunar omina, which is preserved in a Demotic manuscript from the late second century C.E., may give some insight into Harkhebi's function.[27] The manuscript, which is actually a copy of two separate treatises, constitutes a handbook for predicting future events, concerning the king or country, by determining the month of the year and the section of the sky in which the omina occur. This type of judicial astrology is well known from Mesopotamia, where it was practiced from the seventh century B.C.E. onward.[28]

Horus the Mystery (Jupiter), Horus the Red (Mars), the morning-god (Venus), Sobek (Mercury, not identical with the crocodile-god Sobek). Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts III,* 175–76.

27. Richard A. Parker, *A Vienna Demotic Papyrus on Eclipse- and Lunar-Omina,* Brown Egyptological Studies 2 (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1959).

28. I borrow the term "judicial astrology" from Neugebauer, "History of Ancient Astronomy," 55–58.

That the concept of the manuscript was borrowed from Mesopotamia is clearly indicated by the concordance between Egyptian and Babylonian (transcribed into Demotic) names of the lunar months. The mention in text A of what could be pharaoh Darius I (521–486 B.C.E.) could establish the date of the introduction of judicial astrology into Egypt.[29] Moreover, the biography of Udyahoresne, chief physician of Darius I, relates that one day he was sent back to Egypt to reorganize the institution of "the house of life" (Eg. *pr-ʿnḫ*).[30] These institutions were scriptoria of a sort where texts were copied and composed by priests in order to protect the temple, country, and king.[31] It is not impossible that Udyahoresne's reorganization led to the introduction of such texts into the circles of the Egyptian priesthood. Therefore, Harkhebi's utterances might best be seen in the light of judicial astrology.

The new discipline of astrology was practiced by a person holding traditional bureaucratic titles and who was a member of the priesthood, as hour-priest and *ḫrp Srḳ.t*. Harkhebi's honorific titles of hereditary prince, count, and sole companion suggest that he was a high-standing figure in a society that, at least nominally, carried on a pharaonic tradition thousands of years old. This new art, whatever its underlying assumptions, was therefore certainly not a marginal discipline but was taken up by a priestly and scholarly elite. As is clear from the inscription and the *ḫrp Srḳ.t* handbook, the practitioners of astrology founded their knowledge on sacred writings and expanded it by careful observation of the surrounding world. In this way, the fields of medicine and astronomy-astrology could easily be integrated into one person.

In the Roman period, judicial as well as horoscopic astrology were well established among the native priesthood, as is attested by the Demotic horoscopes and astrological handbooks or tables.[32] Most of these texts are laid out according to the signs of the zodiac, which must have been introduced into Egypt during the late Ptolemaic period. The famous zodiacal ceilings in the temples of Dendera, Edfu, and Esna prove the willingness of the Egyptian priests to incorporate new

29. Parker, *Vienna Demotic Papyrus on Eclipse- and Lunar-Omina,* 21, note to line 10.

30. For a translation of this text, see Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume III: The Late Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 36–41.

31. Alan H. Gardiner, "The House of Life," *JEA* 24 (1938): 157–79.

32. For an overview, see Bohleke, "In Terms of Fate," 20–34. The published ostraca of Medinet Maadi (Narmuthis) in the Fayyum reveal that the priestly community was involved with astrology. See O. Narmuti 27, 82 and 84. Edda Bresciani, Sergio Pernigotti, and Maria C. Betrò, *Ostraka demotici da Narmuti* (Pisa: Giardini, 1983), nos. 1–33. Paolo Gallo, *Ostraca demotici e ieratici dall'archivio bilingue di Narmouthis* (Pisa: ETS, 1997), nos. 34–99. For a reedition of O. Narmuti 27, see Friedhelm Hoffmann, *Ägypten: Kultur und Lebenswelt in griechisch-römischer Zeit: Eine Darstellung nach den demotischen Quellen* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 45–46 and pl. 9.

elements, which entail a rather modified vision of the cosmos, even into their highly traditional temples.[33] A ritual for casting a horoscope shows in what way such elements could be incorporated.

The ritual *PDM* xiv 93–114 (see Appendix II),[34] which is contained in the large Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden,[35] stands out among Egyptian rituals of the Late Period for two reasons. First, it is the only known specimen for casting a horoscope. Second, the prescriptions for the ritual procedures are written in Demotic, whereas the prayer is in Greek. Although the facsimile edition may still suggest that the Greek part was written separately from the surrounding Demotic text—by a different scribe, for example—a photo of the original reveals that the Greek part is incorporated with the surrounding Demotic parts to such an extent that both were probably written by the same scribe at the same time.[36] Bilingualism is characteristic of the whole corpus of texts from which this ritual is taken. The collection, better known as the "Theban Magical Library," consists of several magical handbooks and alchemical treatises written in Demotic, Greek, and Old Coptic.[37] Each of these languages is not used exclusively in specific texts but can appear alongside the others in the same manuscript, ritual, or even line. Likewise, the contents of the magical handbooks are a mixture of different cultural and ethnic strands: mainly Egyptian, Greek, and Semitic. Since it is very likely that the difficult Demotic script was only used by the native priesthood during the Roman period, the Greek texts contained in the corpus were presumably written by these same priests.

The Demotic prescription describes in detail a ritual for making a god appear in order to ask him to send favorable stars related to a specific question. The procedures of the ritual are fairly simple to follow. A bench of olive wood is covered with a linen cloth, and four bricks are placed on top of each other, in front of the

33. If late Egyptian temples are viewed as conscious attempts at constructing Egyptian identity and community, such incorporations might have far-reaching consequences with regard to the concept of cultural assimilation. For Egyptian identity expressed in late Egyptian temples, see Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen,* 2d ed. (Munich: Beck, 1999), 177–95, sec. 4.2, called "Der Spätzeittempel als 'Kanon.'"

34. Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells,* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 200–201.

35. P. London-Leiden IV, 1–22: Francis Llewellyn Griffith and Herbert Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden,* 3 vols. (London: H. Grevel & Co., 1904). For philological commentary, see 1:39–43.

36. For a photo, see J. J. Hess, *Der gnostische Papyrus von London* (Fribourg, 1892).

37. William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)" in *ANRW* II 18.5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995): 3380–684, 3402–4. Although the main part of the corpus is constituted by magical handbooks, the collection also contains two alchemical texts and a literary tale. For that reason the title is not well chosen. For the moment I prefer the title "The Thebes Cache," as does Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes,* 168–76.

bench. A little ball of goose fat, pounded with myrrh and *ḳs-ʿnḫ* stone,[38] is burnt in a clay censer. Next, the Greek spell is recited, after which the magician lies down. While he is sleeping, the god appears in the dress of an Egyptian priest, wearing a linen cloth on his back and sandals on his feet. The practitioner will then get an answer to all his questions. If the practitioner also puts a small wooden tablet with an astrological table on the bricks, together with a rolled-up papyrus sheet containing a description of a specific problem, the god will also send favorable stars relating to the question.

P. London-Leiden contains numerous rituals for divination using similar pharaonic ritual techniques such as the placing of bricks, the burning of offerings, and incubation.[39] The astrological component, however, is specific to this ritual. Since astrology was never developed as a discipline in the pharaonic period, but was only introduced in the Hellenistic period, this aspect calls for an analysis of the dynamics of tradition and change. The combination of Egyptian and Greek also begs for an explanation within this dichotomy. It is therefore interesting to look more closely at the use of Greek in this ritual text.

The prayer stands out within the layout of the column because it interrupts the neat sequence of Demotic lines. It opens with a standard phrase, "I call upon you who . . ." (Gk. Ἐπικαλοῦμαι σε τὸν), in order to enumerate several powerful epithets and names for conjuring the gods. This is a form frequently seen in the corpus of the Thebes Cache and the Greek magical papyri in general. The prayer also contains a few *voces magicae* and thus resembles in a number of details other invocations from the Greek magical papyri. Although it appears in a Demotic magical manuscript, the prayer does not mention any Egyptian deities by their traditional names. The prayer is addressed to the sun-god Helios, who is identified as BARZAN, BOUBARZAN, NARZAZOUZAN, BARZABOUZATH, asking him to send his archangel ZEBOURTHAUNEN. It seems that no pharaonic names and epithets can be recognized in these magical names, unlike most other rituals and prayers contained in the Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden.

38. For a discussion of this mineral, see J. R. Harris, *Lexicographical Studies in Ancient Egyptian Minerals* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961), 168–70.

39. The Egyptian term for such an oracular consultation is *pḥ-nṯr,* literally meaning "reaching the god," and is attested from the New Kingdom onward. Several of the divination rituals in P. London-Leiden are considered *pḥ-nṯr,* according to their titles. The same term is also used in the ritual under discussion in lines 2–3: "When you wish to make a 'god's arrival' with it truthfully, without falsehood." Its title however is "A casting for inspection that the great god Imhotep makes" (Eg. *wʿ sš-mšt i.ḫr ir=s pȝ nṯr ʿȝ Ỉy-m-ḥtp*). The term *sš-mšt,* which only occurs in this text and whose interpretation as "casting for inspection" is tentative, shows that the author of the prescription considered the ritual to be something different than a *pḥ-nṯr.* For a discussion of *pḥ-nṯr,* see Robert Kriech Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice,* Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 214–20; for *sš-mšt,* see Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri,* 200 n. 59.

The Egyptian part itself also shows some peculiarities. The Demotic prescription contains two Greek glosses above the line. In the first line, the Demotic word *tks,* "seat, throne, ship," is glossed with the Greek word τραπεσεν, from τράπεζα, "table, bench." In the sixth line the Egyptian word *srỉw.t,* written in hieratic script, meaning "goose," is glossed with χηνα[γ]ριου, from χῆν ἄγριος, "wild goose." In the Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden it is not unusual for Egyptian words to be glossed, but such a procedure is normally restricted to passages within prayers. Divine names are most often glossed with Greek or Old Coptic letters to ensure correct pronunciation, since Demotic script does not render the vowels. Less often, a specific verb is glossed to indicate which vowel is to be pronounced. In the present case, the glosses are in that part of the text which is *not* to be pronounced, and they are a *translation,* not a phonetic transcription in Greek letters.[40]

The first thing to notice is the fact that the Greek glosses are provided with case endings: τραπεσε̲ν̲ and χηνα[γ]ριου̲, accusative and genitive respectively. Demotic has no cases but assigns functions by strict word order. The case endings correspond with the use of the Demotic words in the text, since the grammatical functions of *tks* and *srỉw.t* are direct object and possessive respectively. It seems odd that an Egyptian scribe who composed a text in Demotic would take pains to insert Greek glosses with case endings above common Egyptian words. Thus, it is tempting to think that it happened the other way around: an Egyptian scribe used a ritual text in Greek as *Vorlage* and preserved two original Greek words as glosses above the Demotic words to limit the semantic field of the Demotic words. For example, *tks* means "seat, throne, or ship," but by adding the Greek gloss it is clear that a simple bench is meant; *srỉw.t* is a general word for goose, whereas χηνα[γ]ριου defines the goose more specifically as wild. Not satisfied with his imprecise translations, he added the original Greek words to indicate that the lexically general form was merely the result of his translation. While adding these Greek glosses, however, he left the original case endings, although these no longer had any meaning.

The hypothesis that an original text in Greek was used as a source of this ritual text is supported by the following observation: in lines 21 and 22 the tablet for reading the hours is called πίναξ, a Greek word meaning "board" or "writing tablet" but also used more specifically as a technical term for an astrological table.[41] In this case, the word is not written as a Greek gloss but is a Demotic transliteration. The Demotic wood-determinative makes clear that a wooden tablet is meant. The

40. Griffith and Thompson have also drawn attention to this in discussing the possibility that the manuscript is a translation out of the Greek. Griffith and Thompson, *Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden,* 11–12.

41. *LSJ,* s.v. πίναξ, p. 1405b. Friedrich Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden* (Berlin: Selbstverlag der Erben, 1925), 305–6.

Egyptian translator probably could not find a suitable Egyptian equivalent for this word. This should not be surprising, since pharaonic tradition did not know horoscopes and had therefore never developed any appropriate terminology on the matter.[42] The translator solved the problem by transliterating πίναξ with Demotic letters and by adding, in Demotic, "for reading the hours" as an explanation of what is meant exactly: not just a wooden tablet, but an astrological table.

In summary, I argue that the Demotic text of the ritual has been composed with the help of an original text in Greek. Remnants of this Greek text are the two glosses with case endings, the words τραπεσεν and χηνα[γ]ριου, and the Greek word πίναξ written in Demotic letters. The most important part of the ritual, the invocation, whose effectiveness is entirely dependent upon correct pronunciation, is left in Greek. A translation into another language would certainly have stripped the prayer of its ritual power. This explanation makes the combination of Greek and Demotic functional and reveals, at the same time, a complex textuality: the ritual contains too many traditional Egyptian ritual techniques to presume that the original text derives simply from a Greek cultural background. It is quite possible that the Greek text was composed by an Egyptian priest.

Although it is a common philological practice to concentrate on a lost original textual source instead of the extant text itself, it is more interesting to focus on the consequences for the textual dynamics of the extant text. The Demotic magical papyrus is an elaborate manuscript with ninety-nine instructions dealing with rituals for divination, binding spells, and cures for venomous stings, all written in Demotic.[43] Most of these texts reflect Egyptian mythology and cosmology in matters of theme, magical procedure, and logic.[44] Although the Demotic magical texts are

42. In Classical Egyptian two terms for a writing tablet are attested: *ʿwty* is a golden or silver leaf, attested in the New Kingdom (*WB* I, 173, 11); *ʿn* is a wooden or metal tablet, attested from the Middle Kingdom onward (*WB* I, 187, 13–14). These words are no longer used in Demotic or Coptic. The Demotic-Greek ostraca from Medinet Maadi have similar recourse to the transcribed Greek term (O. Narmuti 56/4, 60/2, 82/4, 85/1, 90/4). In all instances but 82/4 reference is made to an ordinary wooden writing tablet. The form of 82/4 bears a star-determinative to indicate that an astrological table is meant. The word could also be used in Demotic to refer to a (metal) dish, as does Coptic ⲡⲓⲛⲁⲝ (B), ⲡⲓⲛⲉϭ (F), ⲡⲓⲛⲁⲍⲉ (S): Jaroslav Černý, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 25, and Werner Vycichl, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue copte* (Leuven: Peeters, 1983), 30. Two Demotic attestations in documentary texts can be found in Willy Clarysse, "Greek Loan-Words in Demotic," in S. P. Vleeming, ed., *Aspects of Demotic Lexicography* (Leuven: Peeters, 1987), 9–33, 27. In O.dem. Leiden 336, line 11 (*t3*) *pyngʒ.t* and in O.dem. BM 30258, line 2 *pyng*[*ʒ.t*]. Notice that the first is feminine, unlike the *pynᶜks* in P. London-Leiden and πίναξ, which are both masculine. The second clearly means "(wooden) dish," since it figures in a list of house utensils.

43. In two other recipes a short Greek incantation is inserted into the manuscript: P. London-Leiden XV, 25–28, and XXIII, 9–20. Together with the prayer under study, they were collected by Preisendanz out of context as *PGM* XIV.1–26.

44. Not without reason the corpus of Demotic magical texts is often treated as not forming part of native magical tradition. Cf. J. F. Borghouts, "Magical Texts," in *Textes et Langages de l'Egypte*

more aggressive and less apotropaic in nature than pharaonic magical texts, they clearly do form part of the same tradition.[45] The present ritual is therefore an anomaly within the manuscript: it is a ritual for a horoscope, it does not refer to pharaonic mythology and cosmology, and it contains a Greek prayer as well as Greek glosses.

For this reason it is important to note that the Demotic title ascribes the ritual to "the great god Imhotep." Imhotep is a historic figure who, according to Egyptian tradition, served as vizier to pharaoh Djoser (2667–2648 B.C.E.) of the third dynasty and built this pharaoh's step pyramid—an unlikely candidate for a composer of a Greek hymn.[46] This is a clear instance of pseudepigraphy, just like Nechepso and Petosiris. In the Late Period, Imhotep was eventually deified because of his apparent wisdom and became particularly popular as a god of medicine, to be identified by the Greeks with the Greek god Asclepius.[47] By ascribing the ritual to Imhotep, the title's author consciously inscribes the ritual into an Egyptian tradition. This reveals a rather complex movement of cultural transpositions. Although some elements point to a former text in Greek, and while the astrological element has to be of Hellenistic derivation, the basic structure of the divinatory ritual is pharaonic.

The statue of Harkhebi and the ritual in P. London-Leiden have shown that astrology, the art of predicting future events with the help of celestial bodies, was known among the native priesthood in Graeco-Roman Egypt. In both cases, the new discipline is incorporated into the Egyptian tradition without any apparent problems. Harkhebi is as much a traditional snake charmer as he is a close observer of the stars, and in the Demotic magical handbook the element of astrology is incorporated into a traditional divination ritual. It is worth noting that this same elaborate handbook contains, besides the ritual for casting a horoscope, some rituals for curing venomous animal stings.[48] This makes clear that the fields of medicine, magic, and astrology were intimately linked and fell within the competence of the Egyptian priesthood. This priesthood was, according to a Hellenistic

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pharaonique: Cent cinquante années de recherches, 1822–1972: Hommage à Jean-François Champollion, 3 vols., Bibliothèque d'étude 63 (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1972–74), 7–19, esp. 16–17.

45. Ritner, *Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice;* idem, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and Their Religious Context," in *ANRW* II 18.5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 3333–79.

46. For a relevant discussion of all sources pertaining to Imhotep, see Dietrich Wildung, *Imhotep und Amenhotep: Gottwerdung im alten Ägypten,* Münchner ägyptologische Studien 36 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1977).

47. There was, however, a difference between the two. For example, in *PGM* VII.628–42, "Asclepius [who is worshiped] in Memphis" is addressed as "MENOPHRI [he from Memphis]," and the magician asks for "the *true* Asclepius, not some deceitful daimon instead of the god" (my italics). Moreover, Asclepius is connected with the polestar in the ritual. The Egyptian Asclepius, Imhotep, is clearly meant.

48. *PDM* xiv, 554–62, 563–74, 585–93, 594–620.

representation, accredited with the notion of wisdom and access to the divine and consequently was seen as authoritative on the art of astrology. This view constitutes a paradox because pharaonic religion had never developed any astrological theory. Nevertheless, the two examples show that the Egyptian priesthood was not at all reluctant to incorporate the new art into its traditional field of knowledge and, in this way, may even have contributed to developing and propagating such a representation.

Appendix 1

Hereditary prince, count and sole companion;[49]

Open of heart toward the sacred writings,
Who observes everything observable in heaven and on earth;

Clear-eyed in observing the stars, among which there is no erring,
Who announces rising and setting at their times, together with the gods who foretell the future,[50]

He purified himself for them in their days in which Akh [decan] rose heliacally beside Benu [Venus],
So that he satisfied the land with his utterances;

He who observes the culmination of every star in the sky,
Who knows the heliacal risings of [. . .] . . . all their manifestations in a whole year;

He who foretells the heliacal rising of Sothis at the first day of the year,
So that he observes her (Sothis) on the day of her first festival,
Having calculated her course according to the periods to which she is appointed,
Observing everything she does daily, so that all she has foretold is in his charge;

He who knows the northing and southing of the sun disk,
Announcing all its omina[51] and appointing for them (their) moment of occurrence,

49. The metrical analysis is based on the work of Günther Burkard. For an overview with relevant literature, see Burkard, "Metrik, Prosodie und formaler Aufbau ägyptischer literarischer Texte," in Antonio Loprieno, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms,* Probleme der Ägyptologie 10 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 447–63.

50. These are the planets. It is a common Egyptian practice to consider the planets as gods.

51. For *bꜣ.w* meaning "celestial omen," see E. Graefe, *Untersuchungen zur Wortfamilie bꜣ* (Cologne, 1971), 221, who refers to the Gebel Barkel Stele of Thutmosis III, Urk. IV, 1238,5 ff.

So that he declares when they have occurred, having come at their moment;

He who divides the hours into the two periods [day and night] without a mistake in the night
. . . [. . .] concerning everything that is brought on the first day of every month;

Knowledgeable in everything that is seen in the sky, because he has waited for it,
Skilled with respect to their conjunction and their phases,[52]

He who does not disclose (anything) at all concerning his report after judgment,
Whose mouth is closed concerning all he has seen;
He who does not give a bow because of that (?),[53]
Who opens his speech (only) to the lord of the two lands;

He who appeases the children that belong to (the goddess) Serqet,
Who knows the holes of retreat of snakes in which they shoot (like stars);[54]

He who seals the mouth of those that are in them (holes),
Who binds their poison in (human) bodies;

He who protects the royal house having purified it from its impurity,
Who guards its navigations and protects its road;

Leader of those who are in [service?] for a mission . ? . protecting the house,
Who speaks of fortunate omens so that they rejoice in his utterances;

One who does what his god wishes,
The *Kherep-Serqet* Harkheby,[55] son of the blessed one by Wadjet[56] the excellent one,
That favor may happen because of her.

52. Daressy's hieroglyphic transcription reads *šm* or *šgs* with question mark: Daressy, "La Statue d'un Astronome," 2. Neugebauer and Parker propose to emend to gsgs, "ordering" (*WB* v, 207); de Meulenaere reads *ʿšm <ʿḫm,* "to extinguish" (*WB* I, 224); see Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts III,* 215. Both suggestions are not compatible with the determinative of man with hand on mouth and remain therefore doubtful.

53. The meaning of *tm rdi.t ks ḥr=s* eludes me. Von Känel, *Les prêtres-ouab de Sekhmet,* 202, translates "on ne peut lui faire opposition lorsqu' il commence un discours," referring to *ks<m>* (*WB* v, 141).

54. For trw as "impurity," see *WB* v, 317, 10.

55. Harkhebi, *Ḥr-Ḫby,* derives from a longer form *1r-m-ȝḫ-bi.t,* meaning "Horus in Chemnis," which is attested from the New Kingdom until the Roman period; see Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen,* vol. 1, 247, no. 15. Chemnis, an island in a lake in the vicinity of the temple of Buto, was believed to be the place where Isis had given birth to her son Horus, hidden by the marshes from the angry Seth.

56. Wadjet has always been the traditional goddess of Buto during pharaonic history. Buto is called in Egyptian *Pr-Wȝḏ.t,* "The house of Wadjet."

Appendix ii

PDM xiv 93–114 (*PGM* xiv xiva 1–11)

A casting for inspection which the great god Imhotep makes: **Its preparation:** You bring a stool of olive wood having four legs upon which no man on earth has ever sat, and you put it near you, it being clean. When you wish to make a "god's arrival" with it truthfully and without falsehood, **here is** its manner. You should put the stool in a clean niche in the midst of the place, it being near your head; you should cover it with a cloth from its top to its bottom; you should put four bricks under the table before it, one above another, there being a censer of clay before it [sc., the table]; you should put charcoal of olive wood on it; you should add wild goose fat pounded with myrrh and *ḳs-ʿnḫ* stone; you should make them into balls; you should put one on the brazier; you should leave the remainder near you; you should recite this spell in Greek to it (**formula**); you should lie down without speaking to anyone on earth; and you should go to sleep. You see the god, he being in the likeness of a priest wearing clothes of byssus on his back and wearing sandals on his feet.

> "I call upon you [sing.] who are seated in impenetrable darkness and are in the midst of the great gods, you who set; take with you the solar rays, and send up the light-bringing goddess NEBOUTOSOUALÊTH; [you are the] great god, BARZAN, BOUBARZAN, NARZAZOUZAN, BARZABOUZATH, Helios. Send up to me this night your archangel, ZEBOURTHAUNÊN. Respond with truth, truly, not falsely, unambiguously concerning such-and-such a matter, because I conjure you by him who is seated in the fiery cloak on the serpentine head of the Agathos Daimon, the almighty, four-faced, highest daimon, dark and conjuring, PHŌX. Do not ignore me, but send up quickly tonight [in accordance with the] command of the god." Say this three times.

He speaks with you truthfully with his mouth opposite your mouth concerning anything which you wish. When he has finished, he will go away again. You place a tablet for reading the hours upon the bricks, and you place the stars upon it, and you write your business on a new roll of papyrus, and you place it on the tablet. It sends your stars to you whether they are favorable for your business.[57]

57. Trans. Janet H. Johnson and W. C. Grece, in Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation,* 200–201.

9

Divination and Its Discontents

Finding and Questioning Meaning in Ancient and Medieval Judaism

Michael D. Swartz

Divination may have been one of the first forms of hermeneutics. This possibility is raised by some recent research, beginning with Jonathan Z. Smith's classic article "Sacred Persistence"[1] and including Peter Struck's current research on Graeco-Roman semiotics.[2] From ancient Mesopotamia to Cicero, there is evidence that hermeneutical strategies applied to texts can be found in the ancient arts of divination. This idea has both social and conceptual implications. Divination, like other forms of hermeneutics, relies on a variety of social situations. "Everyday" divination, because it requires no special esoteric tradition, can simply involve a routine action that anybody can learn and anybody can perform. An example would be the games that children play to guess whom they will marry. Other divinatory procedures are knit into the fabric of established institutions, requiring the knowledge of specialists such as temple oracles, military staff employed for war divination, and, in the case of ancient Israel, the Urim, the priestly oracles consulted according to Num. 27:21.[3]

Still other divination traditions involve professionals or paraprofessionals who employ complex, technical, and usually esoteric methods for informing clients. Some diviners work through fairly technical procedures using manuals and secret lore, as well as thorough inquiry of their clients, to tell the clients' future and fate. Other traditions involve the cultivation of a supernatural informing agent, such as a spirit or angel, who then reveals the truth to the client through the diviner. Since each form carries with it a different social valence, we must be careful when generalizing about divination and the degree to which it can be seen

1. Jonathan Z. Smith, "Sacred Persistence: Towards a Redescription of Canon," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 36–52.

2. Peter T. Struck, "Reading Symbols: Traces of the Gods in the Ancient Greek-Speaking World" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1997).

3. Cornelius van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997).

as socially disruptive—one criterion by which some of us designate a given practice as magic.[4]

Divination also brings with it a variety of cosmological assumptions. Certain types of divination presuppose the intentionality of many things that are not living humans. For example, necromancy presupposes that the dead know things that we do not—an idea that is not, in fact, self-evident. Other types presuppose the knowledge and intentionality of animals, plants, and the like.[5]

Given this variety of social and conceptual bases for divination, it should come as no surprise that opinions on its efficacy and operation should also vary widely among social and professional classes. Such was the case in one Graeco-Roman community, the Jewish intellectuals and ritual practitioners of Palestine and Babylonia in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. This essay focuses on two corpora, the literature of the rabbis from the early centuries of the common era and Jewish manuals of divination, and examines how each treats this phenomenon.

That divination was the subject of concerted thought in late antiquity can be seen from the treatises devoted to it by Cicero, Porphyry, Iamblicus, Philo, and other Graeco-Roman thinkers. Some, such as Cicero, sought to discredit it; as Gregory Shaw has shown, others, such as Iamblicus, sought to distinguish the pure, spiritual forms, which involve the cultivation of the soul, from the more mundane, mechanical types.[6]

Divination in Israel

Divination, then, has a long history in the Eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia.[7] In ancient Israel, divination was institutionalized in the priestly oracles,

4. Recently, Fritz Graf has made a careful effort to distinguish magical and divination traditions, while showing how one can serve the other; an important example is the practice of gazing into a liquid; see his "Magic and Divination," in David Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen, eds., *The World of Ancient Magic* (Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999), 283–98.

5. See esp. Peter Struck's discussion of Cicero's *De divinatione,* "Reading Symbols," 175–77.

6. See Gregory Shaw, "Divination in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," in Robert M. Berchman, ed., *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination, Dreams, and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1998), 225–67.

7. For a recent list of sources for Mesopotamian divination, see J. C. Greenfield and Michael Sokoloff, "Astrological and Related Omen Texts in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic," *JNES* 48 (1989): 201–2; Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and Its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation,* JSOTSup 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); Herbert B. Huffmon, "Priestly Divination in Israel," in Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, eds., *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 355–59; Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996); J. R. Porter, "Ancient Israel," in Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker, eds., *Divination and Oracles* (London: Goerge Allen & Unwin, 1981), 191–214.

especially the Urim and Thummim. The cultic locale of the official divination system assured it a place in the memory of later generations interested in the arts of prediction. With the loss of the Temple, all subsequent divination was problematized. According to a famous statement in the Babylonian Talmud, "from the day that the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken away from the prophets and given to fools and children."[8] Therefore, the status of divination customs and texts is ambiguous in rabbinic civilization.

Rabbinic discourse on the nature and effectiveness of divination characteristically takes the form of laws and stories. Certain legal texts attempt to delineate divination practices so as to distinguish the permissible from the forbidden. For example, one of the *loci classici* for rabbinic concepts of forbidden magic has been the cryptic list of practices itemized under the heading "the ways of the Amorites" in the early rabbinic compilation known as the Tosefta, which seeks to elaborate Lev. 18:3's commandment against following foreign ways.[9] Among the practices forbidden according to some of these texts are types of augury based on natural phenomena or events.[10] At the same time, the use of signs in nature for omens and divination is well attested in rabbinic literature. That forms of augury and divination attracted rabbinic discomfort should not surprise us. In theory rabbinic theology recognizes only one source of revelation in the present day: the Torah, as taught and interpreted by Israel's sages. Furthermore, the Torah apparently forbids divination, although it leaves much room for interpretation.

Nevertheless, a rich body of Jewish divination literature has flourished, including a brontology text found at Qumran for determining the future according to types of thunder,[11] physiognomy (divination according to facial features) and weather-omen texts from late antique Palestine, and extensive divination systems well attested in the Cairo Genizah and other libraries. This literature presents systematic methods for predicting the future and situates them in the framework of mythic history. The substantial literature on astrology also represents a type of discourse on divination, though from the perspective of the professional and advocate of

8. TB *Baba Batra* 12b.

9. Tosefta *Shabbat,* chaps. 6 and 7, in Saul Lieberman, ed., *Tosefta Mo'ed* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), 22–29. On this unusual list of practices, see Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Kifshutah* 3 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), 79–105, where the author relates them to known Graeco-Roman practices; cf. Giuseppi Veltri, *Magie und Halakha* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997), and idem, "The Rabbis and Pliny the Elder: Jewish and Graeco-Roman Attitudes Toward Magic and Empirical Knowledge," *Poetics Today* 19 (1998): 63–89. Jonathan Seidel, "Charming Criminals: Classification of Magic in the Babylonian Talmud," in Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 129 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 161, argues that the classification serves "to describe 'in-group' practices that needed to be pushed outside the boundaries of society."

10. Cf., e.g., *t. Shabbat* 6:16, 7:14.

11. J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judea* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 42.

divination rituals, but the discussion here will leave it aside both because of its complex nature and the volume of literature related to it.[12]

FORBIDDEN RITES

Several normative statements about forbidden divination center on the interpretation of Lev. 19:26, which states *lo tenaḥashu ve-lo' te'onenu,* rendered by the Jewish Publication Society translation (NJV) as "you shall not practice divination or soothsaying." But exactly what actions these words refer to is not clear. A terse pronouncement in Sifra, an early Midrashic commentary to Leviticus, gives as examples of forbidden practices divination "by mole, by birds, and by stars."[13] Yet bird divination, at least, was understood to be a legitimate pursuit. The Tosefta's chapters on the ways of the Amorites also seek to define forbidden activity by enumerating representative actions of its practitioners, among them the *me'onen* (supposedly one who divines by observing clouds) and the *menaḥesh* (supposedly one who divines by observing birds): "Who is the *menaḥesh?* The one who says: 'My staff fell from my hand; my bread fell from my mouth; so-and-so called me from behind; a raven called me; a dog bit me; a snake passed to the right of me and a fox to the left of me, and a deer cut me off on my way'; [or], 'do not start with me, for it is morning; it is the first of the month; it is Saturday night.'"[14]

Perhaps the passage is indicating those whose fear of inauspicious occasions prevents them from engaging in everyday activities. At the very least the statement would discourage the reading of times and events as signaling an individual's fate.

Another classic statement is found in an interesting excursus in *Hullin* 95b in the Babylonian Talmud. There Rav, a third-century Babylonian sage, is quoted as saying: "Any divination [*naḥash*] that is not like that of Eliezer the servant of Abraham and Jonathan the son of Saul is not divination."

In Gen. 24:10–14 Eliezer asked for a specific sign that the woman chosen by God to become the wife of Abraham's son Isaac had arrived, while in 1 Sam. 14:8–10 Jonathan designated a sign from the Philistines that it was time to attack them. As commentators have noted, the Rav's statement that actions unlike these

12. Cf. the analysis of the Palestinian lunar-omen text below and especially the discussion by Greenfield and Sokoloff, "Astrological and Related Omen Texts"; on astrology in rabbinic literature, see Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942), 97–100; cf. Lester J. Ness, *Written in the Stars: Ancient Zodiac Mosaics* (Warren Center, Pa.: Shangri-La, 1999).

13. *Sifra Qedoshim* 6.

14. *t. Shabbat* 7:13–14; cf. *Sifre Dt.* (ed. Finkelstein), 171.

are "not divination" is ambiguous.[15] Furthermore, it is not entirely clear whether the divination of Eliezer and Jonathan is to be forbidden. Assuming that it is, the thrust of the statement seems to be that if an action is performed with the specific intention of generating an answer, then it counts as forbidden divination, but that if one is simply reading signs from one's environment, the practice is allowable.

The text continues by describing the (presumably acceptable) forms of augury practiced by other sages: "Rav would inquire of ferries; Samuel would inquire into books; Rabbi Yoḥanan would inquire of children." That is, Rav would see whether a ferry was arriving or departing, which would be the omen he sought; Samuel practiced bibliomancy; and Rabbi Yoḥanan practiced a peculiarly rabbinic form of mantic activity: the interpretation of verses recited by children. The text goes on to tell a story of how Rabbi Yoḥanan decided to visit Samuel in Babylonia:

> All the years when Rav was alive, R. Yoḥanan would address Samuel [in letters]: to our master in Babylonia. When he died, he would address Samuel: to our colleague in Babylonia. He said [to himself]: Is there anything in which I am his master? He sent him intercalations of the calendar for sixty years. [Yoḥanan] said: these are ordinary calculations. He sent to him thirteen camel-loads of doubtful cases of non-kosher food. He said: "I have a master in Babylonia. I will go and see him."

Having been convinced that Samuel is his superior in learning and that he must visit him, Rabbi Yoḥanan consults a schoolchild: "He said to a child, 'recite your verse.' He said to him: 'Now Samuel had died' [1 Samuel 28:3]. He said, 'This must mean that Samuel has died.'"

Rabbi Yoḥanan, therefore, had no need to travel to Babylonia. This would seem, then, to be a fine instance of a divinatory practice by which a person solicits a sign, which turns out to have obvious relevance to his life. But here the Talmud adds: "But it was not true. Samuel was not dead; rather it was so that Rabbi Yoḥanan would not bother himself [with the journey]."

This small discourse on the subtle distinctions between forbidden and permitted augury turns out not to be a simple lesson in doctrine. First of all, it is difficult to see the distinction between the actions of Eliezer and Jonathan and those of Rabbi Yoḥanan. Furthermore, the Talmud seems to be making a rather sly statement about the nature of the results of questioning omens. As indicated in the ex-

15. For a summary of opinions, see Louis I. Rabbinowitz, "Divination," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 6:116. Indeed, the range of opinion in medieval sources regarding that question is an indication of the degree of acceptance such techniques enjoyed in the Middle Ages.

tended talmudic essay on dream interpretation in TB *Berakhot* 55–57,[16] the results of inquiry are not necessarily what they appear. In this case, the result is not that Yoḥanan learns the truth but that he is compelled unwittingly, presumably by Heaven, to do what is best for him. It is apparent that, like Greek drama, the Talmud's narrative is not above using oracles ironically. That is to say, the narrative seeks to confound our expectations of the outcome of an oracular inquiry. The message may be that such oracles are not mechanical, independent entities but instruments of the divine will.

This is hardly the only instance of divination by children's recitation in rabbinic literature. For example, someone often learns something of relevance to his life while passing a schoolhouse and hearing a verse recited there.[17] The assumption that children are the special, if unconscious, receptacles of cosmic wisdom is reflected in widespread and ancient divination systems in which a child is made to look into a bowl of liquid or at some other shiny object. The corpus of oil-magic texts collected by Samuel Daiches contains an old Jewish version of this practice, in which a young boy or pregnant woman smears oil into his or her palm and sees an informing angel.[18] Sarah Iles Johnston has studied the Graeco-Roman divination practices in which children play a similar role as informants.[19] In these cases, the idea is that children may have a special receptiveness to oracular apparitions and at the same time are unbiased reporters of their experiences. This notion may also be the idea behind the talmudic statement, quoted earlier, that prophecy is given to fools and children.

Just as prevalent is the interpretation of omens (*simanim,* from the Greek *semeia*) in a person's life, in nature, and in the animal world. A striking case is the "language of birds and the language of palm trees," according to which the patterns of bird flight and song and the swaying of palm trees are read. The latter skill was attributed to one of the founders of the rabbinic movement, Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, along with the language of angels and demons.[20] Yet even these crafts

16. On this passage, see Philip S. Alexander, "Bavli Berakhot 55a–57b: The Talmudic Dreambook in Context," *JJS* 46 (1995): 230–48; Maren Ruth Niehoff, "A Dream Which Is Not Interpreted Is Like a Letter Which Is Not Read," *JJS* 43 (1992): 58–84; Richard L. Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1994), 61–80; Ken Frieden, *Freud's Dream of Interpretation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 73–93.

17. See, e.g., TB *Hagigah* 15a–b, TB *Gittin* 57a and 68a.

18. Samuel Daiches, *Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and in the Later Jewish Literature* (London: Jews College, 1913).

19. Sarah Iles Johnston, "Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination," *Arethusa* 34 (2001): 97–117.

20. TB *Baba Batra* 134a and TB *Sukkah* 28a. On the entire passage, see David J. Halperin, *The Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1980), 137–38; cf. idem, "The Ibn Sayyad Traditions, and the Legend of al-Dajjal," *JAOS* 96 (1976): 219–20.

are not represented without ambivalence in the Talmud. For example, the Babylonian Talmud tells the following story of Rav Ilish, who was in prison:

> One day he was sitting with someone who knew the language of birds. A raven came and called out to him. [Rav Ilish] said to the man, "what did he say?" He said, "flee, Ilish! flee Ilish!" He said, "ravens are liars. I do not rely on them." Then a dove came along and called out. He said [to the man], "what did he say? He said, "flee, Ilish, flee Ilish." He said, "the community of Israel is likened to a dove.[21] This must mean that a miracle will happen to me. I will flee."[22]

Mindful perhaps of the biblical Noah story, Rav Ilish listens not to the raven, whom he calls a liar, but to the dove. Likewise, the Talmud's remark about the informing agents known as the "princes of the egg and the princes of the thumb," like the oil-divination practices collected by Daiches, is instructive: "One may consult the princes of the egg and the princes of the thumb—but [one does not,] because they lie" (TB *Sanhedrin* 101a).

The assumption behind bird, tree, and angel divination is that these creatures know something we do not. But by implying that they do not always tell the truth, the Talmud is once again distancing itself ironically from the full ramifications of that assumption. Indeed, the talmudic objection to the "princes of the thumb" is met head-on in one of Daiches's late medieval texts: "And if they lie, you shall say three times: I adjure you in the name of Sansniel, Petaxiel, Shaqiel, that you tell me the truth."[23]

Rabbinic literature is not alone in mistrusting these sources.[24] But its use of stories that subvert the divination paradigm is instructive. It must be emphasized that it is not because the rabbis were more "rational," "scientific," or "intellectual" than their contemporaries that they display this ambivalence. Indeed, there is ample evidence that the rabbis were no strangers to divination practices, and their status as magical practitioners is well known.[25] Rather, it is likely that any ambivalence can be traced to their interest in discrediting competing systems and practitioners of divine authority.

21. Cf., e.g., Song of Sol. 5:2.

22. TB *Gittin* 45a.

23. Daiches, *Oil Magic,* 18–19.

24. Cf. I. Tzvi Abusch, "*Alaktu* and *Halakhah:* Oracular Decision, Divine Revelation," *HTR* 80 (1987): 20, on the possibility raised in an Akkadian source that the gods may not always provide reliable omens.

25. On Rabbis as magicians and masters of esoteric secrets, see Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 330–70.

BOOKS OF DIVINATION

This brief account of rabbinic attitudes toward divination has emphasized how the ambivalence of the sources to those practices is reflected in narrative reports. In contrast, Jewish divinatory literature has entirely different aims: to provide instruction in the arts of prediction and, no less important, to validate those arts to the reader. Although astrology and angelic divination have received some attention by scholars,[26] there are other significant genres of divinatory literature that deserve consideration.[27]

It is now known that much of the medieval Jewish magical tradition has roots in ancient Palestine. Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked have amply demonstrated that specific literary motifs, angelic figures, rituals, and phrases found in magical texts from the Genizah can be traced to ancient Palestinian amulet texts.[28] This applies both to amulets and to handbooks from the Genizah. One such source is a Palestinian Aramaic omen text published by Michael Sokoloff with the late Jonas Greenfield, and by Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom.[29] Late antique sources, however, are rare. But despite the paucity of early evidence for Jewish divination books, there is a good possibility that medieval divination books refer back to earlier models. At the same time, these books have much in common with their Arabic counterparts.[30]

26. On angelic divination, see Daiches, *Oil Magic;* Joseph Dan, "Sare Kos ve-Sare Bohen" (Princes of the cup and princes of the thumb), *Tarbiz* 32 (1963); Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 47–50; R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); and Reuven Margaliot, ed., *She'elot u-Teshuvot min ha-Shamayim le-Rabbenu Ya'aqov mi-Marvesh* (Jacob of Marvege's responsa from heaven) (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, n.d.).

27. The literature of Jewish divination has not been studied systematically. For earlier studies, see Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic,* 208–29; Moritz Steinschneider, *Jewish Literature from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Century* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1967), 202–3; Israel Friedlaender, "A Muhammendan Book on Augury in Hebrew Characters," *JQR,* o.s., 19 (1907): 84–103; Daiches, *Oil Magic;* Gershom Scholem, "Hakarat Panim ve-Sidre Sirṭuṭav" (Physiognomy and chiromancy), in M. D. Cassuto, Yosef Klosner, and Yehoshua Guttman, eds., *Sefer Asaf: Qoveṣ Ma'amare Meḥqar* (Sefer Asaf: Collected studies) (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1943), 459–95; L. Wiesner, "Etwas über Kinderlosigkeit und Kinderreichtum im Talmud," *Jahrbuch für jüdische Volkskunde* (1924/25): 73–79; and Ludwig Blau, "Lots," in *Jewish Encyclopedia,* 8:187–88.

28. Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1985), 29–30. There are also omen texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls, but few can be traced to talmudic Palestine. For a good survey of extant literature, see Greenfield and Sokoloff, "Astrological and Related Omen Texts," 209–14.

29. Greenfield and Sokoloff, "Astrological and Related Omen Texts"; Michael Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom, *Shirat Bene Ma'arava: Sirim Aramiyim shel Yehude Ereṣ-Yisra'el ba-Tequfah ha-Bizantit* (Jewish Palestinian Aramaic poetry from late antiquity: Critical edition with introduction and commentary) (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and the Humanities, 1999), 223–29.

30. See Friedlaender, "A Mohammedan Book," 84–103.

One major divinatory technique relies on the body of an individual to tell details about his or her fate. The best-known examples of this are physiognomy and chiromancy (palm reading). Both are represented in early medieval Jewish literature and can be found in Genizah fragments.[31] The texts on these extant fragments are mostly formulaic; they consist of lists of conditions and their interpretations.

An interesting variation is the lunar-omen text mentioned above, which is a liturgical poem (*piyyut*) composed in Aramaic for the sanctification of the new moon at Nisan. This text, perhaps with an eye to its liturgical function, emphasizes information of interest to the nation: "If the moon is . . . like snow in the month of Elul, you should know that it [the land] will be smitten with snow. There will be a great dissension in the world between Israel and the government. The moon is never eclipsed in Tishri. But if it is eclipsed, it is a bad sign for the 'enemies of the Jews.'[32] Religious persecution will issue from the kingdom and woeful destruction will be upon the Jews" (lines 11–12).[33]

A fuller literary pattern characterizes another popular genre of divination text: the books of *goralot,* or "lots." Several of them circulate throughout the Jewish world to this day: *Goralot Aḥitofel, Sefer Urim ve-Thumim,* and books attributed to Abraham ibn Ezra.[34]

These books are usually highly structured, in contrast to the magical *grimoires* (magical handbooks) that proliferate in the Genizah and other collections, which are truly miscellanies. They usually consist of several well-delineated parts:

1. a pious, "historical" introduction attesting to the origins of the book;[35]
2. instructions for the procedure;
3. a prayer to be recited by the practitioner, which petitions God in pious language to accept his request for information;
4. the raw material, so to speak, of the procedure, laid out in graphic fashion, usually in grids;
5. the technical data listing the various characteristics of the inquirer and his or her fate.

31. See Scholem, "Hakarat Panim"; Peter Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur,* Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 6 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984), 135–39 (= G12); and idem, in *Frankfurter jüdaistische Beiträge* 13 (1985).

32. A euphemism for the Jews, used when misfortune to the Jews is mentioned.

33. The translation quoted here is by Greenfield and Sokoloff, "Astrological and Related Omen Texts," 204–5.

34. These books have become particularly popular in recent years, in part thanks to the entrepreneur and folklorist Meir Backal, who publishes them in miniature editions based on available manuscripts and sells them all over Israel and New York City.

35. On introductions to magical and esoteric books, see Michael D. Swartz, "Book and Tradition in Hekhalot and Magical Literatures," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1994): 189–229.

In the case of "lots," the procedure often consists in placing one's finger randomly on one of a number of lettered squares, which then refer to messages printed in the back of the book. Other techniques include sand divination or geomancy,[36] weather omens, and bibliomancy. These texts, then, offer systems of interpretations in which (seemingly) random acts, the weather, involuntary body movements, and the like are given cosmic significance.

If the authors of these books of Jewish divination are aware of rabbinic reservations about augury, they do not betray it. By and large, these books hark back to older forms of authority. This is done in their introductions, particularly through the use of *historiolae,* brief stories or historical references used to validate the magic. Often they claim that the praxis described in the book can act as a substitute for a lost ritual in the Temple. The introductory prayer in one Genizah fragment, TS K1.131, which is similar to the common book known as *Goralot Aḥitofel,* "The Oracles of Ahitophel," emphasizes that the petitioner will not use the oracles in order to "transgress the Torah and what is written in it," and expresses the hope that the community will be among those who hold fast to the Torah. The petitioner asks to use the oracles because

> we have neither prophet nor priest to inquire of the Urim and Thummim. Therefore, I approach you and rely on your abundant mercy in inquiring of these oracles for every matter, to inform humanity of your ways; they [the community] will thank you for all your works, whether good or bad, whether healing or sickness, whether deprivation or abundance, as it is written: "I shall raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord; I shall find trouble and agony, and call out the name of the Lord."[37]

Here the author states explicitly that the text's divination system can substitute for the Urim and Thummim in the Temple. This line of rhetoric conforms to a pattern common to magical rituals: that in the absence of a specific Temple ritual the magical technique is available to all.[38]

36. A particularly rich sand-divination text going directly back to an Islamic model is currently being studied by Yael Okun of the Jewish National Library; cf. Emilie Savage-Smith and Marion B. Smith, *Islamic Geomancy and a Thirteenth-Century Divinatory Device* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1980). My thanks to Ms. Okun for her advice regarding this subject.

37. Ps. 116:13–14. For the Hebrew text and notes, see Michael D. Swartz, "Pulḥan ha-Miqdash be-Sifrut ha-Magiah ha-Yehudit" (Temple ritual in Jewish magic literature), *Pe'amim, the Quarterly of the Ben Zvi Institute* 85 (2000): 67.

38. See Michael D. Swartz, "Sacrificial Themes in Jewish Magic," in Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, forthcoming), and idem, "Pulḥan ha-Miqdash." We can also see this in a magic *Sotah* ritual published originally by Arthur

Divination and Cosmology

Divination techniques reflect a particular worldview. Divination is a system in which every detail of the environment is filled with meaning. To the diviner the world is inherently semiotic. Nothing illustrates this better than the very term used in rabbinic taxonomy to distinguish permissible detection from forbidden augury: *siman,* the Greek *semeion.* The term can be used to designate a sign of divine curse, such as rain during the fall festival of *Sukkot.*[39] At the same time, a *siman* can be a mnemonic, a mark consciously made, or a physical indicator of a given status, such as the legitimacy of a document or the advent of puberty.[40] Divination traditions extend this multivalence by reading in natural phenomena meanings of specific import to the life of the individual.

Here is where the specifically Jewish nature of these texts becomes relevant, despite the profusion of identical techniques throughout the Western and Mediterranean worlds. In the form of mythic validation described above, the practice is domesticated, so to speak. At the same time, this domesticated tradition has managed to allow for a broader possibility of revelation. Although the source of the *historiolae* is ultimately the Torah's historiography, the Book of the Urim and Thummim and the Book of Ahitophel remind the reader and participant of a cultic form of divine disclosure in which the locus of revelation is not the text but the object and the priest, not the sage, is curator of the hermeneutical tradition.

We should consider this conception in light of our tendency to see classical Judaic thought—indeed, Western thought as a whole—as inherently logocentric. To be sure, the rabbinic injunction to "turn [the Torah] over . . . for everything is in it"[41] encourages us to read the book as the world. But a contemporaneous tradition, of ancient vintage, reads the world as a book—seeks meaning in physical things. The technical level of divination manuals attests as well to a well-developed and systematic hermeneutics of the natural world.

This association of divinatory and textual systems of meaning is not a new one. As Jonathan Z. Smith argues, both textual canons and divinatory lists require

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Marmorstein and most recently by Giuseppi Veltri, Peter Schäfer, and Shaul Shaked, in which the synagogue substitutes for the Temple and the magician substitutes for the priest. See Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza,* vol. 1, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 42 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), 17–45.

39. Known as a sign of a curse (*siman qelalah*) in Mishnah *Ta'anit* 1:1.

40. See Alexander Kohut, ed., *Arukh ha-Shalem* (Vienna and New York, n.d.), s.v. *smn.* A fascinating, if idiosyncratic, essay on the range of signification in rabbinic literature is Jacob Brüll's essay on talmudic mnemonics, *Doresh le-Ṣiyyun* (Mnemonotechnik des Talmuds) (Vienna: Shlosberg u-Bendiner, 1864), a work that deserves more serious consideration.

41. *m. Abot* 5:22.

hermeneutical traditions, personnel, and sensitivity to a community's needs.[42] No less cogent is Zvi Abusch's remarkable demonstration of the consonance between the Akkadian term *alaktu,* meaning "oracular decision," and the Hebrew term for legal practice, *halakhah*.[43] For Akkadian literature, as he puts it, "the course of the planets or stars, the signs or the writing of the heavenly gods, represent the cosmic will . . . the examination undertaken and the decision announced by astral gods and divination priests constitute the act of drawing out and making known that will. And the way of life one leads as a consequence of the decision is the final outcome."[44]

The will of heaven then, has varying manifestations in both textual and divinatory systems. But the need to interpret the signs and act on their consequences is common to both.

42. Smith, "Sacred Persistence."
43. Abusch, *"Alaktu* and *Halakhah,"* 15–42.
44. Ibid., 34.

PART IV

The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars

10

Heaven and Earth

Divine-Human Relations in Mesopotamian Celestial Divination

Francesca Rochberg

In Mediterranean antiquity, divination was bound up with beliefs about gods and their effect on humankind and the world. Mesopotamian scholarly divination focused on signs collected in formalized lists of omens, the bulk of which are preserved in texts dating to the first millennium B.C.E., mainly from the seventh century. Many of the signs in these lists were directly discernible in astronomical phenomena, rather than generated by diviners in sprinkling oil upon water or even casting lots.[1] Unlike divination by impetration, where the diviner requested a response from the deity in the form of manipulation of the divinatory medium (e.g., smoke, lots, or drops of oil in water), celestial divination required the diviner to be an observer of "nature" and to interpret the signs in the heavens on behalf of the king and the state as a whole. The Mesopotamian diviner was concerned not only with physical phenomena but also with the gods, understood as immanent in the physical heavenly bodies.[2] The tradition of Mesopotamian scholarly celestial divination, developed and practiced roughly from the Old Babylonian to the Seleucid

I wish to thank Prof. Alan F. Segal for his astute commentary on this essay for the conference "Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World," in Seattle, March of 2000. I also want to acknowledge with gratitude the generous reading and comments by Profs. Peter Kingsley and Beate Pongratz-Leisten.

1. The classification of two basic types of Mesopotamian divination, the so-called "operational and magical," goes back to A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization,* rev. ed. by Erica Reiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 207. See also the discussion in Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods,* trans. Zainab Bahrani and Marc Van De Mieroop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 106, which focuses, much as do the categories of subjective and inductive divination of Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité,* 4 vols. (Paris: Leroux, 1879–82), 1:107–9, on the difference between "prophecy," or direct divine communication, on the one hand, and omens, or "deductive" divination, on the other. See also Ann K. Guinan, "Divination," in W. W. Hallo ed., *The Context of Scripture,* vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 421–26.

2. It is important to recognize that, just as terms such as "religion," "magic," or "science" must not be used without regard for the way they may be mapped onto another culture or textual corpus, the same applies with respect to terms such as "god" and "nature." A useful discussion of the

period, thereby resolved a complex of relationships involving the heavens, the gods, the world of the royal court, and that of humankind as a whole.

The behavior of the moon, sun, planets, fixed stars, and weather was of primary interest to celestial diviners for their significance relative to the world of human beings. This significance in turn seems to have been perceived as a function of the gods' vested interest in humanity. But isolating the heavenly bodies, as purely physical things, from the gods, as agents immanent in those physical things or natural phenomena, is a modern manner of speaking that has no counterpart in the celestial omens. Our separation of the knowledge of heavenly phenomena from the predictions derived from them, on the other hand, seems to be better supported by the bipartite form of the omens themselves, that is, the *protasis,* containing the "if-clause" in which the phenomena were described, followed by the *apodosis,* containing the corresponding "then-clause," or prediction.

Any modern discussion of Babylonian celestial divination faces a dilemma with respect to the explicit or implicit classification of the subject itself, in particular, the interpretation of its relation and contribution to the histories of religion, science, and magic, as these cultural phenomena have traditionally been defined. In modern Western terms, "religion" can be said to be involved because the gods are the agents behind the celestial signs, "science" because the signs consist of natural phenomena systematically studied and presented, and "magic" because, in the event of bad portents, the diviners could exercise a form of control by approaching the gods through incantation and ritual acts to nullify or alter untoward omens. But the extent to which such distinctions now made between the terms "magic," "religion," and "science" are applicable to the cuneiform evidence is subject to much debate.[3] The qualities that define and contrast one from another in stan-

meaning of "god" in Akkadian (*ilu*) may be found in W. G. Lambert's entry "Gott," in Erich Ebeling and Bruno Meissner, eds., *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1932–), vol. 3.

3. The limitations of the category "magic" as a universal classificatory term are discussed by John Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 159. This matter has been taken up recently in the introduction to Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn, eds., *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives,* Studies in Ancient Magic and Divination, 1 (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1999); see Wim van Binsbergen and Frans Wiggermann, "Magic in History: A Theoretical Perspective, and Its Application to Ancient Mesopotamia," in ibid., 1–34. Here an attempt is made to differentiate between traditions within the body of literature relevant to the study of Mesopotamian man's attitude toward the physical (and divine) world. Although all sources are preserved in cuneiform texts, one strain is construed by the authors as theological, or stemming from the dominance of a "theistic" worldview perpetuated by an official institutional framework (the Temple), while the other represents a "pretheistic" (also designated "holistic") worldview emanating not from the Temple but from "people," that is, collectively out of the local society. The attempt to disengage a "holism" ("as above, so below") from the systematic frame

dard modern usage seem overdrawn in the context of the ancient Near East.[4] Indeed, the boundaries of science, religion, and magic must now be negotiated in full recognition that the criteria for establishing them are subject to cultural and historical particulars. Whereas once it may have been acceptable to differentiate between science and religion in terms of criteria of validity—those of science being viewed as universal, hence transcendent of culture, as opposed to those of religion, viewed as subject to cultural, historical, and linguistic variation[5]—more recently the claim to universal criteria for science has been challenged. As Thomas Gieryn states, "'Science' is a cultural space: it has no essential or universal qualities."[6] It is not the purpose of this essay to enter into the history or an analysis of the "magic-religion-science problem" as it affects our understanding of Babylonian celestial divination. Rather, it confines itself to the more limited scope of how, within the tradition of scholarly divination, the diviners saw the relations between the gods, the heavenly phenomena, and human society. My intent in the following discussion, however, is to add support for the position against the use, in historical discourse, of the terms "religion," "science," and "magic" in overly contrastive ways.[7] Furthermore, with regard to the content and structure of ancient belief, no claims are made here about "Babylonian thought," or a "Babylonian mentality," beyond what can be supported by the literature of the Babylonian scholar-scribes who specialized in divination and its related activities, such as prayer, incantation, or the mathematical prediction of lunar eclipses.

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work of the pantheon and the cosmological mythology in the background of so many of the sources in question runs into difficulty, inasmuch as, in the authors' own words, "whenever we encounter evidence of the holistic world-view, it turns out to be embedded in theistic terminology" (p. 33). In my view, their argument is particularly problematic in the case of celestial divination (the authors' use the term "astrology"), as presented on pp. 33–34.

4. The terms of this problem are set out in Alan F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition," in Roelof van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 349–75. Also useful is H. S. Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion," *Numen* 38 (1991): 177–97. For a recent and cogent argument on this problem in general and, in particular, concerning Empedocles' thought in the context of the entire Mediterranean cultural and historical milieu from the classical to the Graeco-Roman period, see Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), esp. chap. 15, "The Magus," and, on the difficulty of separating magic from religion, pp. 301–7.

5. See, e.g., Leszek Kolakowski, *Religion: If There Is No God . . . On God, the Devil, Sin, and Other Worries of the So-Called Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 160–64.

6. Thomas F. Gieryn, *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), xii.

7. This position is amply argued by John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; repr., 1998).

While the cuneiform scholastic tradition produced texts of distinct form, purpose, and subject matter, for example, divination texts, magical texts, and mythological texts, such genre designations are also modern conveniences not found in the texts themselves. The scribes had a system of designating texts by title (incipit) or by type of tablet (Sum. IM.GÍD.DA, "long tablet," Sum. ÉŠ.GÀR, "series"). Certainly the differences in subject matter do not correspond to differences in attitude about the world, as, for example, between a mythological and an astronomical text. On the contrary, a consistent worldview resolving the relationships between divine and human, as between divine and nature, seems to be shared among the various genres of texts that deal with celestial signs, astral magic, cosmological mythology, prayers to deities associated with heavenly bodies, or even astronomy.[8] Not surprisingly, the evidence shows the absolute and primary position of the gods in this worldview. The cosmological implication of the position of the divine in the tradition of the scholar-scribes not only bears on our understanding of the Babylonian rationale for celestial divination, but has further significance in placing the Babylonian intellectual tradition in historical relation to later Graeco-Roman divination and astrology.

The Mesopotamian belief that divination was a product of the gods' beneficence and care for their creation is only one aspect of a complex relation between human and divine. Humanity's need for the protection and love of the gods, as expressed in prayers, hymns of praise, and invocations, was complemented by the divine's need for humanity, as its servants, to build and maintain its temples, feed and clothe its statues.[9] But Mesopotamian scholarly divination texts do not reflect directly upon this divine-human relation, since these sources come to us in the form of lists of omens, formulated as conditional statements of the form "if x occurs (in the sky), then y will occur (in human society)." These omens were classified and arranged by phenomena of the moon, sun, fixed stars, planets, and weather. Representative of such omens is the following, from the planetary section of the official handbook *Enūma Anu Enlil:* If Venus rises in Month VIII: [hard times will seize] the land; If Venus rises in Month IX: [there will be] famine [of barley and straw in the land], and so on.[10]

But just as in extispicy, where the gods were thought to "write upon the liver"

8. See the discussion of the religious and divinatory context of horoscopic and astronomical texts in Francesca Rochberg, *Babylonian Horoscopes,* Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 88, pt. 1 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998), 11–13.

9. For the divine meal, see *CAD naptanu,* mng. 1a 9' b', b and c; for the clothing of divine statuary, see *CAD labāšu,* mng. 4 *nalbušu* a and b.

10. For *Enūma Anu Enlil,* see Erica Reiner and David Pingree, *Babylonian Planetary Omens,* 3 fascicles (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1975–), 50–51 and 59–63; and for an interesting recent summary of Babylonian celestial divination, see Erica Reiner, "Babylonian Celestial Divination," in N. M. Swerdlow, ed., *Ancient Astronomy and Celestial Divination* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 21–37.

a forecast encoded in the cracks and coloration of the liver,[11] the gods were also believed to act upon (we might say "cause") the signs observed in the natural world. We depend, however, upon nondivinatory texts for evidence of the gods' direct connection to natural phenomena, as illustrated in the following passage from a prayer to the moon-god Sin and the sun-god Šamaš:[12]

> The lands rejoice at your appearance.
> Day and night they entrust [to you] their ability to see.
> You stand by to let loose the omens of heaven and earth.
> I, your servant, who keep watch for you,
> who look upon your faces each day,
> who am attentive to your appearance,
> make my evil omens pass away from me.
> Set for me propitious and favorable omens.

In this prayer, the celestial deities Šamaš and Sin are addressed as though they were the celestial bodies. The speaker seems to believe that to watch for the sun and moon in the sky is to await the appearance of the gods Šamaš and Sin. Other prayers to the luminaries allude to the astral nature of these gods, as in one of the best-known prayers to Sin, which makes mention of special days of lunar visibility and invisibility:[13]

11. The notion that the god (often Šamaš) "wrote" the signs on the exta of sheep is well known; see, e.g., "you [Šamaš] write upon the flesh inside the sheep [i.e., the entrails]; you establish [there] an oracular decision" (Akk. *ina libbi immeri tašaṭṭar šere tašakkan dīnu*); Stephen Langdon, *Babylonian Penitential Psalms to Which Are Added Fragments of the Epic of Creation from Kish in the Weld Collection of the Ashmolean Museum,* Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts, 6 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1927), pl. 30 K.2824:12. See also Werner Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen "Gebetsbeschwörungen,"* Studia Pohl, 5 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 505:111, and *TCL* 3 319. For references to the gods of extispicy, Šamaš and Adad, making a propitious omen visible in the liver for Esarhaddon, see Riekele Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien* (= *AfO* Beiheft 9) (Graz, 1956), 3 iii 45–iv 6, and 19 Episode 17:16. The idea that the divine scribe, Nabû, decreed a long life and on his "reliable writing board [Sum. GIŠ.LI.U$_5$.UM], which establishes the borders of heaven and earth," inscribed (Akk. *šutur*) old age for the king is stated in a royal inscription of Nebuchadnezzar; see Stephen Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen königsinschriften,* Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 4 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912), 100 ii 25.

12. Henry Frederick Lutz, *Selected Sumerian and Babylonian Texts,* Publications of the Babylonian Section, vol. 1, no. 2 (Philadelphia: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania), 106 r.13–21, edition by Erich Ebeling, "Beschwörungen gegen den Feind," *ArOr* 17 (1949): 179–81. Quoted here is the translation by Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature,* vol. 2 (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993), 684.

13. The SU.ÍL.LÁ prayer may be found in Leonard William King, *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery: Being "The Prayers of the Lifting of the Hand"* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975), 1:1–27, an edited version of which appears in Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache,* 490–94.

Your day of disappearance is your day of splendor,[14] a secret of the great gods
The thirtieth day is your festival, the day of your divinity's splendor.

The equation of deities and celestial bodies is explicitly attested in a late scholastic list where, for example, the equation of Venus and the goddess Ištar is found as "Venus = Ištar, lady of the lands" (Akk. ^{mul}*Dilbat:* ^{d}*Ištar bēlit mātāti*).[15]

I believe we are justified in extending this identification of gods with heavenly phenomena to the observation of phenomena in celestial omens on the basis of a number of protases (the "if-clauses") of celestial-omen texts that describe certain phenomena in personified or metaphoric terms, referring to appearances of gods (such as the wearing of a crown or a beard), activities of gods (such as riding a chariot), or, more interesting, the psychological states of gods.[16] One such metaphor expresses an eclipse as "Sin mourns" or "Šamaš cries."[17] Such anthropomorphic tropes go back to the earliest examples of lunar omens, dating to the mid-second millennium, in which the moon is referred to as "the god," for example, in the expression "the god disappeared in distress" (Akk. *ilum ina lumun libbi itbal*). This metaphoric statement refers to the situation where the moon set while still eclipsed.[18]

The association of the heavenly bodies with certain deities seems to go back to the very beginnings of Mesopotamian civilization and persists as well to the end. Astral emblems, such as the lunar crescent (Akk. *uškaru*) for Sin,[19] the eight-pointed star for Ištar,[20] and the solar disk (Akk. *šamšatu*) for Šamaš,[21] are a regular fea-

14. According to *CAD,* s.v. *bubbulu,* reading *ta-šil*(text: BE)-*ti-ka* for *tašīltika,* "your splendor," as opposed to *ta-mit-ti-ka,* for which, see Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache,* 493:17.

15. K. 250+ (*CT* 26 40–41); see Ernst Weidner, *Handbuch der babylonische Astronomie* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1915), 6–17, and further in idem, "Ein astrologischer Sammeltext aus der Sargonidenzeit," *AfO* 19 (1959–60): 105–13. A more recent transliteration and translation of this text may be found in Ulla Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination,* Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications 19 (Copenhagen: Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 1995), app. B.

16. See my "Personifications and Metaphors in Babylonian Celestial *Omina,*" *JAOS* 116 (1996): 475–85.

17. This is expressed with the Akkadian verb *bakû,* "to cry," discussed in my "Personifications," 481.

18. Again, see my "Personifications," 478–79.

19. According to Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, the *uškaru,* or recumbent crescent moon, is found as a motif from prehistoric periods, although associated with the god Sin (Nanna-Suen) from the Old Babylonian period onward. See their *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 54.

20. As with the *uškaru,* the eight-pointed star also has prehistoric origins, but is associated with Ištar (Inanna) from the Old Babylonian (and probably earlier, in the Early Dynastic) and persists to the Neo-Babylonian period. See Black and Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols,* 169–70.

21. For textual references to the solar disk as the emblem of Šamaš, see the *CAD,* s.v. *šamšatu, šamšu,* meaning 4, and cf. *šaššāru,* the saw as an emblem of Šamaš, the one who "decides ["cuts"] decisions

ture of Mesopotamian iconography throughout its history. These divine symbols can be traced on cylinder seals as early as the Early Dynastic period[22] and as late as the Neo-Babylonian. On a stela of the Akkadian period, Naram-Sin's (2254–2218 B.C.E.) victory over the Lullubi is commemorated in a depiction of the victorious king standing upon a mountain above which hover clear astral symbols.[23] The Middle Babylonian "boundary stones" (Akk. *kudurru*) are well known for representations of many divine symbols, some clearly astral, as in the first register of the *kudurru* of Nebuchadnezzar I (1124–1104 B.C.E.), which shows the eight-pointed star, the lunar crescent, and the solar emblem.[24] Some of these same symbols embellish the royal wardrobe of Assyrian kings, as on the reliefs of the palace of Aššurnaṣirpal II (883–859 B.C.E.) at Nimrud[25] or on the stela of Šamši-Adad V (823–811 B.C.E.), also from Nimrud, where the Assyrian king appears wearing the solar-cross symbol.[26] Even earlier, a necklace from Dilbat, dated to the nineteenth or eighteenth century B.C.E., is adorned with the lunar crescent, the lightning bolt, the solar "cross" commonly known from the Kassite period (1595–1195 B.C.E.), and the eight-pointed star.[27] Perhaps the most remarkable depiction of the solar-disk emblem is that found on the upper portion of a stone tablet of the post-Kassite Babylonian king Nabû-apla-iddina of the ninth century B.C.E.[28] The scene depicts the presentation of the king to the god Šamaš, who

(*purussâ parāsu*)," in Old Babylonian texts. The saw associated with the sun god is attested already in Akkadian-period glyptic; see Beatrice Teissier, *Ancient Near Eastern Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 15 (seal no. 81).

22. Teissier, *Ancient Near Eastern Cylinder Seals,* 126–27; Early Dynastic seals nos. 62 and 64 have star, star disk, and crescent elements. Whether these are firmly associated with the astral gods, however, is uncertain. In Briggs Buchanan's *Early Near Eastern Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981), 61, the author notes that "the crescent, as in [seals nos.] 175–76, does not seem to be attested in Uruk period designs. Nor was it part of the usual Jamdat Nasr repertory. When it does occur in Jamdat Nasr or post Jamdat Nasr seals, it looks more like an added filler than an object of heavenly significance; see, for example, OIP 72, 455, 257 (reversed), 467 (both ways). It is therefore possible that the convention of depicting the moon as a crescent grew out of what was originally an aesthetic device. Compare, however, A. Falkenstein, *Archaische Texte aus Uruk* Berlin 1936, sign 305, of Warka IV, which looks like a crescent standard, though Falkenstein (60 n. 4) relates it to a sun disk group."

23. Dominique Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 75, pl. 58.

24. Ibid., 121, pl. 98.

25. Richard David Barnett and Amleto Lorenzini, *Assyrian Sculpture* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975), pl. 2.

26. Julian Reade, *Assyrian Sculpture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 32, pl. 42. Compare the stela of Aššurnaṣirpal from Nimrud, where the king again wears a necklace strung with amulets in the shapes of similar symbols; see Black and Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols,* 31, pl. 21.

27. Black and Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols,* 31, pl. 21.

28. Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art,* 169, pl. 135.

holds the symbols of divine justice (the rod and ring) beneath astral symbols (lunar crescent, solar disk, and eight-pointed star), while two minor gods lower a huge solar symbol onto what appears to be a table.[29] The three primary astral deities, Sin (moon), Šamaš (sun), and Ištar (Venus), are represented with their traditional symbols during the Neo-Babylonian period as well, as on a stela of Nabonidus (?) (555–539 B.C.E.) depicting the king before the lunar crescent, the solar symbol as Kassite cross, and the eight-pointed star of Venus.[30]

Perhaps also relevant here are the so-called presentation scenes of cylinder seals, which depict the meeting of human servant (usually a king) and god, often through the intermediary of the personal god who leads the devotee before the enthroned cosmic deity.[31] Of course, the elaborate scene presented on the tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina is another example of this same iconographic *topos*. Such images of a human being approaching a god symbolized as a celestial body show us that the gods, even the remote gods associated with celestial bodies, were thought to be willing to communicate with humankind. The ominous phenomena in the heavens were one such form of communication.[32] At least for the celestial signs, the identity of the deity with the celestial body makes even clearer the notion that the gods communicated their messages by means of their visible manifestations in the heavens, as seems to be explicit in the following passage from a prayer to Marduk: "[I praise your name, Marduk, . . .] your name is SAG.ME.GAR [= Jupiter], the foremost god . . . who shows a sign at his rising."[33] The planet Jupiter is again called "bearer of signs to the world" in a list of star names giving the equivalence ^{mul}SAG.ME.GAR = *nāš ṣaddu ana dadmu*^{sic}.[34]

Celestial omens further instantiate the rather abstract idea of correspondence between the two cosmological domains, heaven and earth.[35] The protasis and apo-

29. See Erica Reiner, "Suspendu entre ciel et terre . . . ," in Hermann Gasche and Barthel Hrouda, eds., *Collectanea orientalia: Histoire, arts de l'espace et industrie de la terre, études offertes en hommage à Agnès Spycket,* Civilisations du Proche-Orient, série I, Archéologie et environnement, vol. 3 (Neuchâtel: Recherches et Publications, 1996), 311–13.

30. Michael Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East* (New York: Facts on File Books, 1998), 201.

31. Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art,* 81, pl. 60

32. See further in Oppenheim, *Ancient Mespotamia,* 206–27; Bottéro, *Mesopotamia,* chaps. 8–9; H. W. F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: Athlone Press, 1978), chap. 5; and, most comprehensively, Beate Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien,* SAA Studies, vol. X (Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1999).

33. (*adallal zikirka* ^{d}*Marduk) . . . šumka* ^{d}SAG.ME.GAR *ilu rēštu . . . ša ina nipḫišu ukallamu ṣaddu;* James Alexander Craig, *Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts* I (Leipzig, 1895), 30:41–42.

34. 5R 46 no. 1:39.

35. Akkadian *erṣetu* (Sum. KI), the most common word for earth, is also the term for netherworld, but in the cosmic duality AN.KI (*šamê u erṣeti*), KI most likely refers to earth, not the netherworld. For discussion, see Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 271.

dosis of a celestial omen are an expression of the reciprocal relationship between nature and society, and, by extension, heaven and earth, where nature is not a separate domain, independent of divine agency, but a sphere within which the divine could have direct impact on human life. Again, nondivinatory literature affords a better insight into the belief in the gods' active role in the world. Consider the following incantation:[36]

> Incantation: Ea, Šamaš, Marduk, the great gods,
> you are the ones who judge the law of the land,
> who determine the nature of things,
> who draw the cosmic designs,
> who assign the lots for heaven and earth;
> it is in your hands to decree the destinies
> and to draw the cosmic designs;
> you determine the destinies of life,
> you draw the designs of life,
> you decide the decisions of life.

In this incantation, the gods are viewed as having the power to make decisions, give commands, and determine the fate of people, much like the power possessed by a king. The designation of the gods as determiners of the "nature of things," the "destinies of life," the ones who draw the "cosmic designs" and the "designs of life," evokes the metaphor of the god as king, who orders and legislates existence, and recalls the image of the deity enthroned in the presentation scenes of Mesopotamian glyptic. The political metaphor of god as king, according to Thorkild Jacobsen, is already reflected in the Sumerian mythological assembly of the gods and in divine names composed with the Sumerian word "lord" (en) or "ruler of," as in Enlil "Lord Air."[37] This concept is still fundamental to the understanding of the gods in their celestial manifestations.[38]

But how, logically, are omens to be construed in the light of this conception of gods as divine sovereigns determining destinies and assigning the lots of heaven and earth? As mentioned above, omen texts set the ominous phenomena and the

36. *LKA* 109:1–8.

37. Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 78–81.

38. The association of god and ruler continued as a religio-political metaphor in the Hellenistic milieu, particularly of the Eastern Empire, where gods such as Zeus and Helios were given the titles *kurios,* "lord" (= Latin *dominus*), *despoteis,* "master," and *tyrannos,* "absolute ruler"; see A. D. Nock, "Studies in the Graeco-Roman Beliefs of the Empire," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World,* ed. Zeph Stewart (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 47 and nn. 93–95.

events indicated by them in relation to one another in the manner of conditional probabilities, where the occurrence of an event is expected if it is established that another event has occurred (or will occur). Each new line in the omen list begins with the word "if," but the manner of writing "if" in these lists (with the vertical wedge read as DIŠ) bears the influence of Sumerian and Akkadian law collections and standardized legal formulae. The parallel between lists of omens and earlier collections of legal precedents and their "judgments" or "verdicts" is suggestive and compelling in light of prayers and incantations referring to the gods as "deciders of decisions" (Akk. *pārisū purussî*), often said of Sin and of Sin and Šamaš together. The late theological and "astrological" commentary series entitled I.NAM.GIŠ.HUR.AN.KI.A states: "Sin and Šamaš, the two gods, are present and decide the decisions of the land [. . .] they give signs to the land" (Akk. ^{d}*Sin u* ^{d}*Šamaš [ilāni kilallān] izzazzūma purussê māti iparrasū [. . . ṣa]ddu ana māti inaddinū*).[39]

That the diviners saw the omens as indications of divinely determined events is also supported by the use of the Akkadian word *purussû,* "legal decision" or "verdict," as a term for what we would call an "omen prediction." Inserted between the protases and apodoses of the lunar-eclipse omens of *Enūma Anu Enlil* Tablet 20, for example the omen for month *Du'ūzu,* is the instruction "[Y]ou observe his [Sin's] eclipse and keep the north wind in mind; thereby a decision [Akk. *purussû*] is given for Ur and the king of Ur."[40] In another lunar-eclipse text, similarly, is the comment "region [of the heavens] for a decision concerning the king

39. Alasdair Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 24–25. See also *LKU* 32:3 (Sin), and cf. "Sin is [the equivalent of] Sin of the decision" (Akk. ^{d}*Sin* ^{d}*Sin ša purussê*), *CT* 24 39:15; for Sin and Šamaš, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1915–23; repr., Osnabrück: Zeller, 1970–72), 18 r. 44. The literary stylists of Aššurnaṣirpal's royal inscriptions also made reference to the god Sin's making cosmic "decisions," as in "the Fruit [i.e., the new moon] revealed to me his decisions, which cannot be revoked" (Akk. *ukallimanni inbu purussēšu ša la inninnû*), Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen könige bis zum Untergange Ninevehs,* Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 7 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1916), 110 v 10. The Akkadian phrase *purussâ nadīnu,* "to give a decision (or judgment)," when used in connection with celestial omens, parallels the phrase *dīna dânu,* "to render a judgment in the form of an oracle." In the Old Babylonian prayer to the Gods of the Night, the heavenly bodies Šamaš, Sin, Adad, and Ištar are said not to give judgment (*ul idinnû dīnam*), because they have set (*iterbû*); see Wolfram Von Soden, "Schwer zugängliche russische Veröffentlichungen altbabylonischer Texts," *ZA* 43 (1936): 306:8, and Georges Dossin, "Prières aux 'Dieux de la nuit' (AO 6769)," *RA* 32 (1935): 180; also A. L. Oppenheim, "A New Prayer to the Gods of the Night," *Analecta Biblica* 12 (1959): 282–301. This seems to be a clear metaphor for the idea that only the appearances of the heavenly bodies, that is, while they are above the horizon, are capable of providing omens. See also Erica Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia,* Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 85/4 (Independence Square [Philadelphia]: American Philosophical Society, 1995), 66–67.

40. See my *Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination* (*AfO* Beiheft 22) (Horn: Verlag Ferdinand Berger & Söhne, 1988), chap. 10 passim; see also, in Hermann Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings,* SAA vol. VIII (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992), 4:4, 300 rev. 7, 11; 335 rev. 4.

of Elam, region of [meaning: for the occurrence of] an eclipse."[41] The term *purussû* in this usage is also found in the reports of the diviners to the Neo-Assyrian kings, in which the celestial-omen series *Enūma Anu Enlil* is quoted, such as "[If] a star is darkened in the region of Sagittarius: a decision [*purussû*] for Muttabal and Babylon," or "Simanu means the Westland and a decision is given for Ur." The *purussû*s in these examples, in my view, can be identified with the divine decisions referred to in the epithets of gods.[42]

Why the gods were viewed as the producers of signs in the natural world is further clarified by Mesopotamian cosmology. In one sense, the cosmic deities (Anu, Enlil, and Ea) are the divine essence of the physical cosmos, and so their very existence presupposes the existence of the physical parts of the universe identified with them; that is, the great above is AN-Anu, and the great below is EN.KI-Ea.[43] The other sense, already noted in the evidence from prayers and incantations to celestial deities, derives from a conception of the cosmos as a polity ruled by those gods: AN ruled remote heaven, EN.KI the waters around and below the earth, and EN.LÍL the space between the great above and the great below, with its atmosphere and wind. In seeing the establishment of the cosmic "designs," which I take here to refer to the entire phenomenal world, as a divine act of creation, the opening line of the celestial-divination series makes the notion of divine rule over the entire cosmic domain clear:[44] "When Anu, Enlil, and Ea, the great gods, established by their true decision the designs of heaven and earth, the increase of the day, the renewal of the month [= new moon], and the appearances [of celestial bodies], [then] humankind saw the sun going out from his gate and [the celestial bodies] regularly appearing in the midst of heaven and earth."

In the more famous Babylonian creation poem *Enūma Eliš,* a hierarchical structure of divine authority is described, placing Marduk in the position of leadership (Tablet iv) and under him the fifty great gods, the seven gods of the "destinies" (Tablet vi 80–81), and the Anunnaki and Igigi in their respective cosmic domains (Tablet vi 40–69). This divine society was part of a fixed order that came into existence with creation and became a permanent characteristic of the cosmos. The phenomena through which divine messages were relayed to "the land"

41. *TCL* 6 12 ii 4 ff.

42. Such divine decisions are also attested in the names of temples constructed with Sum. EŠ.BAR, e.g., É.EŠ.BAR.AN.KI, "House of Decisions of Heaven and Earth"; EŠ.BAR.ME.SI.SÁ, "[House] which Keeps in Order Decisions and Me's"; É.EŠ.BAR.ZI.DA, "House of True Decisions": see A. R. George, *House Most High: The Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 82–83.

43. See further, on the association between deities and parts of the cosmos, Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works,* chap. 2, pp. 71–91.

44. L. W. King, ed., *The Seven Tablets of Creation* (London: Luzac, 1902), i 124–27; ii pl. 49:9–14 (Akkadian version).

were a consequence of this fixed order. As stated in *Enūma Eliš,* "[T]he norms had been fixed [and] all [their] portents" (Tablet VI 78). If the physical phenomena that functioned as signs portending the future for humankind were established as part of creation, the channel of communication between divine and human in the form of divination was seen as part of the original structure of the world. In the concluding paragraph of a source for *Enūma Anu Enlil* Tablet 22, a similar notion is expressed: "When Anu, Enlil, and Ea, the great gods, created heaven and earth and made manifest the celestial signs, [they fixed the stations and estab]lished the positions [of celestial bodies], [the gods of the night they . . . they divided the co]urses, [(and with) stars as their (the gods') likenesses, they drew the constellations.]"[45]

Here it is specifically celestial signs that are conceived as coming into being simultaneously with the creation of heaven itself.

The orderliness of the Mesopotamian cosmos was manifest in the reciprocity of heaven and earth and in the rule of regions by designated deities. The chief mythological image of the body of the cosmos, according to *Enūma Eliš,* was that of Tiamat, the personified feminine salt waters. Marduk secured bolts on either side of the gates, or "doors," of heaven (Akk. *dalāt šamê*) (Tablet V 9–10), that is, for the upper part of the cosmos (called *elâtu*) formed from the cosmic salt-water Mother. Also encoded in this metaphor, no doubt, is the original watery state before the generation of the gods in the form of Apsû and Tiamat. After splitting the monster in half, Marduk ultimately placed the celestial bodies in the upper half of Tiamat, forming the "roof" (*ṣullulu*) of the sky. In addition, a motif of the "bonds of heaven and earth" (*markas* or *rikis šamê u erṣēti*) implies the physical unity of the two parts. This cosmological feature was sometimes called *durmaḫu,* an Akkadian word for some kind of strong rope made of reeds (see Tablets V 59 and VII 95). The cosmic bonds, imagined as ropes or cables, therefore tied down and controlled particularly the flow of waters (in the form of dew, rain, or clouds) from the heavens, and recall the image of the gates that locked in the waters of Tiamat. The cosmic cable was used as a linking device that could be held as a symbol of power in cosmological mythology. Ištar, for example, is described as the goddess "who holds the connecting link of all heaven and earth."[46] In a marvelous compounding of metaphors, the *ṣerretu,* or lead-

45. The translation given here is tentative due to the many breaks and the resulting difficulty of the syntax. For the text, see Weidner *AfO* 17 89:5 and pl. IV (VAT 9805+), also my *Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination,* 270–71 (= Source E), and Wayne Horowitz, "Mesopotamian Accounts of Creation," in N. S. Hetherington, ed., *Encyclopedia of Cosmology: Historical, Philosophical, and Scientific Foundations of Modern Cosmology* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 396.

46. The symbol of the rope anchoring the heavens may go back to a Sumerian image preserved in an Early Dynastic hymn, UM 29–16–273 + N 99 iv 7, which has the phrase DUR SUR AN LÁ.GIM,

rope passed through the nose of an animal, becomes synonymous with this cosmological feature because it too can be held by a deity as a symbol of control or authority: "I [Ištar] am in possession of the [symbols of] the divine offices; in my hands I hold the lead-rope of heaven," or "Marduk made firm and took into his hands the lead-rope of the Igigi and Anunnaki, the connecting link between heaven and earth."[47]

The symmetrical bipartite cosmos persisted in later Babylonian thought, where, in religious and scholarly texts of the first millennium, reference is made to cosmic designs called GIŠ.HUR.AN.KI (*uṣurāt šamê u erṣēti*), literally "plans of the above and below." The scholastic explanatory work I.NAM.GIŠ.HUR.AN.KI.A refers to "corresponding elements of celestial and terrestrial parts of the universe, things of the Apsû, as many as were designed" (Akk. *tabbâti šamê u erṣeti šūt apsî mala bašmu*).[48] These cosmic designs, perhaps the image of universality and regularity, are frequently associated with what are called cosmic "destinies" (Sum. NAM.MEŠ = Akk. *šīmâtu*), as in the divine epithet "lord of cosmic destinies and designs" (Akk. *bēl šīmâti u uṣurāti*).

The underlying "causes" or reasons for these "designlike" regularities in the cosmos were, not surprisingly, never expressed in terms of natural law. Accordingly, we cannot presume that the patterns observed in nature were taken by the ancient Mesopotamians as outward signs of a lawlike behavior of physical phenomena, unless by "lawlike" we mean subject to the judgments and rulings of the gods, as expressed in terms of *purussû* (or *dīnu*).[49] In accordance with such a conception, the natural order could just as easily be disrupted as maintained by divine will, as stated in the following line from *Enūma Eliš,* which attests to this very power of the god Marduk to create as to destroy order in the heavens: "[B]y

"the twisted rope to which heaven is secured." See Aage Westenholz, *Old Sumerian and Old Akkadian Texts in Philadelphia, Chiefly from Nippur* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1975–), vol. 1, no. 4, p. 124, cited in Bendt Alster, "On the Earliest Sumerian Literary Tradition," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 28 (1976): 122, who sees in this image a metaphor for a bolt of lightning wielded by Enlil at the cosmogonic separation of heaven and earth.

47. For further discussion of the *ṣerretu,* see A. R. George, "Sennacherib and the Tablet of Destinies," *Iraq* 48 (1986): 133–46.

48. Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works,* 28, rev. 33.

49. All such claims about the relations between physical phenomena, the gods, and what we would call "fate" are of course highly interpretive. Other interpretations have, for example, supposed a Babylonian belief in a notion of overarching fate to which even the gods are bound, for example, J. N. Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium: Toward an Understanding of Šīmtu* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), and Giorgio Buccellati, "Mesopotamian Magic as a Mythology and Ritual of Fate: Structural Correlations with Biblical Religion," in Sara J. Denning-Bolle and Edwin Gerow, eds., *The Persistence of Religions: Essays in Honor of Kees W. Bolle* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1995), 185–95. This view bears resemblance to the classical Greek conception of fate, as evidenced in the tragedies and developed philosophically in the Hellenistic period (e.g., in the treatises of Stoics such as Chrysippus and Calcidius).

your utterance let the star be destroyed, command again and let the star be restored."[50] Less clear, but related in essence, is the statement from an angry Marduk, found in the Erra Epic: "When I left my dwelling, the regulation of heaven and earth disintegrated; the shaking of heaven meant the positions of the heavenly bodies changed, nor did I restore them."[51] Again, the prayer literature provides another parallel, this time with specific reference to an omen: "You [Nabû] are able to turn an untoward physiognomic omen into [one that is] propitious."[52]

The instrumental role of the gods manifested in natural phenomena reflects the nonmechanistic character of the Mesopotamian cosmos. Even in the context of the mythological "designs of heaven and earth," which suggest a fixed structure of the world, the "designs" were drawn by gods who were never conceived as simply setting things in motion only to step away and leave the machinery running, but as active participants in the world. Within such a cosmology, signs in nature, produced by gods, cannot be viewed as occurring out of deterministic necessity. But the most compelling evidence against determinism in Babylonian divination and cosmology was the viability of apotropaic ritual action for dispelling bad omens. This further dimension of Mesopotamian divination, the human response to an omen's meaning, is entirely what one would expect of a system conceived fundamentally as communication between divine and human.

Rituals termed in Sumerian NAM.BÚR.BI (Akk. *namburbû*), meaning "its undoing," could be performed by priests, or even by gods, to ward off the evil portended by an omen.[53] The gods Ea, Šamaš and Marduk (also known as Asalluhi) are said to "perform apotropaic rituals wherever there are portentous happenings and signs,"[54] and an epithet of the sun-god identifies him as "the one who averts the [bad] signs and portents by means of *namburbi* rituals."[55] The seventh-century reports from the astrologers to the kings Esarhaddon and Aššurnaṣirpal reveal the use of such rituals, as in the following selected lines: "Let them perform a *nam-*

50. *Enūma Eliš,* Tablet IV 23–24.

51. Erra Epic Tablet I 133–34, translation by Foster, *Before the Muses,* 2:778; see also Luigi Cagni, *The Poem of Erra,* Sources and Monographs, Sources from the Ancient Near East I/3 (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1977), 32.

52. "Tele'i alamdimmê lemnūti ana damiqti itūru" (for *turra*), *The Sultantepe Tablets,* vol. 1, ed. O. R. Gurney and J. J. Finkelstein, and vol. 2, ed. O. R. Gurney and P. Hulin (London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1957 and 1964), 71:20; see W. G. Lambert, "The Sultantepe Tablets: A Review Article," *RA* 53 (1959): 135.

53. Stefan M. Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung: eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale (Namburbi)* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994).

54. *LKA* 109:16, see *CAD,* s.v. *namburbu* sub a.

55. *LKA* 111:10.

burbû ritual; the halo was not a closed one."[56] "This is a bad sign for all lands. Let the king my lord perform a *namburbû* ritual and so make its evil pass by."[57] "Mars remained four fingers distant from Saturn, it did not come close. It did not reach it. I have copied [the omen from *Enūma Anu Enlil*]. What is the harm in it? Let the pertinent namburbû ritual be performed."[58] The protection of the king was paramount, since the celestial omens (especially the lunar) most directly affected him as the representative of the state. Therefore the scholar Munnabitu warned that "the [ki]ng must not become negligent about these observations of the mo[on]; let the king perform either a *namburbû* or [so]me ritual which is pertinent to it."[59]

When, however, the *namburbû* was not performed or the "cancellation" (Akk. *pissatu*) of the omen did not occur, the consequences of the sign were indeed thought to be inevitable. The diviner's instruction manual says, "[S]hould no sign counteracting the sign have occurred, or it had no cancellation, or no one could make it pass by, [or] its evil consequences could not be removed, [then] it will happen."[60] This is as close as we will come to a Babylonian argument for the truth of divination. This truth, however, stems from the belief in the deities' active role in the universe, that is, above and below. It is not derived from the logical necessity of conditional probability statements. The reliance on incantation and apotropaic ritual acts, which effectively asked the gods to undo the connection between the omen and its "prediction," might seem (to some) to undermine the entire logical structure of omen statements (if *x,* then *y*). At the very least, the resort to prayer and "magic" renders the omen statements something on the order of "if *x,* then *y* (unless *z*)," where *z* is the *namburbû* ritual to avert the untoward event predicted by the omen. Implicit in each omen, then, is the possibility that some procedure will prevent the occurrence of the predicted event by persuading the gods to do so. Perhaps a better modern formulation of a Babylonian omen statement, then, would be "if *x,* then *y,* if and only if not *z*."

Clearly some of the same elements of interest to later Hellenistic philosophers' discussions of the theory and cosmological implications of divination are already imbedded in Mesopotamian divination, for example, cosmic regularity and recurrence, universality, and, of course, prognostication by signs. One cannot fail to notice, however, that some of the most central concerns of the philosophy of divination, especially the Stoic, are absent, for example, causation, determinism,

56. Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings,* 71:4.
57. Ibid., 288 rev. 7–9.
58. Ibid., 82:8–10.
59. Ibid., 320 rev. 6–9.
60. A. Leo Oppenheim, "A Babylonian Diviner's Manual," *JNES* 33 (1974): 200:45–46.

necessity, and the truth of predictions.[61] The conceptual apparatus of Babylonian celestial divination seems to me to be rooted in a cosmology that was profoundly "religious." I mean this in the sense that Babylonian celestial divination followed from a belief in the gods' participation in what we regard as the natural world, as well as their legislation of things occurring in the human sphere of existence. Such a cosmology resulted in the possibility of a meaningful correspondence between heaven and earth by means of the role of the gods in each realm, as well as the efficacy of apotropaic magic as a mode of appeal to the divine in the face of dire omens. While the Stoic conception of an omen may have enabled the prediction of the future by the logical necessity of a universal network of causal connections, the conception of an omen in Mesopotamian divination reveals a logic defined instead in terms of the crucial relationships I have tried to describe here, those between divine and nature, divine and human, heaven and earth.

Throughout this essay I have attempted to steer clear of the problematic terms "science," "religion," and "magic," although the elements of the preceding discussion necessarily conjure up associations with each one. I have also avoided direct confrontation with the issue of how "science," as a dimension of celestial-omen texts identified in the protases containing astronomical phenomena, related to "religion and magic," identified in the *namburbi* rituals and incantations used in the diviners' response to unpropitious omens. Although this question is of great interest from the point of view of the history of science, it seems to me less productive for analyzing the intellectual culture of the scribes who carried on the traditions of celestial omens, *namburbi* rituals, incantations, celestial observation, and astronomical prediction in an integrated way. The extant texts do not support the reconstruction of a culture in which the study of the heavens and the development of mathematical means of predicting phenomena implied a sensibility about the world different from that which characterizes the texts more readily identifiable as "religious" because of their concern with divine action. The separation of science, religion, and magic necessary for entertaining the question of how these relate to one another in some historical context is completely artificial in the ancient Mesopotamian context and should no doubt be avoided when we are engaged in analysis from outside. If what we are trying to understand is the Babylonian scholars' conceptual apparatus of the world, it is unintelligible to speak of the scribes' study and understanding of "nature" as distinct and separate from their study and understanding of the divine. If, on the other hand, we are trying to talk about the degree to which Babylonian scholars understood heavenly phe-

61. For a detailed discussion, see Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

nomena, we may be permitted the historical artificiality of separating astronomical texts from the other kinds of texts in which these specialists were trained. This, however, has not been my concern here. What I have tried to show is that, in the context of distinct text types constituting the repertoire of the scholar-scribe of ancient Mesopotamia, a unified worldview underlies each of the practices evidenced in those texts. A central feature of this relation to the world is the attention to the divine and the assumption of the possibility of a connection and communication between divine and human. In the specific case of celestial divination, that form of communication connected humans not only to gods but to the heavens wherein the gods were thought to make themselves manifest and produce signs for humankind.

11
Astral Religion and the Representation of Divinity
The Cases of Ugarit and Judah

Mark S. Smith

West Semitic religion in general owes much to astral religion, and yet most modern accounts take little note of the it. More specifically, it is apparent that in two cases of West Semitic culture, namely, ancient Ugarit and Judah, astral religion held a place of importance, only to be displaced by the development of other gods' cults. As a result of this dislocation, the significance of astral religion has been inadvertently yet correspondingly displaced to the backdrop in modern efforts to understand West Semitic religion. This essay, hoping in some small measure to remedy this oversight, discusses the four tiers of the divine household in the West Semitic conceptualization of divinity; the astral background of El's family in Ugaritic and Israelite religious literatures and Baal's status as an outsider to this divine family; and El and Yahweh in ancient Israel and the displacement of astral religion.

The Four Tiers of the Divine Household

In addition to the notion of the divine council, the idea of the divine family serves to express a cohesive vision of religious reality. In Nicolas Wyatt's apt formulation: "The image of the one family is a classic instance of systematic theology at work."[1] The immense importance the patrimonial household holds for understanding both human and divine society in the Ugaritic texts has been underscored in an intelligent discussion by J. D. Schloen. At the end of his lengthy treatment of the patrimonial household in Ugarit, Schloen turns to the question of its mythology:

> Although little mention has so far been made of the well-known mythological texts from Ugarit, it is worth considering here briefly the structure

1. Nicolas Wyatt, "Baal, Dagan, and Fred: A Rejoinder," *UF* 24 (1992): 429.

> of authority that is revealed in them. Of course, myths are often murky refractions rather than direct reflections of mundane social realities, but it is striking that a concern for the preservation of the patrilineage is prominent in the Epics of Keret and Aqhat. Furthermore, the household of the gods themselves has the appearance of a typical Near Eastern joint family, complete with rivalries among adult sons and daughters. In the Baal Cycle, a major theme is Baal's desire for a house of his own—as the eldest son and heir he is restless and unhappy under the direct supervision of the aging patriarch, El. The acquisition of his own house does not mean, however, that Baal is totally independent of El or wants to be his rival; indeed, his true rivals are members of his own generation—favorites of El such as Yamm and Mot who want to displace him as heir.[2]

Schloen lays out the basic social paradigm for understanding the Ugaritic pantheon as a whole. The pantheon is a large multifamily or joint household headed by a patriarch with several competing sons. While older studies of Ugaritic religion and literature have recognized the language of the family in Ugaritic myths, its social background has perhaps not been equally appreciated. Since Schloen barely applies his own insight to the divine family (apart from *KTU*[2] 1.12 and 1.23),[3] this discussion largely takes up where he has left off in applying the patrimonial household to the presentation of divinity in Ugaritic texts.[4]

The pantheon is a divine royal household consisting of four tiers. The top two tiers of the pantheon are occupied by the divine parents and their children, while the bottom two tiers consist of deities working in the divine household. El is the father of deities and humanity. Accordingly, El's capacity as ruler of the pantheon is expressive of his function as patriarch of the family. His wife, Athirat (biblical Asherah), is considered the mother of deities and humanity. El and Athirat are the divine royal parents of the pantheon, and the dominant deities are generally regarded as their royal children. (As R. M. Good quips, "What great god wasn't a king?")[5] These divine children are called in generic terms "the seventy sons of Athirat" (*KTU*[2] 1.4 VI 46). The narrative of Elkunirsa, a West Semitic myth written in Hittite, idiosyncratically numbers Ashertu's (Athirat's) children at "seventy-seven"

2. J. D. Schloen, "The Patrimonial Household in the Kingdom of Ugarit: A Weberian Analysis of Ancient Near Eastern Society" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1995), esp. 399.

3. J. D. Schloen, "The Exile of Disinherited Kin in *KTU* 1.12 and *KTU* 1.23," *JNES* 52 (1993): 209–20.

4. See also Lourik Karkajian, "La maisonnée patrimoniale divine à Ougarit: Une analyse wébérienne du dieu de la mort, Mot" (Ph.D. diss., University of Montreal, 1999), published on the internet by Presses Universitaires de Montréal at www.pum.montreal.ca/theses/pilote/karkajian/these.html.

5. R. M. Good, "On RS 24.252," *UF* 24 (1992): 160.

(followed in parallelism by "eighty-eight").[6] Seventy is a well-known number conventional for a generally large group (see Judg. 9:5, 2 Kgs. 10:1, cf. Exod. 1:5).[7] The seventy sons designates, not the divine council as a whole, but its leading members. The number of gods survives in the later Jewish notion of the seventy angels, one for each of the world's putative seventy peoples (1 Enoch 89:59, 90:22–25; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Deut. 32:8;[8] TB *Shabbat* 88b; TB *Sukkah* 55b).[9]

The second tier of gods have their own households as well. Athirat's sons are said to have their own houses, according to Baal's complaint (*KTU*[2] 1.3 iv 48 and elsewhere). This presentation presumes that while El may be patriarch of the clan, the family-heads have houses of their own. Within these households are families with a "baal" at their head. Accordingly, every male family authority ideally might have his own house. In the mythological material, Baal has not only his military retinue but also three "daughters" (*bt*), namely, Pidray, 'Arsay, and Tallay, evidently reflecting his meteorological and chthonic aspects. The designation *bt* may not merely be a term for "woman," since 1.24.26–27 refers to Baal as the father of Pidray. In a further familial construct, Mot refers to his own brothers as well as Baal's (1.5 i 22–25, ii 21–24; 1.6 v 19–22, vi 10–16); the god's comments apparently point to the households with these two gods as their most prominent members.[10]

The bottom two tiers of divinities are exemplified by Kothar and messengers. Kothar himself is the craftsman hired by different divine royals for their various needs. Analogously, human craftsmen were employed by the Ugaritic dynasty. At the very bottom of the divine society are household workers of the following sorts (textual listings following each term reflect attestations of these words for human workers mostly outside of mythological contexts):

6. H. A. Hoffner, *Hittite Myths,* ed. G. M. Beckman, SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series 2 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), 69. For the same parallelism of 77||88, see also *KTU*[2] 1.5 v 19–22.

7. See M. H. Pope, "Seven, Seventh, Seventy," in George A. Buttrick and Keith R. Crim, eds., *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1976), 4:285–95; F. C. Fensham, "The Numeral Seventy in the Old Testament and the Family of Jerubbaal, Ahab, Panammuwa, and Athirat," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 109 (1977): 113–15; J. C. de Moor, "Seventy!" in Manfried Dietrich and Ingo Kottsieper, eds., *"Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf": Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient: Festschrift für Oswald Loretz zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres mit Beiträgen von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen,* Alter Orient und Altes Testament 250 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 199–203.

8. John Day, "Ugarit and the Bible: Do They Presuppose the Same Canaanite Mythology and Religion?" in George J. Brooke, Adrian H. W. Curtis, and John F. Healey, eds., *Ugarit and the Bible: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ugarit and the Bible, Manchester September, 1992,* Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur 11 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994), 38–39.

9. André Caquot, Maurice Sznycer, and Andrée Herdner, eds., *Textes ougaritiques,* vol. 1, *Mythes et légendes* (Paris: Du Cerf, 1974), 213.

10. Karkajian, "La maisonnée patrimoniale divine à Ougarit."

"female servant," *'amt* (cf. 1.14 II 3, II 10, III 25, 37, VI 22; 2.70.19)
tlš 'amt yrḫ (1.12 I 14–15)
dmgy 'amt 'aṯrt (1.12 I 16–17)
"messenger," *ml'ak* (cf. 2.17.7, 1.23.5, 2.33.35, 2.36.11, 2.76.3)
ml'ak ym (1.2 I 22, 26, 28, 30, 41, 42, 44)
ml'ak šmm (1.13.25)
[m]l'akm (1.62.6)
ml'akk 'm dtn (1.124.11)
"servant," *'nn*[11] (2.8.4 [?]; cf. 7.125.3 [?])
Gpn w-'Ugr (1.3 IV 32; 1.4 VIII 15)
"gatekeeper," *ṯgr* (cf. 4.103.39, 40, 4.224.8, 9, 7.63.6)
Resheph as gatekeeper to the underworld (1.78.1–3; cited below)
Yarih (?) as gatekeeper of El's house (1.114.11)

The terms "gatekeeper" (Ug. *ṯgr*) and "messenger" (Ug. *ml'ak*) involve specific tasks apparently assigned only to males. The word "female servant" (Ug. *'amt*) is a generic term for a female worker at this rank. The word "servant" (Ug. *'nn*) seems to be a general term for servant, either male or female. Employees of divine family members are apparently delineated at least in part according to gender: divine gatekeepers and messengers are evidently male, and the domestic servants are apparently female. El's question to Athirat about her not being a servant (*'nn, 'bd*) reflects this assumption (1.4 IV 59–62). With regard to the social background of these roles, *'bd, 'nn* and *'amt* all derive from the language of the family household. The word *ml'ak* in the Ugaritic material is less clear, but biblical material shows family messengers (e.g., Gen. 32:4–7), not only messengers of the royal household (e.g., 1 Kgs. 19:2).[12] In sum, the divine household exhibits numerous structural and linguistic hallmarks of the patriarchal household. As the basic unit of society, the family household delineated in West Semitic texts could include the

11. Frank M. Cross (*Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic:* Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973], 17, 165–66 n. 86) and others understand *'nn* originally as "clouds" (i.e., servants for Baal) and hence "servants." Yet R. M. Good observes that *'nn* applies to servants belonging to figures other than Baal. See Good, "Clouds Messengers," *UF* 10 (1978): 436–37; Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle,* vol. 1, *Introduction with Text, Translation, and Commentary of KTU 1.1–1.2,* VTSup 55 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 292–93.

12. On *ml'ak,* see E. L. Greenstein, "Trans-Semitic Equivalency and the Derivation of Hebrew *ml'kh,*" *UF* 11 (1979): 329–36; Theodore E. Mullen, *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature,* Harvard Semitic Monographs 24 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), 210; Samuel A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World,* Harvard Semitic Monographs 45 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989); and J. T. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East,* Brown Judaic Studies 169 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989).

patriarch, multiple nuclear families headed by his sons, and other relations, as well as workers and slaves.[13]

It should be noted that the divine family is modeled on the royal household in particular. The monarchy in turn represents a royal version of the patriarchal household. *KTU*[2] 4.360 exhibits much of the same social terminology attested in the royal correspondence and the myths. In royal letters *b'l* refers to a social superior and *'adn* to the father of the writer.[14] The royal titulary of 7.63.4 calls the king "upright lord" (*b'l ṣdq*). These titles locate the king at the head of the royal household. As the preceding paragraphs show, even the typical language of monarchy, including *'adn* and *'bd,* obtains in nonroyal households. In addition, the titulary at 7.63.6–7 includes the title "gatekeeper of the kingdom" (*ṯgr mlk*), which reflects the patriarchal duty to protect the "royal household," namely the society, against external threats of enemies and to mediate domestic conflict. Therefore, in ideological terms, the king is at once the patriarchal provider and protector; he is judge and father to the society, as well as the warrior who battles on its behalf. Moreover, the Ugaritic king shows concern for maintaining family patrimony. In sum, the concepts of the divine household and of particular divine roles are founded on the fundamental patriarchal-royal model. The social metaphors for chief deities overwhelmingly reflect the patriarchal experience in households, nonroyal and royal alike. With the model of the royal family as background, it may be asked whether the divine family in the Ugaritic texts is understood as having any other distinguishing features related to nature and culture.

The Astral Background of El's Family in Ugaritic and Israelite Literatures and Baal's Outsider Status

The Ugaritic texts show some hints that El's family was understood as astral in character,[15] although it is important to observe that the texts rarely stress this fea-

13. See Schloen, "The Patrimonial Household," esp. 41, 73. In the general approach and areas of data pertaining to this subject, Schloen follows his mentor, L. E. Stager, "The Archeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1–35. See also Carol L. Meyers, "'To Her Mother's House': Considering a Counterpart to the Israelite *Bêt 'āb,*" in David Jobling, Peggy L. Day, and Gerald T. Sheppard, eds., *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 39–51. For an older appreciation of the family as the basic unit of society, see Isaac Mendelsohn, "The Family in the Ancient Near East," *BA* 11 (1948): 24–40.

14. Dennis Pardee, personal communication (20 April 1998).

15. Compare the typology proposed by R. R. Steiglitz, "Ebla and the Gods of Canaan," in Cyrus H. Gordon and G. A. Rendsburg, eds., *Eblaitica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language, Vol-*

ture.[16] For example, a category of divinities called "star-gods" is attested in 1.43.2–3, evidently with their own "house" (*bt 'ilm kbkbm*). In general, these deities are not specified,[17] though a possible exception is 1.10 I 3–5:[18]

. . . which the sons of El do not know [?] . . .	*[ ]ḥ dlyḏ bn 'il*
. . . the assembly of the stars . . .	*[ ]pḫr kbbm*
. . . the circle of those of heaven . . .	*[ ]dr dt šmm*

On the face of it, the three expressions seem to be parallel.[19] The first may identify the group involved as El's family, but it would be possible to render *bn 'il* as "divine sons" and not literally as "sons of El." The other two phrases, "the assembly of the stars" (*pḫr kbbm*) and "the circle of those of heaven" (*[ ]dr dt šmm*), clearly involve astral language for it (cf. *'ilm kbkbm* in 1.43.2–3). However, it is important to note that the context of 1.10 I 3–5 is broken and not well understood. Given the many difficulties involved in interpreting 1.10 I 13–15, the hypothesis that El's family is astral requires support from texts that mention El and astral deities. Many astral figures are worthy of consideration in this regard: Shahar and Shalim, Yarih, Shapshu, Athtar and Athtart, and Resheph.

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ume 2, Publications of the Center for Ebla Research at New York University (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 82–83.

16. For an older, maximal investigation along these lines, see Ditlef Nielsen, *Ras Šamra Mythologie und biblische Theologie,* Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes XXI/4 (Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, in Kommission bei F. A. Brockhaus, 1936; repr., Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kaus Reprint, 1966). For Nielsen, the astral family was the older Semitic group, while the storm-god was later. This "chronology of divinity" cannot be sustained with the oldest attested textual material. See J. J. M. Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon: A Study of the Semitic Deities Attested in Mespotamia Before Ur III* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972); Francesco Pomponio and Paolo Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla: Étude analytique des divinités éblaïtes à l'époque des archives royales du IIIe millénaire,* Alter Orient und Altes Testament 245 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1997).

17. See Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion: According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit,* trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1999), 129, 285–86; see further 199, 243, 289 n. 105. I am amenable to the possibility that the royal cult of infernal and astral deities reflects beliefs about the royal afterlife that involve descent to the underworld followed by some form of heavenly exaltation characterized as "astralization" (becoming one like the stars). This notion perhaps lies at the base of the "astral Dumuzi" (see D. A. Foxvog, "Astral Dumuzi," in Mark E. Cohen, Daniel C. Snell, and David B. Weisberg, eds., *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William H. Hallo* [Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993], 103–8, and Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* [New York: Oxford University Press, in press], chap. 6, sec. 3, and perhaps later expressions of resurrection in Dan. 12:3). It is possible that such a conceptualization of royal afterlife also informs the apparent juxtaposition of Hadad and the king in the afterlife together in KAI 214.16, 21. On this juxtaposition, see J. C. Greenfield, "Un rite religieux araméen et ses parallèles," *RB* 80 (1973): 46–52; *EHG* 30.

18. For the readings, see *KTU*^{2} and *UNP* 182.

19. So also *UNP* 182.

1. Shahar, "Dawn," and Shalim, "Dusk,"[20] are El's two sons, according to *KTU*[2] 1.23.
2. The moon-god Yariḫ[21] is evidently identified as *nʿmn [ʾi]lm,* "the favorite of El," in *KTU*[2] 1.24.25. In 1.92.14–16 Athtart's hunt provides meat for El and Yariḫ, the latter presumably as a member of the head god's household.[22] Yariḫ participates in the cooking of a meal in El's house in 1.114.
3. The sun-goddess Shapshu serves as El's special messenger according to *KTU*[2] 1.6 vi. It is to be noted further that the stars (*kbkbm knm*) are generally grouped after her in 1.23.54 (cf. *bt ʾilm kbkbm* in 1.43.2–3).[23] See also the blessing in 1.102.26–27 paralleling the sun and moon with El: *lymt špš wyrḫ wnʿmtšʾil.* From the texts cited thus far it might be suggested that the sun, moon, and stars belong to El's family.[24]
4. Athtar and Athtart seem also to belong to El's family, though supporting evidence lies in different texts. The Baal Cycle indicates that Athtar, unlike Baal, belongs to the family of El and Athirat (1.6 i). Athtart likewise seems to belong to El's family (see 1.92.14–16, noted above).[25] At Emar (modern Tel Meskene), Athtar is once called ^{d}*Aš-tar* MUL, "Ashtar of the stars," and Aramaic texts from the ninth century onward attest to *ʿtršmn,* "Athtar of heaven," apparently a reference to the god's astral character. References to the astral character of Ishtar in Mesopotamian sources are also commonly used to bolster a case for Athtart as an astral "queen of heaven."[26] Taken together such textual references

20. See Simon Parker, "Shahar," in *DDD* 1424–28, and H. B. Huffmon, "Shalim," in *DDD* 1428–31. On the mythological motifs in 1.23, see Schloen, "The Exile of Disinherited Kin in *KTU* 1.12 and *KTU* 1.23," 209–20; Nicolas Wyatt, "The Theogony Motif in Ugarit and the Bible," in Brooke, Curtis, and Healey, *Ugarit and the Bible,* 395–419; Meindert Dijkstra, "Astral Myth of the Birth of Shahar and Shalim (KTU 1.23)," 265–87, esp. 270, 274–79.

21. For a recent discussion of Yariḫ, see S. A. Wiggins, "What's in a Name? Yarih at Ugarit," *UF* 30 (1998): 761–79.

22. For convenience, see J. C. de Moor, "'Athtartu the Huntress (KTU 1.92)," *UF* 17 (1985): 225–30. See further Meindert Dijkstra, "The Myth of Astarte, the Huntress (KTU 1.92): New Fragments," *UF* 26 (1994): 113–26.

23. The view that the stars in 1.43.2–3 represent the deified dead in the underworld may be doubted. So see the critical discussion in Manfried Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, *"Jahwe und seine Aschera": Anthropomorphes Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit und Israel: Das biblische Bilderverbot,* Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur 9 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1992), 50–51. For another indication of cultic devotion to the stars, see apparently 1.164.15.

24. Cf. Brian Schmidt, "Moon," in *DDD* 1102.

25. For the following evidence, see Mark S. Smith, "The God Athtar in the Ancient Near East and His Place in KTU 1.6 I," in Ziony Zevit, Seymour Gitin, and Michael Sokoloff, eds., *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 628–29.

26. So Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 140; Roberts, *Earliest Semitic Pantheon,* 39–40; Wolfgang Heimpel, "A Catalog of Near Eastern Venus Deities," *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 4/3 (1982): 14–15.

lend credence to the old view that Athtar and Athtart represent the morning and evening "star" (Venus).[27] Accordingly, the basis for their relationship to El and Athirat may lie in the astral character of this family unit.

5. Resheph may also be an astral figure. M. J. Dahood and W. J. Fulco have argued for the astralization of Resheph at Ugarit, based on the astronomical-omen text *KTU*[2] 1.78: *bṯt ym ḫdṯ ḫyr ʿrbt špš ṯgrḥršp,* "on day six [?] of the new moon [in the month] of Hyr, the Sun went down, with Resheph [= Mars?] as her/its gatekeeper."[28] If the identification of Resheph with Mars is correct, then the text provides evidence for the astral character of the god. However, this identification is not assured. It may be noted perhaps in support of Resheph's astral character that 1.107.40 pairs him with the moon-god Yariḫ. However, it is also unclear if Resheph belongs specifically to El's family.

Beyond the textual record, there is some iconographic evidence that may be relevant. Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger have argued for a lunar presentation of El on a cylinder seal from Beth-Shean.[29] A. J. Brody has drawn attention to the astral features of Athirat's iconography.[30] By the same token, the textual evidence for the astral character of El[31] and Athirat[32] is admittedly minimal. This paucity of information may be due to the fact that the family of El and Athi-

27. See John Gray, "The Desert God ʿAṯtr in the Literature and Religion of Canaan," *JNES* 8 (1949): 72–83; idem, *The Legacy of Canaan,* VTSup 5, 2d ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 170; André Caquot, "Le dieu ʿAthtar et les textes de Ras Shamra," *Syria* 35 (1958): 51; Ulf Oldenburg, *The Conflict Between El and Baʾal in Canaanite Religion,* Supplementa ad Numen, III (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 39–45.

28. William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Rešep* (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1976), 39–40. See also T. de Jong and W. H. van Soldt, "Redating an Early Solar Eclipse Record (KTU 1.78): Implications for the Ugaritic Calendar and for the Secular Accelerations of the Earth and the Moon," *Jaarberich . . . Ex Oriente Lux* 30 (1987–88): 65–77; Dennis Pardee and N. M. Swerdlow, "Not the Earliest Solar Eclipse," *Nature* 363 (1993): 406.

29. Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God,* trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 310–11, 312–15, figs. 308, 402; Othmar Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible,* JSOTSup 261 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 44.

30. A. J. Brody, *"Each Man Cried Out to His God": The Specialized Religion of Canaanite and Phoenician Seafarers,* Harvard Semitic Mongraphs 58 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1998), 27.

31. El is said to survive in South Arabian religion as well. Ulf Oldenburg, "Above the Stars of El: El in South Arabic Religion," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 82 (1970): 187–208; Jacques Ryckmans, "South Arabia, Religion of," in *ABD* 6:172.

32. Epigraphic South Arabian sources may support this approach to Athirat. According to Albert Jamme, Athirat is the name of a Qatabanian solar goddess and spouse of the moon-god. See Jamme, "La religion sud-arabe préislamique," in *Histoire des religions,* vol. 4 (publié sous la direction de Maurice Brillant et René Aigrain; Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1956), 266. See also Gonzaque Ryckmans, *Les religions arabes préislamiques,* 2d ed., Bibliothèque de Muséon XXVI (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1951), 44. See also Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of Asherah: A Study According to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia B.C.E.*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 235 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993), 161–62.

rat was displaced by the Ugaritic cult of Baal, who does not belong to that family.[33] In sum, the sun, moon, and the stars may have been especially associated early with El in West Semitic religion.

The later religion of Israel may have known a cult of El, with a number of these astral deities.[34] Job 38:6–7 may reflect a witness to this notion:

> Or, who set its cornerstone
> when the morning stars sang together
> And all the divine beings [*bĕnê ʾĕlōhîm*] shouted for joy?

In the verse Yahweh, the creator-god (like old El?), asks Job if he was present when Yahweh set the cornerstone of the world's foundations, an ancient event celebrated by the divine beings, here specified as stars. In this passage, the morning stars are parallel to *bĕnê ʾĕlōhîm,* and on the basis of this verse, Ulf Oldenburg connects the astral bodies with El.[35] The god's astral association apparently lies behind the polemic against the king of Babylon in Isa. 14:13, who attempts to ascend into heaven and exalt his throne "above the stars of El" (*mimmaʿal lĕkôkĕbê-ʾēl*).[36] The astral dimension of such a polemic against a foreign king perhaps lived on in the polemics directed against Antiochus IV Epiphanes (ca. 175–163 B.C.E.) in Dan. 8:9–11. The "little horn" grew "even to the host of heaven" and cast some of them down. Shahar and Shalim, although they are not explicitly connected with El or Yahweh in Israelite religion, seem to continue into it. Shahar is known from biblical literature through an allusion to the myth of Shahar ben Helal, the fallen star (Isa. 14:12). Shahar also appears as an element in Hebrew proper names.[37] Shalim is attested sporadically in biblical literature, for example in proper names such as *ʾĂbîšālōm.*[38] Proper names with *šlm* as the theophoric element appear also on inscriptions from Arad, Ein Gedi, and Lachish.[39] Given their earlier

33. See André Caquot, "Problèmes d'histoire religieuse," in *La Siria del Tardo Bronze,* Orientis Antiqui Collectio 9 (Rome: Centro per le Antichità e la Storia dell'Arte del Vicino Oriente, 1969), 70. Similarly, Jacques Ryckmans has suggested that the South Arabian cult of El was displaced by the cult of Athtar; Ryckmans, "South Arabia," 172. See further below.

34. See Fritz Stolz, *Strukturen und Figuren im Kult von Jerusalem,* Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 118 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 181–218.

35. Oldenburg, *Conflict Between El and Ba'al,* 18.

36. See Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah,* AB 24D (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 132–33.

37. G. I. Davies (*Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 492) lists fourteen instances.

38. On *šlm* in Hebrew personal names, see ibid., 495–96, which lists twenty-three instances.

39. So J. H. Tigay, "Israelite Religion: The Onomastic and Epigraphic Evidence," in Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride, eds., *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 164 and 166 nn. n, o, and p.

and later attestation as deities, the sun and moon likely continued as deities at this stage as well.

Furthermore, as part of his identification with El,[40] Yahweh continued the association with astral deities in the form of the "host of heaven," as noted by J. G. Taylor and Baruch Halpern.[41] Taylor points to passages such as 1 Kgs. 22:19 and Zeph. 1:5 as evidence for the association of the host of heaven with the cult of Yahweh.[42] Josh. 10:12 also seems to associate the sun and moon as part of Yahweh's military host.[43] The author of 2 Kgs. 21:5 mentions King Manasseh's construction of "altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts in the house of Yahweh." And Scott Noegel has noted that Joseph's dream in Gen. 37:9, with the sun, moon, and the stars bowing down to him, would also fit into this body of evidence. Perhaps as the last phase in the "career" of astral divinities in Israelite religion, biblical texts criticize astral deities within the cult of Yahweh under the rubric of the "sun, moon, and the stars." It is possible that the this criticism derived from a perceived threat from a Neo-Assyrian astral cult during the Iron II period,[44] but this fact does not diminish the indigenous character of the cultic devotion to the sun, moon, and stars.[45]

The difference between the astral background of El's family and the more earthbound background of Baal as a storm-god may lie at the root of Baal's status as an outsider to this family. Baal's outsider status is expressed through the family metaphor in *KTU*^{2} 1.24.25–26, where the moon-god Yariḫ is called the "brother-in-law of Baal." The dilution of the family connection via the "in-law" qualification confirms Baal's status; the family metaphor can be extended to include an outsider figure only by use of the concept of a divine marriage. (Unfortunately the

40. S. M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh,* Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 34 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1988), 38–61, followed in *EHG* 19.

41. J. Glenn Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel,* JSOTSup 111 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 105–6, 258. Baruch Halpern, "'Brisker Pipes Than Poetry': The Development of Israelite Monotheism," in Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 94, 98.

42. Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun,* 105–6.

43. See the summary of scholarly discussion in Theodore Hiebert, *God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3,* Harvard Semitic Monographs 38 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1986), 100.

44. See Hermann Spickermann, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit,* Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 129 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), as well as the iconographic survey of Keel, *Goddesses and Trees,* 62–109. This latter's emphasis on Aramaean dispersion for astral imagery perhaps diverts the author's attention from the full force of the astral evidence in the Ugaritic texts. For the question of Assyrian influence, see the considerably more qualified study by S. W. Holloway, "The Case for Assyrian Religious Influence in Israel and Judah" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1992).

45. So Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun,* 105–6, 260–61.

texts do not name the female in El's family to whom Baal is married, if not to Anat, as had been thought until recently.) Baal's own title, *bn dgn,* "son of Dagan" (1.2 i 19; 1.5 v 23–24), apparently points to paternity separate from that for the rest of the divine family. Yet Baal can also stereotypically refer to El as his father, since El is generically regarded as the father of the pantheon. What is clear from the Ugaritic texts and later sources is that Baal Haddu stands outside the immediate family of El.

If Athtar is an astral figure and full-fledged son of El, his conflict with Baal in the Baal Cycle may provide some insight about Baal and the divine family. The Ugaritic texts as well as the most proximate comparative evidence from Emar suggest that Athtar is an astral deity considered to be a major warrior. The narratives of *KTU*[2] 1.2 iii and 1.6 i 63 stress that Athtar is not powerful enough to be king. In fact, within the Ugaritic texts, Athtar is rendered as a weak god, perhaps a historical reflection of his cult's demise, as reflected in other sources from the Levantine coast. André Caquot argues that the Ugaritic texts may reflect the historical demise of Athtar's cult relative to the cult of Baal.[46] The geographical distribution of the two cults may clarify the matter.[47] Both Baal and Athtar were warrior-gods, but Baal was the divine patron of the Ugaritic dynasty. The historical cult of Athtar may have been generally restricted to inland areas. Apart from the Ugaritic texts, there is no clear evidence for the cult of Athtar on the coast. There is no mention of Athtar in the Amarna letters, Egyptian sources mentioning West Semitic deities, the Bible, or Philo of Byblos. The single Phoenician attestation is debatable. In contrast, the cult of Baal is at home on the coast. It is tempting to view the conflict between Baal and Athtar in terms of regional precipitation.[48] The coastal regions received heavy rainfall, which precluded the need for either dry farming or irrigation. At Ugarit, for example, the rains occur over seven or eight months and exceed eight hundred millimeters each year.[49] In contrast, many of the inland locales where Athtar is attested practiced either dry farming or natural irrigation. It might be argued, then, that in the environment of Ugarit the god of the coastal storm would naturally supplant the god of natural irriga-

46. Caquot, "Le dieu 'Athtar et les textes de Ras Shamra," 55. See also Hartmut Gese, in Hartmut Gese, Maria Höfner, and Kurt Rudolph, *Die Religionen Altsyriens, Atlarabiens und der Mandäer,* Die Religionen der Menschheit x/ii (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970), 138.

47. Cf. the comments of Gray, *Legacy of Canaan,* 170 n. 2.

48. W. Robertson Smith remarks that TB *Baba Batra* 3:1 reflects the older use of *ba'l* as land wholly dependent on rain, and argues that the original contrast lay between land wholly dependent on rain and that which was irrigated. See Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions,* 3d ed., introduction and additional notes by S. A. Cook (New York: KTAV, 1969 [original, London: A. & C. Black, 1927]), 102 n. 2.

49. Marguerite Yon, "Ugarit: History and Archaeology," *ABD* 6:698.

tion. Unfortunately, it is impossible to ground any further speculation regarding Baal and the family of El, but the picture that remains involves a contrast between the family of El as astral divinities and Baal as storm-god.

EL AND YAHWEH IN ANCIENT ISRAEL AND THE DISPLACEMENT OF ASTRAL RELIGION

A common assumption about El is that his cult did not exist in Israel except as part of an identification with Yahweh. For ancient Israel, this question depends on whether Yahweh was a title of El[50] or secondarily identified with El. Besides the grammatical objections sometimes raised against this view, the oldest biblical traditions place Yahweh originally as a god in southern Edom (possibly in northwestern Saudi Arabia), locales known by the biblical names of Edom, Midian, Teman, Paran, and Sinai.[51] This general area for the old Yahwistic cult is attested not only in the Bible (Deut. 33:2, Judg. 5:4–5, Ps. 68:9, 18, Hab. 3:3)[52] but also in inscriptional sources. Evidence from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, a southern shrine preserving inscriptions written by visiting northerners, also attests to "Yahweh of Teman."[53] These facts militate against an identification of Yahweh as originally a title of El. If so, what

50. A recent example of this approach can be found in J. C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism,* Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium XCI (Leuven: University Press/Uitgeverij Peeters, 1990), esp. 223–60; see also Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic,* 71–75.

51. See the following among recent commentators (with earlier references), by order of publication date: L. E. Axelsson, *The Lord Rose Up from Seir: Studies in the History and Traditions of the Negev and Southern Judah,* Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament series 25 (Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), esp. 56–65; E. A. Knauf, *Midian: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Palästinas und Nordarabiens am Ende des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 43–63; T. N. D. Mettinger, "The Elusive Essence: YHWH, El, and Baal and the Distinctiveness of Israelite Faith," in Erhard Blum et al., eds., *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 393–417; Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life,* Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East, 7 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 281–86; and Frank M. Cross, *Epic and Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 45–70. The Septuagint, Demetrius, Josephus, and possibly a number of other sources favor this Arabian location, according to Allen Kerkeslager, "Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity in Hellenistic and Early Roman Egypt," in David Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998), 99–225, esp. 150–210. For a recent attempt to find the "original Sinai" at Jebel el-Lawz in northwestern Saudi Arabia (based on a suggestion by Frank M. Cross), see Howard Blum, *The Gold of Exodus: The Discovery of the True Mount Sinai* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998); see the review of R. S. Hendel in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25/4 (1999): 54, 56.

52. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic,* 101–2, 105.

53. P. Kyle McCarter, "Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy," in Miller, Hanson, and McBride, *Ancient Israelite Religion,* 137–55.

was the nature of their identification? At what rate and with what distribution did it take place? Biblical evidence necessarily occupies a central place in this discussion. In at least one instance, biblical material points to the cult of El in the Iron I period in Israel. C. Leeung Seow notes El language and characteristics reflected in various aspects of the cult of Shiloh.[54] The tent tradition associated with Shiloh (Ps. 78:60, Josh. 18:1, 1 Sam. 2:22) comports with the Ugaritic descriptions of El's abode as a tent. The narrative elements of the divine appearance to Samuel in incubation dreams, the divine gift of a child to Hannah, and the El name of Elqanah, Hannah's husband (suggesting an El worshiper?), would also cohere with the view that El was the original god of the *bĕt 'ĕlōhîm* there (Judg. 18:31, cf. 17:5). It is probably no accident that Psalm 78 repeatedly uses El names and epithets in describing the rise and fall of the sanctuary at Shiloh.

Traditions concerning the cultic site of Shechem may also illustrate the cultural process lying behind the inclusion of Yahweh at old cultic sites of El. In the city of Shechem the local god was *'ēl bĕrît,* "El of the covenant" (Judg. 9:46, cf. 8:33; 9:4).[55] According to many scholars, the word *'ilbrt* apparently appears as a late Bronze Age title for El (*KTU*[2] 1.128.14–15).[56] In the patriarchal narratives, the god of Shechem, *'ēl,* is called *'ĕlōhê yiśrā'ēl,* "the god of Israel," and is presumed to be Yahweh. In this case, a process of reinterpretation may be at work. In the early history of Israel, when the cult of Shechem became Yahwistic, it continued the El traditions of that site. As a result, Yahweh received the title *'ēl bĕrît,* the old title of El.[57] Jerusalem may also have been a cult place of El, assuming the connection of El Elyon and El "creator of the earth" in Gen. 14:8–22 to this site.[58] Finally, Megiddo may be added to this list of old El cult sites, thanks to the archaeological record.[59] This record illustrates one possible line for the transmission

54. C. Leeung Seow, *Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David's Dance,* Harvard Semitic Monographs 44 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989), 11–54. I do not share Seow's view that the sojourn of the ark at Shiloh was a factor in Yahweh's acquisition of El's characteristics.

55. Or possibly "the god of the covenant." If this is corect, still the evidence weighs slightly in favor of seeing El as this god. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic,* 39, 49, and T. J. Lewis, "The Identity and Function of El/Baal Berith," *JBL* 115 (1996): 401–23.

56. So Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic,* 39. The word may refer to the god Ilabrat, according to Meindert Dijkstra, "The Ugaritic-Hurrian Sacrificial Hymn to El (RS 24.278 = KTU 1.128)," *UF* 25 (1993): 157–62, esp. 161.

57. For the complex issues surrounding this material, see Lewis, "Identity and Function of El/Baal Berith," 401–23. For the archaeological evidence involved, see L. E. Stager, "The Fortress Temple at Shechem and the 'House of El, Lord of the Covenant,'" in P. H. Williams Jr. and Theodore Hiebert, eds., *Realia Dei: Essays in Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Edward F. Campbell, Jr. at His Retirement* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1999), 228–49.

58. Cf. Yahweh Elyon in 1 Kgs. 9:8; Pss. 7:18, 47:3, 97:9. See the classic treatment by Giorgio Levi della Vida, "'El 'Elyon in Genesis 14:18–20," *JBL* 63 (1944): 1–19.

59. For the evidence, see Stager, "Fortress Temple at Shechem and the 'House of El, Lord of the Covenant,'" 235–36.

of West Semitic/Israelite traditions. Israelite knowledge of the religious traditions of other deities was not due only to contact between Israel and its Phoenician neighbors in the Iron Age. Instead, due to the identification of deities such as Yahweh and El at cultic sites—in the case of El, sites such as Shiloh, Shechem, and Jerusalem—the religious lore of the older deity was inherited by the priesthood in Israel. At a variety of sites, Yahweh was incorporated into the older figure of El, who belonged to Israel's original West Semitic religious heritage.

At some point, a number of Israelite traditions identified El with Yahweh or presupposed this equation. It is for this reason that the Hebrew Bible so rarely distinguishes between El and Yahweh or offers polemics against El. West Semitic El lies behind the god of the patriarchs in Gen. 33:20 and 46:3 (and possibly elsewhere). Later tradition clearly intended that this god be identified as Yahweh. For example, the priestly theological treatment of Israel's early religious history in Exod. 6:2–3 identifies the old god El Shadday with Yahweh. This passage reflects the fact that Yahweh was unknown to the patriarchs, that they were instead worshipers of El. In Israel El's characteristics and epithets became part of the repertoire of descriptions of Yahweh. The eventual identification of Yahweh and El within Israel perhaps held ramifications for the continuation of other deities as well. It has been argued that Asherah became the consort of Yahweh as a result of his identification with El.[60] The history of astral deities in ancient Israel may also have been affected by the identification of El and Yahweh. Originally associated with El, perhaps they became part of the divine assembly subordinate to Yahweh, and then the storm imagery associated with Yahweh perhaps came to dominate Israelite religious discourse, thus displacing astral language.

The information reviewed here makes it reasonable to ask whether El or Yahweh was the original god of Israel, despite the apparent complications that this reconstruction may pose for later theology. Moreover, it is a reasonable hypothesis that the god in question was El, given a most basic piece of information: the name of Israel does not contain the divine element of Yahweh, but El's name, with the element **'ēl*. If Yahweh had been the original god of Israel, then its name might have been **yiśrâ-yahweh,* or perhaps better **yiśrâ-yāh,* in accordance with other Hebrew proper names containing the divine name.[61] This fact would suggest that El, and not Yahweh, was the original chief god of the group named Israel. The distribution of El and Yahweh in personal names in many so-called early poems likewise points in this direction.[62] It is true that proper names pose difficulties when

60. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh,* 38–61, followed in *EHG* 19.
61. The latter suggestion courtesy of T. J. Lewis.
62. So de Moor, *Rise of Yahwism,* 267.

used to reconstruct religious history,[63] yet when used in conjunction with other evidence, they offer admissible evidence. Israel is a very old name, apparently known both at Ebla and Ugarit.[64] It might be argued then that the name, when it began to refer to the historical phenomenon of a people in the Iron I highlands, did not refer anymore to the god to whom it was devoted.

The preceding discussion shows some of the difficulties in identifying Israel's chief gods in the Iron I period. It has been assumed that Yahweh was the original god of Israel, but this assumption has perhaps been created by the biblical presentation of early Israel. For later generations of Israelites, there was no difference between El and Yahweh; there was no reason to see the nation's earliest religious history in any other terms. However, the review of the evidence here suggests a more complex history of God in early Israel. To salvage the traditional view, one might suggest that the people in the land who may have been called Israel could have had El as their god, but that Yahweh was still the original chief god of the Israelite people who came out of Egypt. Such a view is of course possible,[65] but it should be noted that some evidence poses problems for this traditional view. Indeed, it was argued by Claude F. A. Schaeffer, followed by Nicolas Wyatt and myself,[66] that El may have been the original god connected with the Exodus from Egypt and that this event was secondarily associated with Yahweh when the two gods were identified. Num. 23:22 and 24:8 (cf. 23:8) associate the Exodus not with Yahweh but with the name of El: "El who freed them from Egypt has horns like a wild ox." (This description also evokes El's attribute animal at Ugarit, the ox, reflected in his title "Bull El.") The poems in Numbers 23–24 contain the name of Yahweh (23:8, 21; 24:6), but it is considerably rarer than the name of El (23:8, 19, 22, 23; 24:4, 8, 16, 23). Indeed, El is attested almost three times as often as

63. Dennis Pardee, "An Evaluation of the Proper Names," in A. Archi, ed., *Eblaite Personal Names and Semitic Name-Giving* (Rome: Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria, 1988), 119–51.

64. For the name at Ebla, see Manfred Krebernik, "The Linguistic Classification of Eblaite: Methods, Problems, and Results," in Jerrold S. Cooper and Glenn M. Schwartz, eds., *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 46. The comparison of Ugaritic *yšr'il* in *KTU*^{2} 4.623.3 with the biblical name Israel was brought to my attention by the late Gösta Ahlström.

65. So among recent commentators, Mettinger, "Elusive Essence," 411: "YHWH is the God of the exodus."

66. Nicolas Wyatt, "Of Calves and Kings: The Canaanite Dimension in the Religion of Israel," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 6 (1992): 78–83. I do not accept a number of the arguments forwarded by Wyatt. Mark S. Smith, "Yahweh and the Other Deities of Ancient Israel: Observations on Old Problems and Recent Trends," in Walter Dietrich and Martin A. Klopfenstein, eds., *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte,* Orbis biblicus et orientalis 139 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 207–8.

Yahweh. Accordingly, Baruch A. Levine is apparently correct in suggesting that these poems preserve an old repertoire of El tradition, now synthesized with references to Yahweh.[67] If this is right, then these texts contain a valuable witness to El as the god of the Exodus, at least in one of the biblical traditions. As these remarks would suggest, the divine profile manifest in the Exodus may have looked originally more like the presence of the deity in the patriarchal narratives, the family god, or "god of the fathers," who accompanies the family on its journeys, a characterization which fits El eminently well.[68] (It is perhaps no accident that El names and titles proliferate in the older patriarchal narratives.)[69] Accordingly, the divine-warrior profile to the Exodus narrative may not reflect an original description of the god involved, but a secondary application (albeit an early one, possibly) of Yahweh's identity as a divine warrior.

If El was the original god of Israel, then how did Yahweh come to be their chief god and to be identified with El? I posit three hypothetical stages (not necessarily discrete in time or geography), taking into account the information presented so far:

1. El was the original god of early Israel. As noted above, the name Israel would point to the first stage. So would references to El as a separate figure (Genesis 49, Psalm 82).[70]
2. El was the head of an early Israelite pantheon, with Yahweh as its warrior-god.[71] Texts that mention both El and Yahweh but not as the same figure (Genesis 49, Numbers 23–24, Deut. 32:8–9,[72] Psalm 82) suggest an early accom-

67. See Baruch A. Levine, "The Balaam Inscription from Deir 'Alla: Historical Aspects," in J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, eds., *The Balaam Text from Deir 'Alla Re-evaluated* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 337–38, and idem, "The Plaster Inscriptions from Deir 'Alla: General Interpretation" in ibid., 58–72. I am indebted to Levine for his seminal research on El traditions in early biblical literature, especially in Transjordanian material. See especially his commentary on Num. 22–24 in Levine, *Numbers 21–36,* AB 4B (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

68. Suggestion courtesy of T. J. Lewis.

69. See Cross's seminal work in this regard in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic,* 3–12, 46–60.

70. With regard to Genesis 49, the point is laid out in *EHG* 16–17. Psalm 82 distinguishes the figure of the standing Yahweh from the presiding, seated divinity, evidently El Elyon, to judge from the reference to Elyon in verse 6. For a tortured attempt to argue for the two deities as a single figure, see Nicolas Wyatt, *Myths of Power: A Study of Royal Myth and Ideology in Ugaritic and Biblical Tradition,* Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur 13 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 357–65; this view is driven perhaps in part by the author's presupposition that Yahweh was originally a form of El.

71. To be credited with this point is the otherwise problematic work of Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 17–25.

72. 4QDeut^{q}: *bny 'l[;* 4QDeut^{j}: *bny 'lwhym[;* LXX *huiōn theou* (cf. LXX variants with *aggelōn* interpolated). For the evidence, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1992), 269; J. A. Duncan, "4QDeut^{q}," in Eugene Ulrich and Frank M. Cross, eds., *Qumran Cave 4. IX: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings,* Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 90; noted also: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia to

modation of the two in some early form of Israelite polytheism. If Psalm 82 reflects an early model of an Israelite polytheistic assembly, then El would have been its head, with the warrior Yahweh as a member of the second tier. Yet the same psalm also uses familial language: the other gods are said to be the "sons of the Most High." Accordingly, Yahweh might earlier have been understood as one of these sons.

3. El and Yahweh were identified as a single god. If El was the original god of Israel, then his merger with Yahweh the southern divine warrior predates the Song of Deborah in Judges 5, at least for the area of Israel where this composition was created. In this text Yahweh the divine warrior from the south is attributed a victory in the central highlands. The merger probably took place at different rates in different parts of Israel, in which case it might have been relatively early in the area where Judges 5 was composed, but possibly later elsewhere. Many scholars place the poem in the premonarchic period,[73] and perhaps the cult of Yahweh spread further into the highlands of Israel in the premonarchic period, infiltrating cult sites of El and accommodating their El theologies (perhaps best reflected by the later version of Deut. 32:8–9). The references to El in Numbers 23–24 and perhaps Job appear to be further indications of the survival of El's cult in Transjordan. Beyond this rather vaguely defined pattern of distribution, it is difficult to be more specific.

Deut. 32:8 note d. For older bibliography, see *EHG* 30 n. 37 and Adrian Schenker, "Le monothéisme israélite: Un dieu qui transcende le monde et les dieux," *Biblica* 78 (1997): 438.

73. Following the lead of William F. Albright, Frank M. Cross, David N. Freedman, and others. See Albright, "The Earliest Forms of Hebrew Verse," *JPOS* 2 (1922): 69–86; idem, "Some Additional Notes on the Song of Deborah," *JPOS* 2 (1922): 284–85; idem, "The Song of Deborah in the Light of Archaeology," *BASOR* 62 (1936): 26–31; idem, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process,* 2d ed. with a new introduction (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), 14; idem, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (London: University of London, 1968), 13; Cross and Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1950 [repr., 1975]), 5; Freedman, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 147–50; Lawrence E. Stager, "Archaeology, Ecology, and Social History: Background Themes to the Song of Deborah," in John A. Emerton, ed., *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986,* VTSup 40 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 221–34 (with references to the earlier supporters of this view); Johannes C. de Moor, "The Twelves Tribes in the Song of Deborah," *VT* 43 (1993): 483–93; and idem, *Rise of Yahwism,* 267, 292. See also J. D. Schloen, "Caravans, Kenites, and *Casus Belli:* Enmity and Alliance in the Song of Deborah," *CBQ* 55 (1993): 18–38, and the recent survey by Klaus Koch, "Jahwäs Übersiedlung vom Wüstenberg nach Kanaan: Zur Herkunft von Israel's Gottesverständnis," in Dietrich and Kottsieper, *"Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf,"* 440–70. For the evidence based solely on grammatical considerations, see D. A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in the Dating of Early Hebrew Poetry,* Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 3 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1972), 153–54. I hasten to add that I do not accept early datings of all other poems thought to be similarly early. For the problems, see my discussion in *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus,* with contributions by Elizabeth M. Bloch-Smith, JSOTSup 239 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 219–26.

In sum, El and Yahweh as separate deities disappeared, perhaps at different rates in different regions. This process may appear to involve Yahweh's incorporating El's characteristics, since Yahweh is the eventual historical "winner." Yet in the premonarchic period, the process may be envisioned—at least initially—in the opposite terms: Israelite highland cult sites of El assimilated the outsider, the southerner Yahweh. We may compare the developments proposed here as a working hypothesis with the situation at Ugarit. Yahweh in ancient Israel and Baal at Ugarit were both outsider warrior-gods who stood second in rank to El, but they eventually overshadowed him in power. Yet Yahweh's development, viewed from a comparative perspective, went further in being identified with El.[74] This scenario requires a closer look at the question of Yahweh's origins. As noted above, many scholars propose that Yahweh originated at the southern sites of Seir, Edom, Teman, Sinai (known from biblical passages such as Deut. 33:2, Judg. 5:4–5, Ps. 68:9, 18, and Hab. 3:3), thought to be located in the northwestern Arabian peninsula east of the Red Sea. The cult of Yahweh then found a home in such highland sites as Shiloh. Largely based on an incisive study by J. D. Schloen,[75] some vestiges of the historical process may be found in Judges 5. Some form of direct cultural contact may account for the adoption of Yahweh in Judah,[76] but it is hardly clear that the worship of Yahweh spread then from the south to the central and northern highlands. Perhaps a further form of contact, such as trade, was the impetus behind the establishment of the cult of Edomite Yahweh in the central highlands. Judg. 5:6 mentions trade as part of the problem leading to conflict, and the preface to the hymn in verses 4–5 provides the traditional litany of areas from which Yahweh marches, namely Seir, Edom, and Sinai. Furthermore, we may note the enigmatic line in verse 14: "From Ephraim came they whose roots are in Amalek" (NJPS: *minnî 'eprayim šoršām ba'ămālēq*). This verse shows not simply a neutral mention of Amalek but a positive indication of kinship between the tribe of Ephraim and Amalek, known as a southern group in biblical tradition (e.g., associated with Edom in Gen. 36:16 and the Negeb in Num. 13:29). In the time of Saul, the Amalekites are mentioned as enemies of Israel, according to 1 Sam. 15:2–3, and the later tradition transmitted a very negative view of Amalek (Exod. 17:8–16, Deut. 25:27–28).[77] Given the tradition's negative memory of the Amalekites, the presence of

74. Such an identification of deities of different character is hardly exceptional in the ancient Middle East. See Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh,* 10 n. 29.

75. Schloen, "Caravans, Kenites, and *Casus Belli,*" 18–38, taking up the lead of Stager, "Archaeology, Ecology, and Social History," 221–34.

76. For contact between Judaeans and Calebites and Kenites, see Axelsson, *The Lord Rose Up from Seir.* For an argument that Saul imported the cult of Yahweh due to his Edomite background, see van der Toorn, *Family Religion,* 285–86.

77. See G. L. Mattingly, "Amalek," in *ABD* 1:169–71. Judg. 6–8 presents the Midianites and Amalekites in a negative light. One can attribute such a negative view either to a later retrojection or

such a neutral reference to them in Judg. 5:14 has a ring of authenticity. Such a reference would suggest cultural contact between the indigenous inhabitants of the central hill country associated with Ephraim and the southern group of Amalek. It may be noted in this connection that Judg. 12:15 mentions a place-name, "Pirathon, in the territory of Ephraim, on the hill of the Amalekites" (NJPS).[78] Accordingly, Amalekites may have constituted some of the traders mentioned in verse 6, who then settled to some degree in the central hill country. In short, various biblical data suggest a series of relationships between the central highlanders and southern caravaneers in the Iron I period. Perhaps trade, enhanced by some kingship ties, provided the mechanism by which a far southern tradition of the deity in Seir/Edom/Sinai/Teman/Midian came to be celebrated originally at northern sites such as Shiloh and Bethel.[79] This tradition came to be transmitted during the Iron II period in royal theology, evidenced by Habakkuk 3.[80]

These observations lead to the difficult but important question of Yahweh's original profile. Many scholars, including W. F. Albright, F. M. Cross, and D. N. Freedman, and more recently J. C. de Moor, Meindert Dijkstra, and Nicolas Wyatt,[81] identify Yahweh with El in some manner or another. Other scholars, such as T. N. D. Mettinger, note how this view flies in the face of the early biblical evidence for Yah-

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perhaps more plausibly to some kernel of tradition that recalls the tensions between the Israelite highlanders and the southern caravaneer groups. Such a record of conflict hardly undermines the evidence for positive relations. For Midian in early Israelite tradition, see further George E. Mendenhall, "Midian," in *ABD* 4:815–17; Frank M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 60–70.

78. For this positive evidence, see Schloen, "Caravans, Kenites and *Casus Belli,*" 27. Schloen would also see a reference to Midian behind Masorectic Text *middîn* in verse 10. Whether an emendation is warranted or a verbal allusion is intended, the connection seems plausible given the reference to traders (Heb. *hōlĕkê 'al-derek*) here.

79. It is often mentioned in the secondary literature that the Egyptian place-name *yhw3*, apparently signifying a place in the Negev-Sinai region, may derive from the name Yahweh: e.g., Mettinger, "Elusive Essence," 404; van der Toorn, *Family Religion,* 283; but see the discussion by Hans Goedicke, "The Tetragrammaton in Egyptian?" *Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities Journal* 24 (1994): 24–27. The theory in its current form goes back to Raphael Giveon, "Toponymes ouest-asiatiques à Soleb," *VT* 14 (1964): 244. Without some further evidence apart from place-names, the theory will not bear much weight. Moreover, etymological questions about the evidence have been raised (see Baruch Halpern, "Kenites," in *ABD* 4:20). For these reasons it is not given greater prominence here.

80. See Hiebert, *God of My Victory,* 129–49; R. D. Haak, *Habakkuk,* VTSup 44 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 16–20.

81. Albright, Cross, Freedman, de Moor, and Dikjstra as reported and summarized in Karel van der Toorn, "Yahweh," in *DDD* 1719–21. See in particular Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic,* 60–75; G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974–), 1:260. See also de Moor, *Rise of Yahwism,* 237–39. Note also Wyatt, *Myths of Power,* 332, 357 n. 2, for Yahweh as a southern Palestinian form of El. How this view is to be dovetailed with Wyatt's efforts at an Indo-European etymology for Yahweh is unclear. For criticism of this general approach, see van der Toorn, "Yahweh," 1722.

weh as a storm- and warrior-god from the southern region of Edom.[82] The original location of Yahwistic cult in the far southern region (whether southern Edom or the Hegaz), if correct, would, however, militate against a comparison of Yahweh with a storm-god such as Baal, since this region has low annual rainfall relative to that for the Levantine coast. The distribution of the evidence currently available may steer scholars to compare El or Baal with Yahweh and away from a possible comparison between Athar and Yahweh. Both gods of relatively arid zones, Athtar and Yahweh could have shared more characteristics than Baal and Yahweh are commonly supposed to have. Yahweh's original character may have approximated the profile of the astral god Athtar, a warrior and precipitation-producing divinity mostly associated with inland desert sites, and this profile may have been rendered secondarily in the highlands in the local language and imagery associated with the coastal storm-god, Baal.[83] Indeed, the movement of Yahweh's cult from the southern climes of Edom/Sinai/Teman, vestigially attested in the poetic sources cited above, could comport with a secondary assimilation of Yahweh to Baal, just as Yahweh was secondarily assimilated at highland cult sites of El, places such as Shechem, Shiloh, and Bethel. If correct, this would suggest the following speculative theoretical possibility for the field to consider: (1) at Ugarit, El's astral family was displaced by the cult of Baal; and (2) in Israel, Yahweh was originally not a storm-god but an astral figure (and this remains a big if). If old, the astral character of Yahweh may have been displaced by the coastal and highland religion of the storm-god presented early in biblical tradition as Israel's emerging national god. In other words, if the conflict between Baal and Athtar in the Ugaritic texts was paralleled later by a conflict between Baal and Yahweh, then the resolution of this religious conflict in the form of attributing coastal storm imagery to Yahweh might have obscured the profile that Yahweh might have shared with a figure such as Athtar, including any astral association. Among other developments, Iron II Judah witnessed a general displacement of old, traditional religious features. This dislocation may have obscured not only astral religion in general but also any possible astral features of Yahweh; and in turn, this Iron II displacement has been reinscribed in modern accounts by scholars. In any case, insofar as early biblical sources may reflect secondary developments in the history of Israel's religion, the original profile of the biblical god may be, at least in part, irretrievably lost.

82. For example, Mettinger, "Elusive Essence," 393–417, esp. 410. This view is preferred also by van der Toorn, "Yahweh," 1723.

83. I do not see such a view as precluding a derivation of the name from **huy,* "to blow" (of the wind), an etymology that at the present seems the least objectionable of the current theories; see E. A. Knauf, "Yahwe," *VT* 34 (1984): 467–72—cited favorably by van der Toorn, "Yahweh," 1719–25—and Mettinger, "Elusive Presence," 410. The diversity of scholarly views points to the great uncertainty on this point.

12

A New Star on the Horizon

Astral Christologies and Stellar Debates in Early Christian Discourse

Nicola Denzey

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

—Matt. 2:1–10; NRSV

Every Christmas, Matthew's account of the star of Bethlehem is recited and reenacted in countless churches and Christian homes. So familiar to most of us are the contours of this narrative that we rarely pause to consider it. But what happens when we engage it more thoughtfully, as scholars?

I offer my sincere thanks to conference organizers Scott Noegel, Joel Thomas Walker, and Brannon Wheeler for the opportunity to present an earlier version of this essay at the "Magic, Prayer, and the Stars" conference at the University of Washington, and to Michael Williams for his response. I would also like to acknowledge the excellent work of my fellow Canadian colleague Prof. Tim Hegedus of the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, who presented a paper entitled "Astrological Motifs in Matthew 2:1–12" at the Eastern Regional Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Toronto, 18 April 1998. His paper examines many of the same sources I have highlighted here; I have enjoyed and learned from his work.

This essay explores the reception history of Matthew's star-of-Bethlehem account through its impact on certain early Christian writers and their communities. Conventionally, modern scholars—most often scientists—consider the star a sort of historical puzzle that can be solved by science; they scan records, documents, and data to find likely celestial events that then might have been (mis)interpreted as a portent of Christ's advent by gullible, superstitious Christians.[1] But to focus on a scientific "explanation" for the star of Bethlehem is to move considerably beyond the interpretive horizons of the first four centuries of the common era. Early Christians rarely addressed the question of what exactly the star was, in terms of an astronomical event. For the most part, early Christian interpreters were far more interested in what the star meant. These arguments and interpretations began in earnest only in the second century—the point at which Christians began to reach a "critical mass" and to develop a sense of identity distinct from Judaism as well as from the wider political corpus of the Roman Empire. The substance of these arguments—beginning in the second century and extending until the fourth—is the focus of this essay. Beyond the fourth century, few new arguments and interpretations of the star of Bethlehem were produced, as the Church began to consolidate and codify its official doctrine.

It is a widely held assumption that Christianity is—and has been since its inception—antithetical to astrology.[2] A wealth of early Christian anti-astrological polemical treatises in fact support this contention. Many of these treatises, composed before the Peace of the Church in 313 C.E.—including Tertullian's *De idololatria* (ca. 200–206 C.E.; see sec. 9) and Hippolytus's *Refutation of All Heresies* (ca. 222–30 C.E.; see lines IV.1–12) as well as Methodius of Olympus's *Banquet of the Ten Virgins* (date unknown; Methodius was said to have been martyred in 311 C.E.; see XIII–XVI) and Arnobius of Sicca's *Seven Books Against the Heathen*

1. Two recent trade publications review some of the recent scientific theories on the star: Mark Kidger's *Star of Bethlehem: An Astronomer's View* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) and Michael R. Molnar's *Star of Bethlehem: The Legacy of the Magi* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999). For articles on the subject, see Colin J. Humphreys, "The Star of Bethlehem—a Comet in 5 B.C.—and the Date of the Birth of Christ," *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society* 32 (1991): 389–407, and Roger W. Sinnot, "Computing the Star of Bethlehem," *Sky and Telescope* 72 (1986): 632–35.

2. For twentieth-century scholarship that asserts this perspective, see Otto Riedinger, *Die frühchristliche Kirche gegen der Astrologie* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1956); David Amand de Mendieta, *Fatalisme et liberté dans l'antiquité grecque,* Recueil de travaux d'histoire et de philosophie, 3d ser., fasc. 19 (Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1945); and Lynn Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science,* vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923). For a more balanced survey of early Christians and astrology, see Tim Hegedus, "Attitudes to Astrology in Early Christianity: A Study Based on Selected Sources" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2000), and my own Ph.D. dissertation, "Under a Pitiless Sky: Conversion, Cosmology, and the Rhetoric of 'Enslavement to Fate' in Second-Century Christian Sources" (Princeton University, 1998).

(ca. 284–305 C.E.; see VII,10)—repeat standard arguments based on earlier Graeco-Roman philosophical models against astrological prognostication. Nowhere is this use of standard philosophical argument more clearly evident than in Bardaisan of Edessa's influential second-century treatise, *The Book of the Laws of the Countries*.[3]

All the sources listed here, although indisputable evidence for Christian anti-astrological sentiment, represent only one side of a debate far more complex. In fact, the widely held perception that early Christians actively and consistently opposed astrology is misleading and oversimplifying.[4] Christians, like Jews and polytheists in the Roman Empire, actually engaged both sides of a lively and impassioned debate concerning the validity—not to mention the true significance—of astrology and astrological prognostication.[5] To find evidence for this, however, we must move beyond mainstream Christian texts. Thus my intention here is to include a wide range of extant evidence from Christian antiquity, not merely to select those sources that reflect the current, conservative position of most Christian denominations.

My argument does not adhere to straightforward chronological principles of organization. A strict chronological layout may soothe modern readers, but it imposes a certain violence on the history of ideas, which can be impervious to neat categorization by century. Certain interpretations of the star of Bethlehem first emerge during the second century and remain in place until the fourth; other interpretations remain too entrenched in their specific social location to survive apart from it. To suggest that an idea is emblematic of a century is really to overcategorize and oversimplify both the idea and the century. For this reason, my use of chronology may appear erratic or even arbitrary, as I trace an idea across the centuries, then return. Nevertheless, the "metastructure" of this essay is chronological, since this remains the simplest and most logical method for organizing a wide range of data.

3. Bardaisan, *The Book of the Laws of the Countries (On Fate),* trans. Han J. W. Drijvers (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965). The Syrian theologian Bardaisan (155–ca. 223 C.E.) remains an elusive figure. This treatise in his name was probably written by Bardaisan's disciple Philip.

4. This is the argument of Tim Hegedus, "Attitudes to Astrology." I make a similar claim in my own dissertation; see esp. chap. 4, "Cosmos as Chaos: Providence and *Heimarmene* in the *Apocryphon of John* and *On the Origin of the World*," where I focus on heterodox, "Gnostic" second-century views concerning astrological fate.

5. Several Jewish texts from the Hellenistic and Roman periods contain polemics against the astrological art: see, for instance, *1 Enoch* 8:3, *Jubilees* 12:16–18, and the third book of the *Sibylline Oracles,* 220–36. These polemical writings stand against astrological/astronomical texts such as *3 Enoch* (also known as the "Astronomical Book of Enoch," 3d century B.C.E.?), the *Treatise of Shem* (2d–1st century B.C.E.), and the horoscopes found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Jewish astrological texts from the Roman period include the *Testament of Solomon* and the later *Sepher ha-Razim*. See the evidence collected by James H. Charlesworth, "Jewish Astrology in the Talmud, Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Early Palestinian Synagogues," *HTR* 70 (1977): 183–200.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM IN SECOND-CENTURY DEBATES

In the second century, many Christians apparently accepted at least the principles of astrology, even if they considered the system of astrally ordained fate, in the words of their contemporary, the Syrian apologist Tatian (fl. 150 C.E.), to be "exceedingly unjust" (Gk. λίαν ἄδικον), established by demons for their own amusement.[6] Tatian's perspective stood in high relief against the conventional anti-astrological treatises of some of his more conservative Christian contemporaries, such as Bardaisan. His highly vitriolic polemic *Oration to the Greeks* attacks a wide range of Graeco-Roman ideas and practices. In it, astrology figures prominently as a "demonic" deception, yet is never dismissed as spurious nonsense. In place of a refutation of astrology's validity stands Tatian's conviction: Christians were no longer subject to the laws of astral fatalism, though these laws still bound their polytheist contemporaries. Two laws of fate, then, were administered by two distinct lawgivers: the stars or planets ruled the behavior and destiny of non-Christians, while Jesus Christ had abrogated destiny for all those to whom he had granted a new genesis through the sacrament of baptism.[7]

In his attack on astrology, Tatian may not have polemicized against polytheist religious practices alone, but also against Christians who incorporated astrological principles into their cosmologies. We know of these Christians predominantly from the anecdotes and recollections compiled by their theological opponents. The second-century Christian heresiologist Irenaeus (ca. 120–200 C.E.), for instance, reports that two communities of so-called Gnostics, the Phibionites and Marcosians, revered the *monomoirai,* or divinities associated with single degrees of the ecliptic.[8] Less than a century later, Hippolytus of Rome (170–236 C.E.) recounts the Valentinian "Gnostic" teacher Basilides' doctrine of the astrological *climata*. Hippolytus also mentions the conviction of a community known as the Peretae that the stars were powers of destruction. These Christians apparently avoided performing baptisms on days that were astrally inauspicious.[9]

Since Christianity grew out of the fertile soils of Judaism and Graeco-Roman traditions—all of which accepted astrology in theory and practiced it in fact—it

6. Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* (in English), trans. Molly Whittaker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

7. Ibid., 8:1, p. 15.

8. Irenaeus *Adversos Haereses* 1.2.268. I have used the critical edition *Contre les hérésies,* ed. Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, Sources chrétiennes 100 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1974), 152–53, 210–11, 263–64.

9. Hippolytus *Ref.* 183.30–39. I have used here the critical edition *Refutatio omnium haeresium,* ed. Miroslav Marcovich (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986). See also *Ref.* 4.2, where Hippolytus names in passing the "heretics" (therefore presumably Christians) Euphrates the Peraetic and Acembes the Carystian, who drew on the principles of astrology.

makes sense that educated Christians such as Basilides and Tatian would incorporate astrology, the highest, most sophisticated form of ancient science, into their worldviews. Still, accommodating astrology within Christianity raised considerable difficulties as Christians engaged in sophisticated intellectual debates with their polytheist contemporaries. From the late first century up until the end of the second century, for instance, the tradition that a star appeared at the birth of the Christian Messiah created problems for any interpreters who sought to explicate the relationship between foreknowledge, signification, and astral causality. The issue was this: since the Magi learned by means of astrology where Jesus had been born, did this mean astrology was in itself a valid type of foreknowledge, apart from prophecy? Did Matthew (with the full force of scriptural authority) mean to condone astrology by including the star-of-Bethlehem narrative? And why would the Savior have been born, apparently, under a natal star? Was the star, properly understood, a sign that Christ was the Savior, or was it a witness, or an agent?

At least one polytheist intellectual of the second century, the Platonist philosopher Celsus, was familiar with the story of the star of Bethlehem, and in his treatise against the Christians, *On the True Doctrine* (168 C.E.), he publicly posed many of the questions I have raised here. Celsus's contempt for Christianity manifests when he queries, cleverly, if the star actually foretold the birth of the Savior.[10] If so, Christians would have to assert that "pagan" astrological prognostications were indeed still valid within a new, Christian cosmos; by extension, the star proved not only that Christ's birth was fated but that even Christ was powerless under the inexorable unfolding of a cosmic plan greater than his own.

To answer Celsus's question, Christians of the second century had a number of options, best understood as preliminary products of debates concerning concepts of signification versus concepts of causality, as Christian systems of cosmology and causality emerged from within the context of broader, Graeco-Roman imaginative horizons. In a Christian system, or, rather, a complex cluster of systems that had not yet fully developed the concept of free will, the star of Bethlehem raised potentially troubling issues of Christ's own free will, seen over and against the fatalistic power of the stars.[11] The second-century Valentinian teacher Theodotus resolved the problem one way: astrology had once ruled causality, he conceded,

10. Celsus's work survives only in fragments; it can also be reconstructed from Origen's responses. I have taken this passage from Origen *Contra Celsum* 1.59.

11. Work needs to be done on early Christian notions of free will. Much of the extant work is anachronistic, misattributing a later, Augustinian notion of free will to a first- or second-century context. For earlier material upon which early Christians drew, see Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity,* Sather Classical Lectures, vol. 48 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982).

but Christ's advent had annulled or replaced a malevolent causality with the beneficence of divine Providence.[12] Valentinus's student Basilides, however, took another tack; he emphasized the preexistence of Christ, thereby effectively inverting hierarchies of causality: Christ had been "mentally preconceived at the time of the generation of the stars."[13] Both these thinkers represent maverick forms of Christianity, yet their solutions are neither unique nor necessarily unorthodox, being deeply rooted in middle Platonist concepts of divinity. Still, Theodotus and Basilides represent positions rather different from those of the vigorous Christian polemics against fate and astrology that emerged later, during the third and fourth centuries. They operated, first of all, from a tacit assumption that the stars *were* potent causal agents. They also substantially developed standard Graeco-Roman refutations by incorporating into them Christological arguments based on a doctrine of Christ's preexistence.

Other Christians of the second century interpreted Matthew's account as an indication that astrology no longer held the power it had before Christ's advent. Against the implication that Jesus was somehow subject to the astrological decrees of the stars, both Ignatius of Antioch and, later, Theodotus devised an ingenious interpretation of the nativity accounts: Jesus was not subject to the star of the nativity, because he himself embodied it. Ignatius, in his *Letter to the Ephesians* 19.2–3, likens Jesus to a new star that troubles the other stars, making magic impossible:

> How then was [Christ] revealed to the aeons [Gk. αἰῶνες]?
> A star shone in heaven,
> Brighter than all the stars,
> And its light was ineffable,
> And its novelty caused astonishment;
> All the other stars together with the sun and moon
> Became a chorus [χορὸς] for the star,
> And it outshone them all with its light;
> And there was perplexity [as to] whence [came] this novelty so unlike them.
> Thence was destroyed all magic [μαγεία],
> And every bond [πᾶς δεσμὸς] vanished.[14]

12. *Exc. Theod.* 74. I have used the edition *Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria,* ed. Robert Peirce Casey, Studies and Documents, ed. Kirsopp Lake and Silva Lake, vol. 1 (London: Christophers, 1934).

13. Hippolytus *Ref.* 7.15. Note the similar Manichaean position to which Augustine alludes in *Contra Faustum* 5; Faustus evidently asserts that Christ was composed of astral material, then proceeds to critique orthodox Christian interpretations of the star of Bethlehem.

14. Ignatius *Ephesians* 19.2–3. I have used the translation by William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 87. For the astonishment the Savior causes the celestial

Theodotus apparently held a similar idea: "Therefore the Lord came down, bringing to those on earth the peace that is from heaven . . . a strange and new star arose [Gk. ἀνέτειλεν ξένος ἀστὴρ καὶ καινὸς], doing away with the old astral decree [ἀστροθεσίαν], shining with a new unearthly light, which revolved on a new path of salvation, as the Lord himself, a guide for all people, came down to earth to transfer from Fate to his providence those who believed in Christ."[15]

Ignatius and Theodotus agreed that the presence of the star of Bethlehem heralded a significant cosmic event. To avoid the implication that Jesus was somehow subject to ancient "astrological law" (Gk. ἀστροθεσίαν), both Christians suggested that Jesus and the star were essentially identical. Jesus' advent, as the star itself, had canceled astral destiny, throwing the stars off their regular courses and into confusion; by extension, Roman astrologers were no longer correct in their predictions. This conviction was reflected in other early Christian sources, including the undated *Pistis Sophia,* in which Christ on his descent through the cosmos turns the cosmic axis, throwing into disarray planetary aspects and confounding the predictions of astrologers.[16]

Early Christians appear to have drawn the model of Christ subverting astral destiny from Graeco-Roman paradigms. The same theme of a god controlling cosmic order appears, for example, in literature associated with Isis and Mithras. That Isis transcended and controlled astral destiny is attested as early as the Hellenistic era; in an aretalogy from Cyme dated between 306 and 283/282 B.C.E., the goddess proclaims:

> I am she who rises in the Dog Star
> I separated the earth from the heavens
> I showed the paths of the stars.
> I ordered the course of the sun and the moon

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bodies, see also Protennoia's salvific descent in the Nag Hammadi treatise *Trimorphic Protennoia,* NHC XIII,1 43:5–44:20.

15. *Exc. Theod.* 74. Διὰ τοῦτο ὁ Κύριος κατῆλθεν εἰρήνην ποιήσων, τὴν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ τοῖς ἐπὶ γῆς, ὥς φησιν ὁ Ἀπόστολος· "Εἰρήνη ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ δόξα ὑψίστοις." Διὰ τοῦτο ἀνέτειλεν ξένος ἀστὴρ καὶ καινός, καταλύων τὴν παλαιὰν ἀστροθεσίαν, καινῷ φωτί, οὐ κοσμικῷ, λαμπόμενος, ὁ καινὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ σωτηρίους τρεπόμενος, [ὡς] αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος, ἀνθρώπων Ὁδηγός, ὁ κατελθὼν εἰς γῆν ἵνα μεταθῇ τοὺς εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν πιστεύσαντας ἀπὸ τῆς Εἱμαρμένης εἰς τὴν ἐκείνου Πρόνοιαν.

16. *Pistis Sophia* 1.15 (ed. Carl Schmidt [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978], 25,16–20). This text was most likely composed between the second and fourth centuries; it is extant in a sole manuscript, the Askew Codex, now in the British Museum. Because of its similarity in vocabulary to other texts from Nag Hammadi, most scholars identify the *Pistis Sophia* as "Gnostic." In reality, very little is known about it. For an analysis of the *Pistis Sophia*'s use of astrology, see Horace Hodgson, "Gnostic Liberation from Astrological Determinism: Hipparchan 'Trepidation' and the Breaking of Fate," *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997): 359–73.

I am living in the rays of the sun
I govern the path of the sun
Everything obeys me
I deliver those who are enchained.
I overcome Fate [Gk. τὸ εἱμαρμένον][17]
Fate submits to me.[18]

A later Isis hymn from Cyrene confirms the cosmic power of the goddess: "[T]he stars do not go their own course if they have not received my command [Gk. ἐντολή]."[19] The convert to Isis's cult received a new birth, free from an astrally ordained genesis.[20] In Apuleius's *Metamorphoses,* Isis informs Lucius: "[Y]ou shall know that I, and I alone, have the power to prolong your life beyond the bounds appointed as your fate" (scies ultra statuta fato tuo spatia vitam quoque tibi prorogare mihi tantum licere).[21] Recently, Mithraic scholar David Ulansey has demonstrated that the complex cosmological symbolism of Mithraic iconography likely represents a code that, when properly understood, revealed the central "mystery" of Mithraism: Mithras alone possessed the power to rotate the cosmic axis.[22] This esoteric knowledge carried profound implications for the Mithraic initiate;

17. Note the use of the unusual neuter form *heimarmenon* to express the concept of fate, rather than the more conventional feminine form, *heimarmene.* According to Jan Bergman,"I Overcome Fate, Fate Hearkens to Me," in Helmer Ringgren, ed., *Fatalistic Beliefs in Religion, Folklore, and Literature* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 41, this neuter form is attested elsewhere only once, in Theodoret *Eccl. His.* VI.14. Bergman suggests that the neuter form in the aretalogy may correspond to an earlier Egyptian word for fate.

18. The hymn has been translated by A. J. Festugière, in *L'idéal religieux des Grecs et l'Évangile* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1932), 107–9. For studies, see Philippe Roussel, "Un nouvel hymne grec à Isis," *Revue des études grecques* 42 (1929): 137 ff.; A. J. Festugière, "A propos des arétologies d'Isis," *HTR* 42 (1949): 209 ff. Roussel, Festugière, and A. D. Nock consider the last two lines a later addition to the original aretology; Bergman, "I Overcome Fate," 41, tentatively disagrees.

19. Werner Peek, *Der Isishymnus von Andros und verwandte Texte* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1930), 129.

20. On astrological influence in Isism, see Bergman, "I Overcome Fate," 37–51; A. D. Nock and A. J. Festugière, eds., *Corpus Hermeticum* (Paris, 1946–54) I:193–95; Siegfried Morenz and Dieter Müller, *Untersuchungen zur Rolle des Schicksals in der ägyptischen Religion* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961); C. J. Bleeker, "Die Idee des Schicksals in der altägyptischen Religion," in *The Sacred Bridge* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), 112 ff.

21. Apuleius *Metamorphoses* XI,15.

22. David Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 95. He cites as primary evidence the iconography collected by M. J. Vermaseren, *Corpus inscriptionem et monumentorum religionis mithriacae* (= CIMRM), 2 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijoff, 1956, 1960), esp. CIMRM 985 (Mithras holding the planetary spheres), CIMRM 245 and CIMRM 545 (Mithras with the sky beneath his cape), CIMRM 860 (Mithras breaking out of the cosmic egg), and CIMRM 1083 (Mithras within the zodiacal arch). Though the extant evidence for Ulansey's theory is primarily iconographic, he quotes Porphyry, *Cave of the Nymphs* 24: "As a creator and lord of genesis, Mithras is placed in the region of the celestial equator with north to his right

he acknowledged that, in Ulansey's words, "the entire cosmos was completely under [Mithras's] control." Mithras, through his power to alter the cosmic fabric, could deliver his protégés from "the forces of fate residing in the stars."[23]

I have highlighted here a number of second-century paradigms for interpreting the star of Bethlehem, not as a signifier, but as a type of causal agent. These paradigms covered a range of possibilities and concerns in early Christianity, from a time when Christians had not yet fully articulated a new vision of the cosmos and fully repudiated astrological fatalism as mere superstition. They are emblematic, perhaps, of the flexible and essentially inchoate nature of second-century Christianity. Within a hundred years, new interpretive paradigms for the star would emerge, and these older models I have presented here would be rejected. Tatian's willingness to accept the possibility that the stars were potent agents, for instance, was quickly abandoned as Christians developed a distinctive cosmology quite separate from Graeco-Roman systems.

The Star of Bethlehem in Third- and Fourth-Century Debate

By the third century, anti-astrology treatises frequently appeared within the compendium of anti-Roman tractates that Christians circulated. Treatises composed or compiled by theologians such as Origen (185–254 C.E.) and Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 215 C.E.), dismantled, point by point, logical proofs for astrological influence. The authors of these philosophical treatises adopted, as had their predecessors during the previous century, Graeco-Roman refutations of astral fatalism in order to attack Graeco-Roman belief and praxis. For the most part, these texts are tediously homogeneous, introducing little innovation and reflecting little evidence that such debates resonated with any real emotional force in the public life of the empire.

The production of these treatises reached a crescendo during the fourth century and later, by which time Christianity had become the new official religion of the late empire. Fourth-century treatises include the *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti,* ascribed to Ambrosiaster or Decimus Hilarianus Hilarius, and book four of Nicetas of Remesiana's *Instructio ad competentes,* "Against the Use of a Horoscope" (ca. 385 C.E.; now lost). Diodore of Tarsus (fl. 378–90 C.E.), an opponent of the emperor Julian, composed numerous treatises against fate—including *Against Astronomy, Astrology, and Fate; On the Spheres and Seven*

and south to his left" (Ulansey, *Origins,* 59). Ulansey's highly controversial theories have been countered by, among others, Roger Beck, in his monograph *Planetary Gods and Planetary Order in the Mysteries of Mithras* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988).

23. Ulansey, *Origins,* 125.

Planetary Zones; On the Spheres According to Hipparch; and *On the Celestial Bodies: Against Aristotle*—all of which have been lost but the first, which has been preserved in fragments by the ninth-century Byzantine Greek compiler Photius of Constantinople. In addition, a number of treatises from the fourth century and later are directed not at astrology but at astral fatalism; these include Gregory of Nyssa's *De Fato* (ca. 382 C.E.), Augustine's *City of God,* book 5 (ca. 415 C.E.), and works by Isidore of Pelusium (ca. 400–449 C.E.) and Proclus of Constantinople (411–85 C.E.).

Astrology emerged as repugnant to Christians of the third and fourth century for its unrelenting fatalism, a fatalism that appeared to contradict the essential goodness of God. But astral fatalism also challenged those Christians who were convinced that God alone directed the unfolding of the cosmos. As Tamsyn Barton has noted, astrology likely posed a threat to some Christians because, on a basic level, it threatened to rival Christian prophecy.[24] Before the third and even the second century, by contrast, Christians and Jews alike were more likely to reconcile astrology and prophecy than to draw a sharp distinction between them. The Gospel of Matthew's infancy narrative itself provides us with an excellent case in point. The account was most likely composed to satisfy Balaam's prophecy in Num. 24:17 that "a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel," and thus build Matthew's case that Jesus was the awaited "King of the Jews";[25] yet apparently the gospel writer was not troubled by the star of Bethlehem's astrological implications. In the gospel itself, then, messianic prophecy and astrological prognostication could not be divided into irreconcilable systems of signification.

By the third century, as Christians prepared to distance themselves from astral systems of causality, what had clearly been an allusion to prophecy within a Jewish context—and one reconciled with astrology apparently without much trouble—was reinterpreted as dangerously close to astral fatalism in a later context. Third-century Christians set themselves the task of clarifying the relationship between the two. Origen's solution was to note that the Magi were in fact astrologers but that they had come by their knowledge of Christ's kingship not through the astrological arts but through reading Balaam's messianic declaration, with which

24. Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 72.

25. See Jean Daniélou's chapter "The Star of Jacob," in his *Primitive Christian Symbols,* trans. Donald Attwater (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), 102–23, and idem, "L'étoile de Jacob et la mission chrétienne à Damas," *Vigiliae christianae* 11 (1957): 121–38. As Hegedus notes ("Astrological Motifs in Matt 2:1–12"), many groups of Jews living in the Hellenistic period and the Roman Empire regarded Num. 24:17 as messianic prophecy, following the Septuagint's translation of "scepter" as ἄνθρωπος. Similarly, the Targumim Neofiti 1: Numbers translates "scepter" as "redeemer, ruler, or Messiah." Dissident Jews under the leadership of Bar Kochba, "Son of the Star," turned to Num. 24:17 for scriptural direction in their uprising during the reign of Hadrian in 135 C.E. Bar Kochba drew his name directly from Num. 24:17.

he asserts they were familiar.[26] The undated *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* offers a second solution to the same problem: it replaces the Magi entirely with "prophets from Jerusalem" who, seeing the star, point out that Jesus' birth should restore the promise to Israel and all the nations.[27] These interpretive turns are even reflected in early Christian iconography; a crudely carved cover from a Roman loculus grave, now at the Vatican Museum, includes Balaam, who stands behind the seated figures of Mary and Jesus and points to the star, as well as the traditional three Magi bearing gifts, dressed in their short capes and Phrygian caps. The loculus cover is undated but, like most early Christian catacomb art, was most likely produced sometime in the third century. A similar representation of the star narrative appears in a fresco from the catacombs of Priscilla in Rome, also tentatively dated to the third century. Mary sits with the child Jesus on her lap. To her right, a lone figure points to a star above them. Since the figure does not bear any of the iconographic markers of the Magi, with their capes and Phrygian caps, the figure most likely represents Balaam.

A second interpretive problem to persist into the third and fourth centuries was the degree to which the star ought to be understood as an agent rather than merely a sign. Thus, in his *Commentary on Genesis,* Origen takes up the question posed by Celsus nearly a century earlier: "[W]as Christ also," he asks, "subject to fate according to the movements of the stars at his birth, and therefore did and suffered all these things?"[28] But Origen's response departs radically from the answers of Christians during the second century. To answer this taunt from his polytheist adversaries, Origen looked to their own philosophical teachings, disarming his opponents with a position adopted by Philo and Origen's own contemporary, Plotinus: the stars themselves were not responsible for fate; they were merely signs, moving writing traced by God's hand in the sky.[29] Directing his barbs at astrologers and other prognosticators, Origen believed it was not for humans to interpret these signs; they were revealed for the sake of powers higher than humans. Ultimately, Origen sought to justify freedom of the will against stellar determinism; "it is not due to the stars, but rather to one's own desire, which God has foreseen rather than predestined."[30] With this tactic, he effectively transferred the power of fate from the stars to God.

26. Origen *Contra Celsum* 1.59.

27. *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* 13.

28. Origen *Comm. Gen.* (*Patrologia Graeca* 6.11).

29. See Plotinus *Enn.* II.3, Περὶ τοῦ εἰ ποιεῖ τὰ ἄστρα, "On whether the stars are causes"; by Philo: *De migrat. Abrahami* 32, *De somniis* 10, *De monarchia* 1,1, *De opificio mundi* 14. This ideas finds its way into a wide variety of later sources, including Macrobius's *Saturnalia* 1,18 and *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 19, and even (though in imperfect form) the twelfth-century John of Salisbury's *Polycraticus* II,19.

30. *Philokalia* 23.1–21.

Origen's approach, to interpret the star of Bethlehem as merely a signifier directed by a higher power rather than as an agent, followed certain rationalist, monotheist Greek philosophical traditions already expressed in the famous dictum: "Astra inclinant, non necessitant." Loosely translated, this meant that the stars could point toward or indicate the future or an event's significance, but they could not bring it about. This position was adopted by other Christians of the third and fourth centuries. Clement of Alexandria, for instance, asserted that the stars act as signs of what is to come.[31] Much later, in 398 C.E., Augustine, too, in his response to the Manichean Faustus, claimed: "We also deny the influence of the stars upon the birth of any person; for we maintain that, by the just law of God, the free will of human beings, which chooses good or evil, is under no constraint of necessity. How much less do we subject to any constellation the incarnation of the eternal Creator and Lord of all!"[32] The star, continued Augustine, had no control over Christ; it was, by contrast, a witness and a guide. Augustine made much of Matthew's description of the star's apparently leaving its course to guide the Magi. How could it have determined Christ's action, he asked, when it was compelled to change its own action at Christ's birth? For Augustine, the newness of the star proved that it had not effected Christ, but that Christ's birth was its cause: "Christ was not born because the star was there; but the star was there because Christ was born. If there was any fate, it was in the birth, and not in the star." Augustine then continued with an apologetic etymology: "The word 'fate' is derived from a word that means 'to speak'; and since Christ is the Word of God by which all things were spoken before they were, the conjunction of stars is not the fate of Christ, but Christ is the fate of the stars." Ultimately, God's providential power stood behind the event: "The same will that made the heavens took our earthly nature. The same power that ruled the stars laid down his life and took it again."[33]

A third issue faced in third- and fourth-century sources concerned the continuing validity of astrology as a system of interpretation and foreknowledge. Tertullian, in his treatise *Against Idolatry*—like Tatian and Athenagoras before him—attributed astrology to the demonic pedagogy of fallen angels. But the star of Bethlehem, remarkably, signaled that astrology had been supplanted by a new *scientia* of Christ: "Astrology now . . . is the science [Lat. *scientia*] of the stars of Christ, not of Saturn and Mars or anyone else from the same class of dead people. That science was allowed just until the advent of the gospel, in order that after

31. Clement of Alexandria *Ecl. Proph.* 55.
32. Augustine *Contra Faustum* 1 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 25, 259.19–24).
33. Augustine *Contra Faustum* 1.5.

Christ's birth no one should henceforward interpret anyone's horoscope by the stars."[34]

God had allowed the science of the stars to exist until the coming of the gospel. After Christ's birth, Tertullian warned, no one should cast horoscopes, "for since the gospel you will never find either wizards, astrologers, enchanters, soothsayers, or magicians, unless they are being clearly punished." Later, Origen, too, came to believe that the coming of Christ thwarted the activity of celestial demons. When the Magi attempted to find the reason why their spells failed to work as usual, Origen explained, they noted the new star in the sky: "The evil spirits . . . became feeble, losing their strength; the falseness of their sorcery was manifested and their power was broken. This overthrow was brought about not only by the angels who visited the terrestrial regions on account of the birth of Jesus, but also by the power of Jesus himself, and his innate divinity."[35]

Jerome, during the fourth century, asserted much the same: the advent of the Messiah heralded the destruction of astrology's power,[36] as did John Chrysostom: "[Christ] freed us from astrology" (Gk. ἀστρολογίαν ἔλυσε).[37] Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 331–ca. 396 C.E.) devoted a poem to the problem of prognostication, "On Foreknowledge," in which he extended Tertullian's line of reasoning; he explained that the Magi abandoned their art, converting to Christianity when they saw the infant Jesus. The theme of Christ as a new, victorious star vanquishing the astral powers finds its most poetic expression in the work of the late-fourth-century Latin Christian poet Prudentius, who uses more elegant, visual language in an astonishing passage. All the creatures of the zodiac cringe and shrink as they are confronted by the shimmering new star of Christ: Serpens withdraws; Leo flees; Cancer contracts its claws by its sides as if maimed; Taurus with its broken horns groans; Capricorn with torn, ragged hide withers; "here the banished water boy glides down, there too Sagittarius; Gemini wander, separated as they flee; shameless Virgo gives up her silent lovers in the vault of heaven; the other fiery orbs that hang in the terrible clouds are afraid before the new star."[38]

34. Tertullian *De idololatria* 9.1: "Stellas Christi, non Saturni et Martis, et cuiusque ex eodem ordine mortuorum observat et praedicat. At enim scientia ista usque ad Evangelium fuit concessa, ut Christo edito nemo exinde nativitatem alicuius de caelo interpretatur."

35. Origen *Contra Celsum* 1.58.

36. Jerome *Commentary on Isaiah* 13.47.12–15 (*Corpus Christianorum Latinorum* 73, 278.19–279.22).

37. John Chrysostom *Homilia* 6.1 (*Patrologia Graeca* 57, 61).

38. Prudentius *Apotheosis* 616–26 (*Corpus Christianorum Latinorum* 126, 98, 99): "cessisse auguem, fugisse leonem, / contraxisse pedes lateris manco ordine cancrum, / cornibus infractis domitum mugire iuvencum, / sidus et hirquinum laceris marcescere uillis. / Labitur hinc pulsus puer hydrium, inde sagittae; palantes geminos fuga separat, inproba virga / prodit amatores tacitos in fornice numdi, /

Not all Christians responded as poetically as Prudentius. A few explained the star of Bethlehem in "modern, scientific" terms. Origen, having studied Chaeremon the Stoic's treatise *On Comets,* suggests that the star might actually have shared some physical qualities with comets, since, he notes, comets have been known to portend significant events; alternatively, the star might have been a type of meteor, which Greeks had before noted in the sky.[39] Beyond Origen's musings, however, the question of the star's astrological meaning was rarely broached in antiquity.[40] Modern, scientific interpreters of the star of Bethlehem consistently miss this point. Within the interpretive horizons of early Christians, the star was definitely not a comet, which would have been a bad omen, according to ancient astrology—neither was it Jupiter, nor any planetary conjunction, nor any other known configuration the astrologers could have simply looked up in their notebooks. Gregory of Nazianzus (329–89 C.E.) emphasizes this novelty: "[F]or this is not the kind of star dealt with by expounders of astrology, but rather a star without precedent which had never previously appeared [Gk. ξεῖνος δὲ καὶ οὐ πάρος ἐξεφαάνθη]."[41]

Conclusions

From the second to the fourth century Christian sources advanced a plethora of arguments, counterarguments, invective, and polemic concerning the star of Bethlehem's validity within a Christian cosmos. As Christianity spread, apologists publicly offered their religion as part of a natural order, a natural unfolding of divine will or plan. Debates on the star of Bethlehem came to reflect this same ideology of supersessionism, reshaped or rearticulated as Christocentric cosmology. Christ's advent had "corrected" a deficient cosmos, as it had a deficient system of Roman

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quique alii horrificis pendent in nubibus ignes / luciferum timuere novum." Compare Prudentius's *Liber Cathemeron* 12.5–6, 11–12, 29–32 (*Corpus Christianorum Latinorum* 126, 65–66)

39. Origen *Contra Celsum* 1.58–59. Here, I have used the translation prepared by Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980). For a modern version of the argument that the star was actually a comet, see William E. Phipps, "The Magi and Halley's Comet," *Theology Today* 43 (1986–87): 88–92. Origen states that the star shares a physical nature with comets or meteors, but has an entirely unique celestial nature the others lack.

40. The terms "astrological" and "astronomical" were virtually interchangeable in the ancient world; the distinction is largely a modern one. I draw the distinction here to indicate that few Christians approached the star of Bethlehem without incorporating a wide variety of hermeneutical "grids," considering the symbolic, metaphorical, and allegorical dimensions of the star as intently as they considered its scientific dimensions. For a more nuanced study of ancient use of the terms "astrology" and "astronomy," see Wolfgang Hübner, *Die Begriffe "Astrologie" und "Astronomie" in der Antike* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989).

41. Gregory of Nazianzus *Poemata Arcana* 5.56–57 (ed. C. Moreschini, introduction and commentary by D. A. Sykes [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997], 24–25).

devotio. This trend is visible as early as the late second century, and persists into the fourth.

All the interpretations of the star of Bethlehem that I have presented here developed within the competitive spiritual marketplace of the Roman Empire, in which Christianity needed to compete with a range of soteriological offerings. Christ's advent is repeatedly presented as profoundly disruptive of a prior cosmic order. Yet remarkably, accounts of this advent must have struck many Roman citizens as rather conventional religious rhetoric. Christians, however, only redoubled their effort to present Christ's advent as something entirely novel. The rhetoric of the first four centuries of the common era insistently portrays the star of Bethlehem as "new," that is, not part of a preexisting cosmic system, and therefore demanding a new system of signification beyond the conventions of astrology.[42] Christians insisted upon the star's novelty not because they were unschooled in the vocabulary of ancient astrology—they clearly knew this vocabulary as well as did their non-Christian contemporaries—but rather because many of them had become convinced that Christ's advent initiated a new cosmic order. This new cosmic order revealed the timeless, orderly cosmos of Roman imaginative horizons to be dangerously chaotic for the unconverted. But it also revealed that time-honored, traditional Roman systems for reading and interpreting that order had been rendered invalid. Since these systems were the tools of the Roman elite—from astrologers to the emperor and his retinue of propagandists—the Christian repudiation of the star's astrological meaning struck at the heart of Roman claims to authority.[43] However their adversaries perceived them in the natural order of the cosmos, Christians saw themselves as triumphant, possessed of a secret conviction that the star of Bethlehem signaled not just the birth of the Savior but the transformation of the entire cosmic *oikonomia*.

42. The evidence has been collected by Hegedus, "Astrological Motifs," 16–17. For marked emphasis on the star as "new," see Ignatius *Ephesians* 19.2; *Sibylline Oracles* 8.475–76; Prudentius *Apotheosis* 617; *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 74.2; Augustine *Contra Faustum* 2.5; Gregory the Great *Homilia in Evangelia* 10.4 (*Patrologia Latina* 76,1111–12); Gregory of Nyssa *Sermones* (Mann, 245.16); Ambrose *Commentary on Luke* 2:48 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 32/4, 68.3–4).

43. There existed few more effective justifications for autocracy than to demonstrate that such a system of rule—or the right of a particular individual to rule—was built into the cosmic structure itself. For Augustus's use of astrology as propaganda, see Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), and Barton, *Ancient Astrology*.

13

At the Seizure of the Moon

The Absence of the Moon in the Mithras Liturgy

Radcliffe G. Edmonds III

"At the seizure of the moon, take a sun scarab which has twelve rays, and make it fall into a deep, turquoise cup."[1] The ritual instructions for the famous Mithras Liturgy tell the magician to begin the complex preparations for the encounter with the supreme sun-god Mithras "at the seizure of the moon," that is, at the time of the new moon, when the moon is absent from the heavens.[2] This absence of the moon is not merely an isolated ritual detail, but rather it corresponds to a pattern throughout the whole spell, in which the absence of the moon is crucial to the magician's project of immortalization through

I would like to thank Scott Noegel, Brannon Wheeler, and Joel Walker both for organizing an excellent conference and for their comments on earlier drafts. I would also like to thank Chris Faraone, Hans Dieter Betz, and Sarah Johnston for their critiques and comments, although I need scarcely say that any infelicities, obscurities, or outright errors are wholly the products of my own ignorance, carelessness, or obstinacy.

1. *PGM* IV.751–62. Translation slightly modified. All citations to the *PGM* are to Henrich's second edition of Preisendanz (Karl Preisendanz and Albert Henrichs, eds., *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri,* 2d ed., 2 vols. [Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973–1974]). All translations from the *PGM* are from Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). "At the seizure of the moon, take a sun scarab which has twelve rays, and make it fall into a deep, turquoise cup. . . . Pick it up and throw it into a glass vessel of excellent rose oil, as much as you wish; and spreading sacred sand in a pure manner, set the vessel on it, and say the formula over the vessel for seven days, while the sun is in midheaven."

(Gr. λαβὼν κάνθαρον ἡλιακὸν τὸν τὰς ιβ΄ ἀκτῖνας ἔχοντα ποίησον εἰς βηίον καλλάινον βαθὺ ἐν ἁρπαγῇ τῆς σελήνης βληθῆναι. . . . τοῦτον ἀνελόμενος βάλε εἰς ἀγγεῖον ὑελοῦν μύρου ῥοδίνου καλλίστου, ὅσον βούλει, καὶ στρώσας καθαρείως ἄμμον ἱερὰν ἐπίθες τὸ ἀγγεῖον καὶ λέγε τὸ ὄνομα ἐπὶ ἡμέρας ζ΄ ἡλίου μεσουρανοῦντος.)

2. A search of the TLG (Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, CD ROM E, University of California, Irvine, 1999) reveals only one other use of this term, in Horapollo 1.14.6, also referring to the absence of the moon at the conjunction of the sun and moon, that is, the new moon. The passage relates that male baboons mourn the absence of the moon at new moon: "For when the moon, moving into conjunction with the sun, is darkened, then the male baboon does not look nor does he eat; but he is bowed down to the earth in grief; as if lamenting for the rape [Gr. ἁρπαγήν] of the moon."

(Gr. ὅταν γὰρ ἐν τῷ μέρει τῆς ὥρας ἡ σελήνη συνοδεύουσα ἡλίῳ ἀφώτιστος γένηται, τότε ὁ μὲν ἄρσην κυνοκέφαλος οὐ βλέπει οὐδὲ ἐσθίει, ἄχθεται δὲ εἰς τὴν γῆν νενευκώς, καθάπερ πενθῶν τὴν τῆς σελήνης ἁρπαγήν.) (Horapollo 1.14.6, trans. George Boas, *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo,* Bollingen Series XXIII [New York: Pantheon Books, 1950].)

his contact with the powers of the sun.[3] While the absence of the moon from the ritual preparations is suggestive, its absence from the magician's ascent through the heavens is striking. In the Mithras Liturgy, the magician ascends through the heavens to a meeting with the supreme god, who is titled Helios Mithras. Although he encounters other planetary and astral gods and two deities with solar characteristics, he never sees the moon. Why does the magician avoid an encounter with the moon in his ascent, and why must all of his ritual preparations avoid her influence?

In this essay, I argue that this absence of the moon points to an underlying cosmology in which the moon is seen as a potentially hostile and dangerous power, in contrast to the benevolent power of the sun. The sun and moon are not merely two planetary powers in a cosmos divided into seven planetary spheres; rather, the moon rules over the lowest realm of earth, while the solar powers reign over the higher realms of the cosmos. Not only does this cosmology underlie the ritual instructions and the description of the magician's ascent through the heavens in the Mithras Liturgy, but this cosmology also corresponds with the redactor's organization of all the spells within the papyrus. The spells that invoke the powers of sun and moon are placed in different parts of the papyrus, and the sun and moon are invoked in different ways and for different purposes. This division reveals the significance of the sun and moon in the cosmology of the compiler of the Great Paris Magical Papyrus, giving insight into the worldview of a magician of the late antique period.[4]

3. "Immortalization" is the best, most direct translation of the Greek *apathanatismos*. The precise ramifications of the process are not explained in the text, but the immortality achieved is not permanent, just a temporary state of undyingness. Presumably, it means elevation to some sort of divine ontological status for the duration of the ritual, but since it does not last beyond this ritual, it is not really deification, which might suggest some permanent transformation to divine status. See Sarah Iles Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion: Theurgical Ascent in Its Cultural Milieu," in Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg, eds., *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium,* Studies in the History of Religions, 75 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 179–80. Hans Lewy (*Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic, and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire,* ed. Michel Tardieu [Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978], 177–200) discusses *apathanatismos* in terms of the immortal soul's separation from the mortal body.

4. The exact dates of the Mithras Liturgy and of the papyrus are of course uncertain, although the papyrus is generally agreed to date to the third or early fourth century B.C.E.; cf. *PGM* p. 64. Undoubtedly the Liturgy is older than the collection of spells within the papyrus, since it shows signs of editing. A. J. Festugière, in noting comparisons with the second-century C.E. Chaldaean Oracles, suggests that the Liturgy may go back to the same period (Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste,* vols. 1–4 [Paris: Librairie LeCoffre, 1950], 1:303 n. 1); cf. Morton Smith, "The Hymn to the Moon, *PGM* IV 2242–2355," in *Proceedings of the XVI Int. Congr. of Papyrology,* American Studies in Papyrology, vol. 23 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981), 643–45, and, for discussions of the dates, William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," in *ANRW* II: Principate, vol. 18.5 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 3419–20 and notes. Whether the redactor of the papyrus was himself a practicing magician who

The Magician's Ascent

The so-called Mithras Liturgy has been described as "the single best known Greek papyrus in the world today,"[5] and it has indeed enjoyed a certain amount of notoriety since its publication by Albrecht Dieterich in his *Eine Mithrasliturgie* in 1903. The Mithras Liturgy consists of lines 475 to 834 in the Great Paris Magical Papyrus (*PGM* IV), a thirty-six-page codex in Coptic and Greek. The redactor of the codex was clearly a scholarly magician, working with a large variety of sources from which he drew the spells to include in his codex. The Mithras Liturgy itself seems to have been collated from at least two manuscripts available to the redactor, since the redactor notes alternate readings in three separate places in the text.[6] Thus, although the papyrus seems to have been written early in the fourth century C.E., scholarly consensus places most of the originals from which the redactor was copying or recopying as early as two centuries prior.[7] In examining the Mithras Liturgy within the Great Paris Magical Papyrus, therefore, we may distinguish at least two sets of cosmological ideas: those of the original author of the Mithras Liturgy and those of the redactor of the papyrus.[8] I will begin with the cosmology of the spell itself and then examine some of its correspondences with and differences from the cosmology revealed by the redactor's organization of the whole papyrus.

Since the Mithras Liturgy was designed as a practical guide for the magician rather than a descriptive literary tour of the cosmos, its cosmology is not immediately clear. Comparisons with the Mithraic ladder of seven steps described by Celsus or with the planetary sequences in the Hermetic Poimandres and Macrobius have led some scholars to look for a sevenfold division of planetary realms in the ascent.[9] The celestial gods, however, are encountered together in the realm

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used the spells he collected cannot be known for certain. Garth Fowden suggests that the size and character of the collection "savour more of the library than the workbench" (Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* [repr., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993], 170).

5. William M. Brashear, *A Mithraic Catechism from Egypt* (Vienna: Verlag A. Holzhausens Nfg., 1992), 53.

6. Lines 500, 592, and 767.

7. Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3419, and other references in note 3 above.

8. Further ideas might be distinguished in the various revisions of the Mithras Liturgy before its redaction, but, for the purposes of this essay, I focus on the correspondence between the two most easily discernible.

9. Cf. Origen *Contra Celsum* VI.22, 31; *Corpus Hermeticum* I.25; Macrobius *In Somn.* 1.12. The dating of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (= CH) is of course uncertain, but the best guess is probably third century C.E. Celsus's work is dated to ca. 175–81 C.E., according to Origen's refutation, dating to the 240s. Macrobius is looking back to earlier traditions, writing at the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century C.E. Cf. Paul's passage through the seven heavens with extra realms beyond in the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul* (NHC V.2) 20:5–21:28, 24:1–9. Another elaborate set of

of the winds before the doors of the sun. As the magician rises by inhaling the sun's rays,[10] he can see "the divine order of the skies: the presiding gods rising into heaven and others setting. Now the course of the visible gods will appear through the disk of god, my father; and in similar fashion the so-called pipe, the origin of the ministering wind."[11] In this realm of winds and astrological rulers of the day and hour, the magician must protect himself against the inhabitants' wrath at an intruder, claiming to be a wandering star at home in the realm. "I am a star, wandering about with you, and shining forth out the deep."[12] The magician then approaches the doors of the sun and, after invoking the seven immortal gods of the world, invokes Helios, who comes when the doors of the sun open. The magician faces no sequence of planetary gates whose guardians need the password to permit the magician to ascend to the next realm. Even the invocation to the seven immortal gods of the world, presumably the planetary deities, only serves to open the doors of the sun into the next realm.[13]

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seven planetary celestial customs may be found in the Mandaean *Ginza* (GL III 51 Lidzbarski 578–82). Although Franz Cumont rejected Albrecht Dieterich's connection of the Mithras Liturgy with Celsus's Mithraic ladder, Reinhold Merkelbach ("Immortality Rituals in Late Antiquity," *Diogenes,* vol. 42.1, no. 165 [1994]: 100) still explains the cosmology of the Mithras Liturgy as an ascent through the seven planetary spheres to the realm beyond the fixed stars (Cumont states his arguments in *Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux mystère de Mithra* [Brussels: H. Lamertin, Libraire, 1899], 41, *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* [NewYork: Dover Publications, 1956], 260, et al., against Albrecht Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie,* 3d ed., ed. Otto Weinreich [Leipzig: Teubner, 1923], 89–90). Cf. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste,* 1:305 n. 3, who describes the sun as in its customary fourth sphere, thus presuming the sevenfold division.

10. *PGM* IV.539–41: "Draw in breath [pneuma] from the rays, drawing up three times as much as you can, and you will see yourself being lifted up and ascending to the height, so that you seem to be in mid-air" (Gr. ἔλκε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀκτίνων πνεῦμα γ´ ἀνασπῶν, ὁ δύνασαι, καὶ ὄψῃ σεαυτὸν ἀνακουφιζόμενον καὶ ὑπερβαίνοντα εἰς ὕψος, ὥστε σε δοκεῖν μέσον τοῦ ἀέρος εἶναι). On the technique of inhaling the sun's rays to ascend, see Radcliffe Edmonds, "Did the Mithraists Inhale?—A Technique for Theurgic Ascent in the Mithras Liturgy, the Chaldaean Oracles, and Some Mithraic Frescoes," *Ancient World* 32.1 (2000): 10–24; Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion," 181–83; Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy,* 184–85, 209.

11. *PGM* IV.545–50:

Gr. ὄψῃ γὰρ ἐκείνης τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ τῆς ὥρας θείαν θέσιν, τοὺς πολεύοντας ἀναβαίνοντας εἰς οὐρανὸν θεούς, ἄλλους δὲ καταβαίνοντας. ἡ δὲ πορεία τῶν ὁρωμένων θεῶν διὰ τοῦ δίσκου, πατρός μου, θεοῦ, φανήσεται, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὁ καλούμενος αὐλὸς ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ λειτουργοῦντος ἀνέμου . . . ὄψῃ δὲ ἀτενίζοντάς σοι τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ ἐπὶ σε ὁρμωμένους. The disk of the god seems to refer to the sun with its doors, but the pipe of the ministering wind is somewhat mysterious. It may refer to the source of the winds that blow in the sky, but it could also refer to a conduit that brings down divine pneuma and helps the magician ascend.

Cf. Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion," 183–85.

12. Lines 574–75: Gr. ἐγώ εἰμι οὔμπλανος ὑμῖν ἀστήρ, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ βάθους αναλάμπων.

13. One of the reasons Cumont rejected a Mithraic origin for the Liturgy is the lack of correspondence between its cosmology and the cosmology of seven planetary zones he envisioned for Mithraism. "Cette description fantastique du monde céleste ne répond nullement à celle que nos sources nous font du paradis mithriaque, divisé en sept zones superposées. De même, dans les noms qui sont

However, the seven planetary spheres of heaven were not the only cosmological model popular in the Hellenistic and late antique eras.[14] A three-level cosmos—divided into (*a*) the material, or earthly, world, (*b*) the ethereal, or cosmic, world, and (*c*) the noetic, or hypercosmic, world—is found in a wide range of sources, many of which based their cosmologies upon Platonic ideas that filtered through the Hellenistic world.[15] In such a cosmology, instead of seven planetary rulers who each govern one layer of the cosmos, each of the three realms has a ruling luminary, often the moon, the sun, and (drawing from Plato's allegory of the Cave) the noetic sun, which illumines the middle cosmic world from its place in the highest noetic world just as the physical sun illumines the material world from its place in the heavens.[16] The planets and other astrological rulers of the day and hour have their place in the middle cosmic realm, between the material world of humans and the noetic realm of the supreme powers. The moon marks the lower boundary of this cosmic realm; thus the material realm below the heavens is often called the sublunary world, presided over by the powers of the moon.[17]

The cosmos through which the magician ascends in the Mithras Liturgy corresponds better to this tripartite cosmos than to a sevenfold cosmos. The magi-

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donnés aux dieux, et dont je n'ai pas la prétention de fournir l'étymologie, je n'ai découvert aucune analogie avec les appellations perses ou même chaldéennes" (Cumont, *Textes et monuments figurés,* 41).

14. Cf. Jacques Flamant, "Sotériologie et systèmes planétaires," in Ugo Bianchi and M. J. Vermaseren, eds., *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell'impero romano* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), 223–42, who thinks that the three-level cosmology is more archaic and rudimentary than the seven-level. Flamant prefers to see the three-level cosmos as deriving from "the Orient" but picked up by Greek thinkers as early as Anaximander (Flamant, "Sotériologie et systèmes planétaires," 226). Since, however, he manages to trace both models back before the third century B.C.E., I prefer to regard the models as two different, but not necessarily incompatible, cosmological options available in the Hellenistic or late antique periods. Someone picturing the cosmos could imagine the important divisions as seven planetary spheres or as three spheres, one of which contained the planets. See further on this subject my "Faces of the Moon: Cosmology, Genesis, and the Mithras Liturgy," in *In Heaven As It Is On Earth: Celestial Realms and Earthly Realities* (forthcoming). Cf. the attempts of Proclus and Psellus to synthesize the tripartite and varying sevenfold (Platonic and Chaldaean) cosmological structures of their sources—Proclus *In Ti.* 257d-259e and Psellus *Patrologia Graeca* 122, 1149c.

15. John Dillon traces the development of a triadic cosmos to Xenokrates (396–14 B.C.E.), who linked each realm (Sensible, Heavenly, and Intelligible) to an element and to one of the Fates. Such a triadic schema was picked up by other Platonist thinkers, especially Plutarch (Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* [London: Duckworth, 1977], 30–33).

16. Cf., e.g., Philo *De Opificio Mundi* VIII.31. David Ulansey ("Mithras and the Hypercosmic Sun," in John R. Hinnells, ed., *Studies in Mithraism* [Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1994], 257–64) discusses the idea of the double sun as it filters into Mithraism, but does not address the Mithras Liturgy.

17. As Sarah Iles Johnston notes: "The Middle Platonic school popularized the idea that the Moon was both a liminal point and a transmissive or mediating entity between the Sensible and Intelligible worlds, an idea that persisted throughout later antiquity in philosophical and mystical thought" (Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature* [Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990], 29).

cian encounters the winds and the planets in the ethereal, or celestial, realm before the boundary of the sun, which divides the ethereal from the hypercosmic realm. Even the two suns, Helios and Mithras, that the magician encounters correspond to the physical and noetic suns of the Platonic system, which rule over the ethereal and hypercosmic realms respectively.[18] In the text the one figure missing from this cosmological system is the ruler of the material world, the keeper of the boundary between the material and celestial realms, the Moon. Just as the magician invokes Helios, the ruler of the celestial realm, to allow him to pass beyond to meet with Mithras, the ruler of the noetic realm, so one would expect that the magician would have previously had to entreat Selene, the ruler of the material world, for entry into the realm of Helios. The Moon, whether called Selene or Hekate or some other name, does indeed play such a role in other theurgic systems, where she serves as the intermediary who allows the magician to rise above the material world. As Sarah Iles Johnston has argued for the theurgy of the Chaldaean Oracles, Hekate is the first to be invoked and the first to appear to the theurgist seeking to rise to realms above.[19] Why does the magician's ascent not include an encounter with Selene, but, to the contrary, why do his preparations avoid her presence as much as possible? To answer this question we must examine the role the moon plays as the ruler of the lowest world in such a tripartite cosmology.

THE ROLE OF THE MOON IN THE *GENESIS* OF SOULS

A passage from Porphyry's third-century C.E. *Cave of the Nymphs* may illuminate the obscurity caused by this absence of the moon in the Mithras Liturgy. Porphyry links the process of *apogenesis,* the ascent of the soul from embodiment in the material world, to the sun, and the process of *genesis,* the descent of the soul into flesh, to the moon: "The theologians make the 'gates' of souls the sun and the moon, the ascent taking place through the sun and the descent through the moon. . . . And the ancients called the Moon, who presides over genesis, a bee, especially because the moon is a bull and the Moon's [astrological] exaltation is Taurus, and bees are ox-born, and souls going into genesis are ox-born, and the ox-stealing god [Mithras] is he who secretly [hearkens to?/impedes?] genesis."[20] Whether or not these "theologians" have any connection to the Mithraic mys-

18. For this double sun as a feature of the Mithras Liturgy that may reflect actual Mithraic doctrine, see below. Cf. Edmonds, "Did the Mithraists Inhale?" and Ulansey, "Mithras and the Hypercosmic Sun."

19. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira,* 111–33.

20. Gr. καὶ τῶν θεολόγων πύλας ψυχῶν ἥλιον τιθέντων καὶ σελήνην, καὶ διὰ μὲν ἡλίου ἀνιέναι, διὰ δὲ σελήνης κατιέναι. . . . Σελήνην τε οὖσαν γενέσεως προστάτιδα Μέλισσαν ἐκάλουν ἄλλως τε

teries, this association of sun with *apogenesis* and moon with *genesis* can be found in a variety of other sources.[21] Souls can return to the realm of the sun after their mortal existence, and souls about to enter bodies and a material existence pass through the moon into the mortal world.[22]

The embodiment of the soul in the material world means that it no longer partakes of the perfection of the highest realm. This loss of perfection can, however, be interpreted in a variety of ways, with each interpretive choice producing a different cosmological outlook on the nature of the material world and the soul's *genesis* within it.[23] From the most optimistic perspectives, the descent of the soul and the creation of the material world are part of the revelation of the divine, the

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ἐπεὶ ταῦρος μέν Σελήνη καὶ ὕψωμα Σελήνης ὁ ταῦρος, βουγενεῖς δ' αἱ μέλισσαι, καὶ ψυχαὶ δ' εἰς γένεσιν ἰοῦσαι βουγενεῖς, καὶ βουκλόπος θεὸς ὁ τὴν γένεσιν λεληθότως † ἀκούων †. Porphyry *De Antro Nympharum* 18, 29 (translation adapted from Porphyry, *On the Cave of the Nymphs,* trans. Robert Lamberton [Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1983], and Roger Beck, "In the Place of the Lion: Mithras in the Tauroctony," in Hinnells, *Studies in Mithraism,* 29–50). The ox-stealing god is Mithras, but what precisely he does († ἀκούων †) to genesis remains uncertain. Beck renders it "hearken," following the conjectured text, but Lamberton proposes "impedes" because of the opposition of Mithras and the bull. Porphyry further links Cancer with the Moon and Capricorn with Saturn (20), noting that the gate of Cancer is for the descent of souls into genesis, whereas the gate of Capricorn is for apogenetic ascent. For Mithras as Saturn, cf. Ptolemy *Tetrabiblos* II.3.64: "For they revere the star of Venus under the name of Isis, and that of Saturn as Mithras Helios." (Gr. σέβουσί τε γὰρ τὸν μὲν τῆς Ἀφροδίτης Ἶσιν ὀνομάζοντες, τὸν δὲ Κρόνου Μίθραν Ἥλιον.) See Roger Beck, *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders in the Mysteries of Mithras* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 86.

21. Robert Turcan (*Mithras Platonicus: Recherches sur l'hellénisation philosophique de Mithra* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975], 25–26, 62–89) argues that Porphyry's testimony reflects only Platonic cosmological ideas, whereas Beck suggests that such ideas may have had wider currency, including various Mithraic groups (Beck, *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders,* 35 n. 73, 91–100; now idem, "Ritual, Myth, Doctrine, and Initiation in the Mysteries of Mithras: New Evidence from a Cult Vessel," *Journal of Roman Studies* 90 [2000]: esp. 178–80). Richard Gordon critiques the very idea of a clear division between the theological speculations of the Neoplatonic "allegorisers" and the religious ideas of the mystery cults themselves: "Even theoretically under these circumstances, there can be no dividing line of the kind claimed by those who seek to distinguish between the 'real' Mysteries, essentially simple and down-to-earth—suitable for soldiers—and the interpretive Mysteries, full of allegorical speculation. We cannot dismiss Euboulus and Pallas as neo-pythagorean outsiders, unrepresentative of properly Mithraic interpretation. Given the intellectual habits of antiquity, no body of utterance as suggestive and peculiar as that of the Mysteries could have remained immune to allegorisation for very long" (Gordon, "Mystery, Metaphor, and Doctrine in the Mysteries of Mithras," in John R. Hinnells, ed., *Studies in Mithraism* [Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1994], 121).

22. Cf., e.g., Plutarch *De facie* 943a–945d, *De Iside* 367d, *De genio* 591; Lydus *De mensibus* IV 80, Julian *Or.* V.172ce. Dillon discusses Plutarch's ideas on cosmology and the descent of the soul from sun and moon in *De genio, De facie, De def. or., De sera,* noting connections with Xenokrates, as well as Stoic ideas of Poseidonius (Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 199–225 [cf. 108–13], 24–33).

23. Ioan P. Couliano (*The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* [San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992]) similarly discusses consideration of Gnosticism through a set of structural oppositions that define the possible forms of cosmology. Regardless of the ontological status one gives to the resulting form, the method provides a useful way of categorizing the evidence and describing the relations between one system and the next in the face of the enormous gaps

expression of the completion of the cosmos.[24] Although the descent of souls from the creator is thus, for some, part of a good and ordained process, the *genesis* of souls is not always so positively portrayed. At the other extreme, the fall of the soul into the material world appears as a disaster, a loss of the wings that keep it aloft in the heavenly realm or even an imprisonment of the soul in the body.[25] For some, the body is the tomb of the soul, a prison that binds the soul native to the heavenly realms down in the realm of death and corruption.[26] Mortal life is at best an exile or prison term to be served in expiation for a previous crime; at worst it is a brutal enslavement to the vicious powers that rule the material world and try to keep souls from their true home in the heavens.[27]

The moon as the ruler of *genesis* in a tripartite cosmos can thus be either a positive or a negative entity. In some of the more "optimistic" schools of thought regarding *genesis,* the moon is a beneficent power.[28] The moon serves as an intermediary between the material and higher worlds, not only sending souls down

in the evidence. Festugière (*La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste,* 3:63–96) discusses the range of options, dividing them into "optimistic" and "pessimistic" currents. I explore the cosmological options further in my "Faces of the Moon."

24. This idea stems ultimately from the *Timaeus;* Festugière (*La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste,* 3:73–76) discusses such proponents as Plotinus and Calvenus Taurus. Cf. also Hermetic *Asclepius* 1.8; CH IV.2; Iambl. in Stob. 1.49.40.22–27.

25. Plotinus (IV.8.1) contrasts the negative images of the cave in the *Republic,* the *phroura* in the *Phaedo,* and the loss of wings in the *Phaedrus* with the *Timaeus*'s idea that creation is good. Cf. *Phaedo* 67d, 62b; *Cratylus* 400c; *Republic* 514a–517b, 619d; *Phaedrus* 246c–247c; *Timaeus* 34b. Cf. also Gregory Shaw (*Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995], 24–26) on the Iamblichean reconciliation of the two elements in Platonism. Festugière (*La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste,* 3:77–96) comments on this "pessimistic current."

26. In a Hermetic treatise (*Corpus Hermeticum* VII.2) the body is "the bonds of corruption, the dark cage, the living death, the sentient corpse, the portable tomb" (Gr. τὸν τῆς φθορᾶς δεσμόν, τὸν σκοτεινὸν περίβολον, τὸν ζῶντα θάνατον, τὸν αἰσθητὸν νεκρόν, τὸν περιφόρητον τάφον). Cf. also the planetary *daimons* in CH XVI.13–16, who govern mortals through the instrument of the body and irrational parts of the soul; Origen *Contra Celsum* VIII.53; the Hermetic *Kore Kosmou* in Stob. Herm. XXIII.24 = Stob. I. 49.44. Cf. also the creation of the body in Zosimus *On the Letter Omega* 9–11, where the body is formed from the four elements as a prison for the spiritual man, Phos.

27. In some cosmologies, the soul (or more often Soul or some other primary feminine entity) abandons the heavenly realm through curiosity or some other form of willfulness. In various cosmologies described as "Gnostic," the lowest entity in the heavenly pleroma precipitates the fall of soul into matter by her curiosity about the Highest Father or her desire to create on her own, for example, Sophia in the Valentinian cosmologies described by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* I.2.2–4) and Hippolytus (*Ref.* V.25). Cf. also the Letter of Peter to Philip in NHC VIII,2.135:10–28. In the Hermetic *Poimandres,* the male principle, the Anthropos, ventures from curiosity beyond the celestial sphere and beholds his own reflection in Physis (CH I.12–14). Through desire for his own divine image, he descends and mingles in love with Physis. In its most extreme form, the soul is depicted as a helpless maiden, who leaves her father's house and is raped and reduced to a life of prostitution in the evil world of matter. Cf. the *Exegesis on the Soul* in NHC II, 6.127.18–129.5.

28. Festugière's terminology of "optimistic" and "pessimistic" should be applied with caution and precision to specific facets of a cosmology, for example, the evaluation of *genesis,* rather than to the

into embodiment but also serving as a conduit for the benefits of the higher worlds to the lower.[29] As Julian comments: "Selene beholds the intelligible, which is higher than the heavens, and adorns with its forms the realm of matter that lies below her, and thus she does away with its savagery and confusion and disorder."[30] In such a cosmology, the moon, as the overseer of *genesis* in the material world, appears as a benevolent figure, spreading the order and beauty of the highest realms into the lowest and darkest reaches of the cosmos. Consequently, deities identified with the moon in such a cosmology, such as Eilithyia, Persephone, and Hekate, display their nurturing and beneficent kourotrophic aspects and downplay the traditional negative associations.[31]

Although cosmological systems such as that of the Chaldaean Oracles concentrate upon the beneficent aspects of the moon and of goddesses such as Hekate, this option requires, as it were, more philosophical legwork to rationalize away the negative traditional aspects of the deity while at the same time making use of the positive aspects of Hekate as intermediary and goddess of magical power.[32] If there is no need to put a positive spin on *genesis,* then Hekate need not have her negative attributes removed. Such is the case in cosmologies where *genesis* and its rulers are negative. If the soul has left the realm of true life to abide in the dark underworld of material, the powers that rule this world can therefore be identified with powers of death and the underworld such as Persephone and Hekate.[33] Some "Gnostic" systems elaborate a whole hierarchy of archons and

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cosmology as a whole. Any logos for living within the cosmos will describe the obstacles to living a happy life as well as provide for ways to get around these obstacles.

29. Johnston discusses how Hekate, as the ruler of the sublunar world in the Chaldaean Oracles, serves as the channel by which the Ideas that whirl forth from the Paternal Intellect in the hypercosmic realm are transmitted throughout the cosmos (Johnston, *Hekate Soteira,* 49–70, 107–8).

30. Julian, *Or.* IV (Hymn to King Helios), 150a: Gr. ἡ Σελήνη τά τε ὑπέρ τὸν οὐρανὸν θεωρεῖ νοητὰ καὶ τὰ ὑφ' ἑαυτὴν κοσμοῦσα τὸν ὕλην τοῖς εἴδεσιν ἀναιρεῖ τὸ θηριῶδες αὐτῆς καὶ ταραχῶδες καὶ ἄτακτον.

31. "Traditional" may be applied in the sense of the ideas and associations passed down in Greek mythical and religious discourse before the time of these cosmologies in the first several centuries C.E. Hekate is *kourotrophos* (the nurturer of the young) already in Hesiod's *Theogony* (411–51). Erwin Rohde (*Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality Among the Greeks,* trans. W. B. Hillis [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925]) has a characteristically copious note listing appearances of Hekate *kourotrophos,* 322 n. 91; for a discussion of Hekate's kourotrophic roles, see Sarah Iles Johnston, *The Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 212–15. For Persephone as a *kourotrophos,* especially in southern Italy, see Theodora Hadzisteliou Price, *Kourotrophos: Cults and Representations of the Greek Nursing Deities* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 175.

32. Johnston discusses the strategies by which the traditional negative aspects of Hekate were separated from the goddess and assigned to Physis, leaving Hekate's traditional roles as intermediary (Johnston, *Hekate Soteira,* 136–42).

33. The material realm is thus identified, in these cosmologies, with the underworld, the realm of the dead. To be in the body is to be dead; that is, life in the body is death, in contrast to the real life

powers that conspire to keep the soul in the ignorance of the material world, drawing on malevolent figures from a variety of religious traditions.[34] Other cosmologies simply emphasize the darker aspects of traditional Greek mythic deities such as Persephone, dark queen of the underworld, and Hekate, mistress of *daimones* and keeper of the keys of hell. Adopting traditional attributes of such deities, the mistress of *genesis* becomes the ruler of the dark world of the tomb of the body, who leads mortals astray with her *daimones,* phantoms of sensual desire and deceit who distract the soul from understanding its true nature.[35] Interpreted within such a cosmological framework, Persephone and Hekate are fitting deities for the position of the ruler of the material world, the power that keeps souls locked in the shadowy world of matter.

THE FACE OF THE MOON

The moon, in a cosmology that takes such a negative view of *genesis,* can become a threatening presence, a powerful force for harm. The face of the full moon is associated with terror and madness, the gorgon's head the sight of which can kill or petrify.[36] The moon is the image of Physis, the personification of the material world, and theurgists are warned not to invoke the image of Physis or to look upon her.[37] She is the mother of the *daimones* that inhabit the material world, the evil spirits who work harm upon the human race.[38] Looking upon the moon or calling on her name brings the powers of *genesis,* the forces that bind the soul into

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of the soul in realms above. Such an equation of the material world with the underworld starts perhaps as early as Empedocles (ca. 492–432 B.C.E.) and becomes a common trope.

34. E.g., *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1.59:26) or the *Pistis Sophia* (chaps. 136–37), both of which elaborate a system of planetary archons in addition to other powers. Origen (*Contra Celsum* VI.30–31) provides the clearest picture of ascent past such a collection of planetary archons. Cf. *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII, 1) for an evil Nature and her brood of demons.

35. The hounds of Hekate, Porphyry says, are evil *daimones* (Gr. πονηροὶ δαίμονες), hostile spirits who lead mortals astray (Porphyry ap Eusebius Prep. Ev. 4, 23, 7–8).

36. Cf. Plutarch *De facie* 944c 29.6: Gr. ἐκφοβεῖ δ' αὐτὰς καὶ τὸ καλοῦμενον πρόσωπον ὅταν ἐγγὺς γένωνται βλοσυρόν τι καὶ φρικῶδες ὁρώμενον. Clement Alexandri Stromata v.49: Gr. γοργόνιον τὴν σελήνην διὰ τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ πρόσωπον. Lewy (*Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy,* 271–72) compares with these supposed dangers the custom of averting the eyes when worshiping Hekate, the sources for which can again be found in one of Rohde's notes (*Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief,* 325 n. 104).

37. *Chaldaean Oracles* 101 = Psellus *Patrologia Graeca* 122, 1136 c12: "Do not invoke the self-manifesting image of Physis" (Gr. μὴ φύσεως καλέσῃς αὐτοπτον ἄγαλμα). Proclus *In Remp.* II.133.15–17 claims that the image (Gr. ἄγαλμα) of Physis is the Moon; CO 102 = Proclus *Theol. Plat.* 317.29 warns "Do not look at Physis! For her name is like Fate" (Gr. Μὴ φύσιν ἐμβλέψῃς. εἱμαρμένον οὔνομα τῆσδε).

38. Psellus (*Patrologia Graeca* 122, 1137a1–10) describes the epiphany of Physis as preceded by deceptive *daimones.* Synesius *Hymn 5* (2) 52–53 describes Physis as mother of *daimones.* Cf. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira,* 139–41.

its body. The moon, is seen not as a helpful intermediary, a necessary step on the way up through the heavens, but as a dangerous power that must be avoided, bypassed with an appeal to beneficent powers of the higher realms, to prevent her from keeping the soul in the dark realm of matter. As the ruler of *genesis,* the moon is a power whose influence is dangerous and hostile to the soul that is trying to escape from the shackles of fate that bind it to the material world.[39]

Although the Mithras Liturgy itself does not provide such a picture of the malevolent moon goddess, because of the magician's careful precautions against her influence, other parts of the same Great Paris Magical Papyrus from which the Mithras Liturgy comes offer just such a picture. While we should not assume a consistent cosmology throughout the whole papyrus, the organization of the spells in the papyrus indicates that the redactor selected and arranged spells to fit within certain cosmological assumptions.

Several other spells in the papyrus invoke the moon under the names of Selene, Persephone, Hekate, and Brimo, listing epithets that stress her malevolent power:

> Hail, Holy Light, ruler of Tartaros, who strike with rays; hail, Holy Beam, who whirl up out of darkness and subvert all things with aimless plans . . . awesome destiny is ever subject to you . . . e'er with sorrows fresh, wolf-formed, denounced as infamous, destructive, quick, grim-eyed, shrill-screaming.
>
> Or:
>
> You whose womb is decked out with the scales of creeping things, with pois'nous rows of serpents down the back, bound down your back with horrifying chains. . . . O you who bring death and destruction, and who feast on hearts, flesh-eater, who devour those dead untimely, and you who make grief resound and spread madness.[40]

While many of the epithets are traditional descriptions of Hekate or Persephone, some seem particularly suited to the moon as the ruler of *genesis* and the material world: "Mistress of night and chthonic realms, holy, black-clad, 'round whom

39. Cf. the magician's complaints of the present bitter and pressing Necessity in *PGM* IV.525 and 605: "the present bitter and relentless necessity which is pressing down upon me" and "on account of the pressing and bitter and inexorable necessity" (Gr. τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν καὶ κατεπείγουσάν με πικρὰν ἀνάγκην ἀχρεοκόπητον and ἕνεκα τῆς κατεπειγούσης καὶ πικρᾶς καὶ ἀπαραιτήτου ἀνάγκης).

40. *PGM* IV. 2241–45, 2246, 2276–78, 2802–6, 2865–69: Gr. χαῖρε, ἱερὸν φῶς, ταρταροῦχε, φωτοπλήξ, χαῖρε, ἱερὰ αὐγὴ ἐκ σκότους εἰλημμένη, ἀναστατοῦσα πάντα βουλαῖς ἀστόχοις . . . φρικτῆς Ἀνάγκης πάντοτέ σοι ὑπερστρωμένης . . . νεοπενθής, λυκώ, στηλῖτι, οὐλοή, ἀκρία, χαροπή, ὀξυβόη. . . . ἡ νηδὺν φολίσιν πεπυκασμένη ἑρπυστήρων, ἰοβόλοις ταρσοῖσιν κατωμαδίοισι δρακόντων, σφιγγομένη κατὰ νῶτα παλαμναίοις ὑπὸ δεσμοῖς. . . . αἱμοπότι, θανατηγέ, φθορηγενές, καρδιόδαιτε, σαρκοφάγε καὶ ἀωροβόρε, καπετόκτυπε, οἰστροπλάνεια.

the star-traversing nature of the world revolves whene'er you wax too great. You have established every worldly thing, for you engendered everything on earth and from the sea and every race in turn of winged birds who seek their nests again, Mother of all."[41] The ruler of the darkened realm of earth is the Mistress of Genesis, who binds all mortal creatures with her chains.

In all these spells to the moon, the magician invokes the moon to help him in a violent act. Either the spell stirs up her anger against someone, inciting her to violent revenge, or it is a violent "love charm," in which the victim is compelled to go immediately to the magician or suffer excruciating torments.[42] These spells involve an element of coercion of the hostile goddess to turn her power against another, as well as an element of danger should the magician himself become the target of her wrath. As one spell notes: "[T]he goddess is accustomed to make airborne those who perform this rite unprotected by a charm and to hurl them from aloft down to the ground."[43]

Sun and Moon Sections of the Great Paris Magical Papyrus

In the Great Paris Magical Papyrus, the spells that invoke the power of the moon reinforce the idea that, in the cosmology of the redactor who compiled the papyrus, the moon was a dangerous and hostile entity, who might be coerced or deceived into directing her violence at others. Such a power is distinguished by the redactor from the other cosmic ruler to whom prayers are addressed in several spells in the papyrus, the sun. The spells that invoke the moon are grouped together in the later part of the papyrus, whereas the spells that invoke the sun, including the Mithras Liturgy, are all in the earlier part of the papyrus. The organization of the Great Paris Magical Papyrus has received little comment from scholars, although some general groupings by the purpose of the spell have been noted.[44] Careful attention to the groupings of spells, however, can reveal some of the cosmological presuppositions of the magician selecting and arranging them.

41. *PGM* IV.2550–56: Gr. νυχία, χθονία, ἁγία, μελανείμων, ἥν ἀνακυκλείται κόσμου φύσις ἀστερόφοιτος, ἡνίκ' ἄγαν αὔξῃς. οὐ τὰ κοσμικὰ πάντα τέθεικας· γεννᾷς γὰρ οὐ πάντα ἐπὶ χθονὸς ἠδ' ἀπὸ πόντου καὶ πτηνῶν δ' ἑηῆς παντοῖα γένη παλίνεδρα, παγγεννήτειρα.

42. Cf. the so-called "slander spells" *PGM* IV.2241–358, 2441–621, 2622–707; charms of attraction 1390–495, 2441–621, 2708–84, 2943–66. On these agoge spells, see Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 41 ff., 133–46.

43. *PGM* IV.2507–9: Gr. εἴωθεν γὰρ ἡ θεὸς τοὺς ἀφυλακτεριαστοὺς τοῦτο πρὰσσοντας ἀεροφερεῖς ποιεῖν καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕψους ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ῥίψαι. Cf. 2627: as a result, the magician is warned not to perform such spells too often, 2506, 2569.

44. Cf. the listings of the spells in the papyrus by Brashear, "Greek Magical Papyri," 3497–98, and Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation,* xi–xii. Brashear also has an index of spell types

The papyrus begins with a few miscellaneous spells (lines 1–87), followed by a large section in which most of the spells are addressed to the sun (lines 88–1227).[45] A section in the middle (lines 1227–2240) contains a mixture of spells to various powers (Christ, Aphrodite, the constellations of the Bears, Eros), as well as two spells invoking Helios and one that invokes the chthonic powers (although not in lunar form). A number of spells follow that do invoke the moon (lines 2240–890), and the papyrus concludes with another miscellany of short spells (lines 2891–3274). While these divisions are by no means exact, the redactor does make a clear division of "sun spells" and "moon spells" in the papyrus. Although this magician feels free to draw upon the resources of a number of religious traditions, we can perhaps get a picture of his cosmological ideas from his selection and organization of spells within the papyrus. The sun is the supreme heavenly power, beneficent and connected specifically with special knowledge.[46] The moon, on the other hand, is a hostile power connected with sex, death, and the underworld, far from the beneficent intermediary and helper of the sun that appears in other cosmological systems. Such a depiction of the moon reveals a pessimistic view of the material world and the mortal condition, although the magician also sees opportunities to manipulate the constraints of fate, either by appeal to the beneficent powers of the higher realms or with spells that coerce or deceive the hostile powers of the sublunar world.

Ritual Preparations at the Seizure of the Moon

Some spells invoking the dangerous power of the moon must be performed at moonrise, when the moon begins to influence the world below; another dangerous spell for summoning the spirits of the dead must be performed under the light

("Greek Magical Papyri," 3499–505). Smith ("Hymn to the Moon," 643–45) makes a few comments on the sections of the papyrus that concern the purpose of the spells.

45. The spell in 296–466 is a curious exception to the division, since it contains a spell of attraction that invokes the chthonic deities. However, the prayer that is attached to the procedures is a hymn addressed to Helios, entreating him to mollify the *daimon* who performs the attraction and claiming that Helios has enabled mankind to understand the threads of Fate so that such magic may be performed. I would suggest that the redactor classified this spell as a "sun" spell because of the hymn to Helios. Despite the chthonic nature of the spell, moreover, the moon is not invoked, nor must the spell be performed in the presence of the moon. Instead, the hymn is sung at the setting sun.

46. *PGM* IV.88–153 uses a boy medium to find out about a lover; 154–285 and 930–50 are for lecanomancy; 950–1115 is for lychnomancy; 1115–66 and 1167–226 (as well as 1275–308, which is primarily a Bear spell) are all-purpose, powerful spells; 296–466 and 1928–2125 both involve summoning spirits of the dead, but the sun is invoked in both cases to ensure that the spirit is "gentle, gracious, and pondering no hostile thoughts towards me" (Gr. πραύν, μειλίχιον μηδ' ἀντία μοι φρονέοντα) (451, cf. 1974–75).

of the full moon.[47] By contrast, all the magician's preparations for the ascent in the Mithras Liturgy must take place when the moon is absent from the sky. Beginning at the time of the seizure of the moon, when the moon exerts least influence over the process, the magician prepares the ointment by infusing a vessel of high-quality rose oil with a specially prepared sun-scarab beetle. The ointment is further filled with the power of the sun by the recitation of a magic formula over the vessel for seven days at the time of day when the sun is in midheaven. The magic ink for the formula must also be prepared when the moon is absent from the sky, at the conjunction of the sun and moon (again, the new moon) that occurs in the sign of the lion, that is, Leo, the astrological house of the sun.[48] In each case, the ritual preparation must take place when the influence of the moon is least powerful and when the sun's influence is present.[49] Whereas spells that manipulate the dangerous power of the moon often require the moon's presence in the sky, the

47. *PGM* IV.2441–621, 3125–71, are spells to be performed at moonrise. Cf. IV.52–85, where the magician must hurry home to prevent the hostile spirit from locking him out. Although the spirit is not explicitly a spirit of the dead, the ritual of summoning it with the leftover morsels of food resembles a spell in the papyrus (IV.1390–495) in which morsels are explicitly left for spirits of the dead who have died violently. Another spell that requires the full moon is the agoge spell in IV.2708–84, which must be performed on the thirteenth or fourteenth of the month, at the full moon.

48. *PGM* IV.779–88:

"Having obtained the above-mentioned herb kentritis, at the conjunction [of the sun and moon] occurring in the Lion, take the juice and, after mixing it with honey and myrrh, write on a leaf of the persea tree the eight-lettered name, as given below. And having kept yourself pure for 3 days in advance, come at morning to face the sunrise; lick off the leaf while you show it to the sun, and then he [the sun god] will listen to you attentively. Begin to prepare on the new moon in the Lion, according to the god's [reckoning]." (Gr. βαστάξας κεντρῖτιν τὴν προκειμένην βοτάνην τῇ συνόδῳ τῇ γενομένῃ λέοντι ἄρον τὸν χυλὸν καὶ μίξας μέλιτι καὶ ζμύρνῃ γράψον ἐπὶ φύλλου περσέας τὸ ὀκτογράμματον ὄνομα, ὡς ὑπόκειται, καὶ πρὸ γ' ἡμερῶν ἁγνεύσας ἐλθὲ πρωίας πρὸς ἀνατολὰς, ἀπόλειχε τὸ φύλλον δεικνύων ἡλίῳ, καὶ οὕτως ἐπακούσεταί τελείως. ἄρχου δὲ αὐτὸν τελεῖν τῇ ἐν λέοντι κατὰ θεὸν νουμηνίᾳ.) Note that the oil is prepared at the time of a new moon and then stored for later use at the specific time of the new moon in the Lion. The magician, having picked the kentritis, keeps pure for three days before the new moon, then begins the procedure by mixing the ink, writing the formula, and licking it off.

49. Only when the ritual is altered by a later practitioner does this timing shift. In a section of instructions clearly added later, the magician is instructed by the god to throw away the ointment made at the time special to Mithraists and to make use of an entirely different ritual scarab prepared at the full moon (*PGM* IV.792–98). On the revisions of the Mithras Liturgy, see Morton Smith, "Transformation by Burial (1 Cor. 15.35–49; Rom. 6.3–5 and 8.9–11)," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 52 (1983): 109–10. The magician who revised the ritual preparations need not have had any understanding of the cosmological implications of the timing, either its specifically Mithraic associations or even the general connection of the moon with genesis. Nor need the redactor who compiled all the spells into the Great Paris Magical Papyrus have taken the revisions into account when organizing the spell within the papyrus. For the redactor, the appeal to the powers of the sun and the absence of the moon from the ascent would certainly have been sufficient to place it within the section of spells that appeal to the beneficient power of the sun, regardless of any inconsistency created by the revised preparations.

Mithras Liturgy, which is to free the magician from the chains of fate, requires the moon's absence.

This timing for the ritual preparations may be an important instance of genuinely Mithraic elements in the Mithras Liturgy, since the conjunction of the sun and moon with the sun in the sign of Leo had special significance for the Mithraists as the time of Mithras's slaying of the bull. As Roger Beck has argued, the elements in the Mithraic tauroctony provide a picture of the heavens, with the animals representing various constellations (the scorpion is Scorpio, the snake is Hydra, the dog is Canis Minor, etc.) and with the bull and Mithras depicting the moon and the sun—specifically, the sun in its astrological house of Leo.[50] The Unconquered Sun slaying the lunar bull, Beck argues moreover, is linked to the processes of *genesis* and *apogenesis,* of the descent and ascent of souls.[51] The ritual preparations for the Mithras Liturgy, then, are prescribed for the time that is most appropriate to the Mithraic bull-slaying, when Mithras as the power of *apogenesis* overcomes the power of *genesis* in the form of the lunar bull.

This correspondence suggests that the spell was originally composed by someone who had some understanding of Mithraic ideas about the sun and moon. Indeed, in contrast to Franz Cumont's famous claim that the Mithras Liturgy is neither Mithraic nor a liturgy, scholars have identified a number of genuinely Mithraic features in the cosmology of the Mithras Liturgy. The peculiar doubling of the sun-gods in the ascent not only appears in Platonic contexts but is a standard feature of Mithraism, where Sol, the sun, appears separately from Mithras Sol Invictus.[52] Mithras as the ruler of the celestial pole, turning the heavens by means of the Bear constellations in the form of a bull's shoulder, appears not only in the central scene of the Mithras Liturgy[53] but in a variety of Mithraic monuments. The positioning of the Great Bear on the ceiling of the Ponza mithraeum, as Beck has argued, shows that at least some Mithraic groups made the connection between the Great Bear (whose Egyptian name, Plutarch tells us, was "the bull's shoulder") and Mithras, for Mithras is depicted with the bull's shoulder in

50. "It follows from the composition and logic of the tauroctony as a map of the solar journey that the icon represents Mithras as Sun god in the sign of Leo." Beck, "In the Place of the Lion," 45.

51. "The tauroctony, I have claimed throughout, is a map (and calendar) for genesis and apogenesis, for the descent and ascent of the human soul. It is as the great agents of these processes that Mithras and the bull as Sun and Moon are placed on the map." Ibid., 48.

52. Cf., e.g., Ulansey, "Mithras and the Hypercosmic Sun."

53. *PGM* IV.697–700:

"Youthful, golden-haired, with a white tunic and a golden crown and trousers, and holding in his right hand a golden shoulder of a young bull: This is the Bear which moves and turns heaven around" (Gr. νεῶτερον, χρυσοκόμαν, ἐν χιτῶνι λευκῷ καὶ χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ καὶ ἀναξυρὶσι, κατέχοντα τῇ δεξιᾷ χειρὶ μόσχου ὦμον χρύσεον, ὅς ἐστιν Ἄρκτος ἡ κινοῦσα καὶ ἀντιστρέφουσα τὸν οὐρανον).

the side panels of a number of monuments.[54] Even the idea of ascent on the rays of the sun, as I have argued, fits in with Mithraic ideas of *apogenesis* through the celestial gate of Capricorn, as the Barberini tauroctony's sunbeam indicates.[55] As we can see, then, from his prescription of the ritual preparations for the seizure of the moon in Leo, the magician who composed the Mithras Liturgy did not merely insert the prestigious Mithras as the endpoint of the magician's journey, but these ritual preparations that fit in with Mithraic ideas of the timing of its central religious scene, the tauroctony, are part of a cosmological perspective that partakes of a number of Mithraic elements.[56]

CONCLUSIONS

The absence of the moon in the Mithras Liturgy, then, provides clues to the cosmological perspectives both of the creator of the spell itself and of the redactor who compiled the Great Paris Magical Papyrus. In the cosmologies of other theurgic systems, the powers of *genesis* are a necessary part of the cosmic order, and the moon serves as a helpful intermediary for those seeking contact from the material world to the realms above. In the Mithras Liturgy, by contrast, the ambivalent position of the moon as intermediary in other cosmologies is interpreted in a more negative sense, since this ruler of *genesis* must be absent for the apogenetic ritual to succeed. Although the surviving evidence for Mithraism does not present a par-

54. Cf. Plutarch *De Is.* 359d. "The polar symbol that the god of the *Mithrasliturgie* carries is the *Stierschenkel.* Now the *Stierschenkel* is the Egyptian constellation corresponding to Ursa Major, and it is Ursa Major (its size clearly identifies it as such) that, contrary to proper *astrothesie,* has been placed at the pole and the centre of the Ponza zodiac." Roger Beck, "Interpreting the Ponza Zodiac: II," *JMS* ii.2 (1977): 126. Beck, confirming the hypothesis of Dieterich denied by Cumont, has identified the object that Mithras is holding during the so-called investiture-of-Sol scenes as the shoulder of a bull, rather than a Phrygian cap, as Cumont suggested (Beck, "Interpreting the Ponza Zodiac," 124–27). See also R. L. Gordon and John R. Hinnells, "Some New Photographs of Well-Known Mithraic Monuments," *JMS* II.2 (1978): 213–19, for a discussion of some of the specific monuments on which this motif occurs.

55. Cf. my "Did the Mithraists Inhale?" I build my argument on Beck's analysis of the Barberini monument, where he draws upon Porphyry to explain the positioning of the sunbeam through Capricorn and the torch of Cautes. (Cf. Beck, *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders,* 91–100.)

56. This is not, of course, to suggest that the Mithras Liturgy is, as Dieterich claimed, an adaptation of a real Mithraic ritual. The author of the Mithras Liturgy reveals his familiarity with many of the features of Mithraic cult practice and is likely to have been an initiate. However, he was also a theurgic magician, a religious craftsman in a syncretistic age, who had no qualms about bringing together elements from a variety of sources to achieve his magical, religious, and philosophical ends. Attilio Mastrocinque (*Studi sul Mitraismo [Il Mitraismo e la magia]* [Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, 1998], 119) discusses a variety of ways in which Mithraic elements were put to use in magical material, although he does not see the Mithras Liturgy itself as a particularly valuable source for understanding the interrelation of Mithraic and magical practices.

ticularly negative picture of the moon and *genesis* (apart from the obvious fact that Mithras slays the lunar bull), the redactor of the Great Paris Magical Papyrus found in the Mithras Liturgy a scenario that could be fit within more pessimistic views of the moon and *genesis*. Throughout the papyrus, the moon is a hostile power, trapping souls in *genesis* through hostile *daimones* and the chains of fate. This power can be coerced into assisting in violent magic, but it must be kept as far as possible from an enterprise that aims at *apogenesis*. The magician's preparations and ascent to the great god Mithras, therefore, must take place when the moon is entirely absent from the sky, at the seizure of the moon.

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Index