EPIPHANIES IN SECOND- AND THIRD-CENTURY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE:
DISCOURSE, IDENTITY, AND DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

JASON ROBERT COMBS: Epiphanies in Second- and Third-Century Christian Literature:
Discourse, Identity, and Divine Manifestations.
(Under the direction of Bart D. Ehrman)

This is a study of the early Christian discourse on epiphanies—visible manifestations

of otherworldly beings, including gods, angels, and demons, who communicate or interact

directly with human beings. During the second and third centuries, epiphanies featured

prominently in the literature, letters, inscriptions, and art of the pagan (non-Jewish, non-

Christian) world that Christians inhabited. Yet, compared to their pagan contemporaries,

Christians wrote little about epiphanies. The paucity of evidence in theological treatises has

led scholars to suggest that most Christians in the second and third centuries were not

interested in epiphanies. Nevertheless, when the evidence from theological treatises is

compared with the more numerous accounts from such literature as the apocryphal acts, the

significance of epiphanies becomes clear. Epiphanies were implicated in early Christian

discourse on identity. Focusing on the writings of Tertullian, Athenagoras, and other

apologists as well as on apocryphal acts, gospels, and other narratives, this dissertation

argues that developments in Christian theories and narratives about divine encounters

evolved out of discursive strategies that distinguished between Christian and pagan

epiphanies. For instance, although the most common Christian response to pagan epiphanies

was to declare them demonic, careful analysis of Christian discourse reveals a more

influential strategy. Whereas most pagan authors suggested that gods could be recognized by

comparison to their statues, some Christian authors proposed that demons should be identified by their efforts to encourage the worship of a pagan god. Interpreting epiphanies according to their purpose instead of their images allowed Christians to identify images commonly associated with pagan gods as images of angels or even Christ. In particular, some Christian authors adopted the popular pagan images of the young man or shepherd as manifestations of Christ, while others described Christ appearing in the uniquely Christian images of an apostle, a deacon, or even the cross. The study of each of these images shows how Christians negotiated their relationship with common Greco-Roman practices and traditions often defined as pagan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Pivotal moments in the history of Christianity are punctuated by epiphanies.[1] One of

the most famous epiphanies in Christian history occurred at the beginning of the fourth

century.[2] The emperor Constantine had begun preparations to capture Rome from his fellow

ruler, Maxentius. While on a campaign with his troops, he decided that he should petition the

Christian God for assistance. Then, before he finished his prayer, a sign appeared in the sky.

Constantine looked up and saw above the noonday sun a light that formed the shape of a

cross. And on this cross of light appeared the words, "By this Conquer." Constantine and all

of his troops witnessed this miraculous manifestation, but the emperor was unsure of its

meaning. He contemplated its significance long into the night, until finally he fell asleep.

Then Christ appeared with that same cross of light. He commanded Constantine to fashion an

image of it and to carry that image into battle for protection. Upon waking, Constantine

immediately shared this vision with his friends and consulted people familiar with the

Christian God. When they confirmed Constantine's interpretation of the visions, he

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[1] I focus here on Constantine's vision, but the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus (e.g., 1 Cor 15) and the epiphanic experience of Paul (e.g., Acts 9 and Gal 1) might also be considered pivotal moments. For the purpose of this dissertation, I define "epiphany" as a visible manifestation of the divine often in anthropomorphic form. For more on my definition of epiphany, see below.

[2] The following account is based on Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* 1.27-32. For review of literature on Constantine's vision, see Timothy Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 74-76. On the significance of Constantine's vision and arguments for its authenticity, see recent studies by William V. Harris, "Constantine's Dream," *Klio—Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte* 87 (2005): 488-494; Jan N. Bremmer, "The Vision of Constantine," in *Land of Dreams: Greek and Latin Studies in Honour of A.H.M. Kessels* (eds. A.P.M.H. Lardinois, M.G.M. van der Poel, and V.J.C. Hunink; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 57-79, here 74; Barnes, *Constantine*, 74-80.

communicated the details of the sign to his artisans. The standard they crafted led him to victory against Maxentius and eventually to become the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. Through Constantine's response to this epiphany, Christianity began a new, triumphant chapter in its history. At least, that is how Eusebius, the fourth-century Christian historian and bishop of Caesarea, relates the story in his *Life of Constantine*.[3]

Eusebius's description of Constantine's vision and dream is in many ways uniquely Christian—Christ himself appeared. Yet it is also quite different from epiphanies recorded in the earliest Christian texts; characteristics not paralleled in accounts from the first century include the celestial manifestation of a cross experienced by Constantine and his soldiers, the appearance of Christ accompanied by a cross, and the divine command that Constantine create an image. This study, however, is not about the epiphanies of Constantine or those of the first-century disciples. Rather, this study focuses on the often overlooked epiphanies in between. More precisely, it is a study of the developments in the Christian discourse on epiphanies that would allow for a vision like Constantine's to be interpreted as authentic, meaningful, and identifiably Christian.

This is a study of the early Christian discourse on epiphanies—the various descriptions, theories, and narratives of divine manifestations, including appearances of divine beings in dreams and visions, found in second- and third-century Christian literature.[4] During this period, epiphanies were prominently featured in literature, letters, epigraphy, and art throughout the Greco-Roman world. Theories, narratives, and depictions of epiphanies

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[3] Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* 1.27-32.

[4] On "discourse" and "cultural discourse," see below.

were part of the predominant culture.[5] This was the social world inhabited by Christians. I will argue that in the second and third centuries Christian discourse on epiphanies developed, in part, as a discourse on identity—in particular, through the work to define Christian epiphanies vis-à-vis simultaneously constructed "pagan" epiphanies.[6] I will also show how Christians adapted the Greco-Roman cultural discourse on epiphanies in ways that created new possibilities for describing manifestions of Christ.[7]

Review of Literature

There is a significant gap in scholarship on early Christian epiphanies.[8] Scholars have written numerous studies on epiphanies in first-century Christian literature, as well as on epiphanies in literature from the fourth century and beyond.[9] Yet, to my knowledge, there is currently no major study devoted primarily to the analysis of epiphanies in second- and third-century Christianity. Nevertheless, there are a number of important studies on early Christian

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[5] This is the argument of chapter one.

[6] By "pagan" I mean adherents to any system of beliefs or practices that are not identifiable as Jewish or Christian. I acknowledge that the term "pagan" is anachronistic; see, most recently, Christopher P. Jones, *Between Pagan and Christian* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2014). Yet the term "pagan" is less confusing than "gentiles" or "nations."

[7] In this study I do not presume reified, bounded, and stable identities easily distinguished as pagan and Christian, rather I argue that such identities are continuously constructed and reconstructed through discourse; see below.

[8] E.g., Wiebe includes a chapter on the New Testament and a chapter on the history of Christianity but omits evidence from the second and third centuries; see Phillip H. Wiebe, *Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[9] E.g., the work of Elpidius Pax focuses on understanding epiphanies in the New Testament and especially the writings of Paul; Elpidius Pax, *ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑ: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie* (München: Karl Zink, 1955); see critique in Margaret M. Mitchell, "Epiphanic Evolutions in Earliest Christianity," *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (2004): 183-186. There are relatively few studies that focus on epiphanies of Jesus, angels, or demonic beings from literature outside of the canonical New Testament. Those that do tend to emphasize the period of late ancient Christianity (4th-7th century); e.g., Martine Dulaey, *Le rêve dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1973); David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Ellen Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

dreams, some of which include accounts of epiphanies—in ancient Greek and Latin literature, epiphanies are often treated as a type of "dream."[10] In the history of scholarship on early Christian dreams, there are several developments that form the foundation for my study of epiphanies. These include (1) a shift away from reading dreams as "irrational," (2) recognition that dreams were not limited to "heretical" Christians, (3) awareness of modern psychoanalytic influence on the study of ancient dreams, and (4) the development of a more nuanced cultural-historical method. In order to describe these developments, I will trace their origins from some of the earliest work on ancient Christian dreams.

Scholars of early Christianity in the 19th and early 20th century displayed little interest in dreams. The earliest studies often dismissed dreams as insignificant or associated them with "irrational" pagans and heretics. For instance, Albrecht Oepke, in his entry on "dream" for the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (org. 1954), insisted that there was a "paucity" of significant dreams in early Christianity.[11] He claimed that early Christians were "strongly critical" of dreams, and that dreams were always "peripheral" in the New Testament.[12] He contrasts this enlightened, "rational explanation" of early Christians with the view of pagans: "one of wild and riotous fantasy," whose dream interpretation is "a mixture of fatalism, superstition, and filth."[13] Around the same time that Oepke's article was published, classicists began to study Christian dreams as part of the broader Greco-Roman culture. The pivotal work on this subject was E.R. Dodds' *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, in which he argued that the transformation of the Roman Empire in the fourth

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[10] For more on "epiphany" as a subclass of "dream," see below.

[11] Albrecht Oepke 1967, "ὄναρ." *TDNT* 5:220-238.

[12] Oepke, *TDNT* 5:228.

[13] Oepke, *TDNT* 5:228.

century developed out of the religious experiences of the second and third centuries. These included dreams.[14] Like Oepke, Dodds also considered the belief in divine communication through dreams to be irrational; nevertheless, his approach to studying ancient dreams was groundbreaking. Although psychoanalytic theory shaped his view that certain dreams were caused by "anxiety," Dodds relied primarily on recent anthropological studies on dreams in "primitive societies" to determine his approach.[15] Based on these studies, he argued that "there are [dreams] whose manifest content [...] is determined by a local culture-pattern" and "there are types of dream-structure which depend on a socially transmitted pattern of belief."[16] Since Christians formed part of the ancient Greco-Roman culture, Dodds concluded that "[t]he Christian attitude to dreams was not in principle different [from the pagan]."[17] The significance of Dodds' work cannot be overstated. Dodds' methodological approach, including the proposition that early Christian dreams belonged to the Greco-Roman cultural framework, has influenced every major study on the subject until the present day.

Both Oepke and Dodds were unduly influenced by a perspective on dreams grounded in post-Enlightenment rationality. In the decades that followed, however, scholars began to challenge the connection between dreams and superstition or irrationality, and interest in dreams as part of the early Christian tradition grew. In his *Making of Late Antiquity* (1978),

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[14] E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [org. 1965]). See also Robert C. Smith and John Lounibos, eds., *Pagan and Christian Anxiety: A Response to E.R. Dodds* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[15] See John G. Gager, "Introduction: The Dodds Hypothesis," in *Pagan and Christian Anxiety: A Response to E.R. Dodds* (eds. Robert C. Smith and John Lounibos; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 6. For more recent anthropological approaches, see below.

[16] E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 103.

[17] Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, 46.

Peter Brown accepted Dodds' view on the prominence and importance of dreams in a shared

pagan and Christian culture during the second and third centuries, but he insisted that this

evidence did not demonstrate the decline of rationalism and rise of superstition.[18] An

important critique of both Oepke's and Dodds' perspective on the irrationality of dreams

appears in the first English-language monograph devoted exclusively to the study of

Christian and pagan dreams in late antiquity (1994).[19] In this book, Patricia Cox Miller

describes their view as a "debilitating Cartesianism ... which produces an ancient populace

that is credulous, foolish, intellectually inferior."[20] This "Cartesian frame of reference,"

Miller argues, creates a problematic dualism that positions a rational, orthodox, high culture

over against irrational heresies or "popular" practices.

> One feature of this dualistic model of historical interpretation that has produced
>
> misleading stereotypes regarding dream-literature is its division of thought and
>
> practice into two opposing categories: 'high' literate culture and 'low' vulgar
>
> practice. This model consigns late-antique interest in dreams to the latter category as
>
> something that only disreputable figures like magicians and other 'commoners'
>
> meddled in.[21]

Miller still agrees with Dodds that the ancient Christian cultural imagination is best

understood in its Greco-Roman context, but she insists that Dodds's and Oepke's perspective

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[18] Brown, *Making of Late Antiquity*, 10-11.

[19] Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); see also François Bovon, "Ces chrétiens qui rêvent: L'autorité du rêve dans les premiers siècles du christianisme," in *Geschichte, Tradition, Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (eds. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 636.

[20] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 10.

[21] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 12.

on "rationality" had "misconstrue(d) one of the major languages with which late-ancient people attempted to interpret themselves to themselves."[22] Miller's nuanced approach will be discussed in greater detail below since it forms a foundation for my own methodology. Yet, before discussing Miller further, there are two additional developments in the history of scholarship on early Christian dreams that must be addressed: a new perspective on early Christian heresies and a critique of psychological interpretation.

Before the critiques of Brown and Miller, Dodds' perspective on early Christian dreams met with some resistance—in particular, his notion that most early Christians could be situated equally in the context of paganism and superstition. Some scholars of early Christianity exempted the "orthodox" from irrational perspectives on dreams, attributing such views to "heretics" or to those under the emotional strain of persecution. For instance, Martine Dulaey's 1973 study of dreams in Augustine's works cites Dodds favorably in his introduction.[23] Then, in his chapter on Christian dreams in literature prior to Augustine, he divides the evidence into two main categories: "heresy" and "persecution."[24] Yet, as scholars continued to study early Christian dreams, it became increasingly clear to many that various Christians held positive views on dreams as a form of divine communication. In another study published in the early 1970's, Morton Kelsey surveyed the history of Christian dreams from the first century to the present day in order to "show how important the dream has been in the Christian view of revelation."[25] In 1985, Jacqueline Amat published the first major

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[22] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 11. Miller begins her monograph by mapping the "cultural imagination" of pagan and Christian authors together; the second half of her book is comprised of individual case-studies with each chapter addressing a different pagan or Christian figure.

[23] Dulaey, *Le rêve dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin*, 31.

[24] Dulaey, *Le rêve dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin*, 33-47.

[25] Morton T. Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams* (Minneapolis:

monograph to devote significant research to second- and third-century Christian dreams. She

began her study by declaring that the emphasis on dreams in this period was shared by pagan

and Christian authors alike: "L'Antiquité tardive, tant païenne que chrétienne, accorde aux

songes une attention considérable."[26] Amat's thorough study on dreams and dream theories

in the Latin writings of church fathers, martyrdom accounts, and monastic lives,

demonstrated a rich history of Christian writing on dreams that crossed the imagined

boundaries of heresy and orthodoxy. For instance, Amat argues that Tertullian's views on

dreams reflect trends in Christianity that go beyond the so-called "heresy" of Montanism—a

group often mischaracterized as the only early Christians who cared about dreams.[27] Other

Christians, Amat insists, were interested in dreams and the Montanist movement "n'est que

l'expression chrétienne la plus effrénée."[28] This perspective was reiterated more recently in

an article by François Bovon (1996) on the connection between dreams and authority in early

Christianity.[29] After discussing a dream account from Tertullian, Bovon acknowledges that it

could be considered Montanist, but then continues with this important observation:

> C'est possible, mais elle n'est pas l'exception; elle est plutôt l'expression extrême
>
> d'une tendance générale des chrétiens d'alors: leur Dieu vivant, leur Seigneur élevé
>
> manifeste aujourd'hui sa dilection tant par le message évangélique que par des

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Augsburg, 1991 [org. 1973]), 16; published first as *Dreams: The Dark Speech of Spirit* (1968).

[26] Jacqueline Amat, *Songes et Visions: L'au-delà dans la littérature latine tardive* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), 9.

[27] Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 10.

[28] Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 10.

[29] Bovon, "Ces chrétiens qui rêvent," 631-653.

manifestations extatiques et oniriques, en tout cas inspirées.[30]

Montanists were not the only Christians who believed that God could communicate through dreams.[31] Scholars who study dreams in early Christian literature now widely agree that interest in such phenomena was not limited to so-called "heretics."

This trend in the history of scholarship on early Christian dreams parallels an important development in the broader study of early Christian history. The traditional view of Christian history characterized the "orthodox Church" as a monolith—a single, original, well-defined, and predominant organization against which pagans fought and from which heretics deviated. In the 1930s, however, Walter Bauer convincingly argued that the history of Christian "orthodoxy" was more complicated. In particular, he demonstrated that so-called "heresies" should not be dismissed as unoriginal, hellenized deviations.[32] By the early 1970s, when Bauer's work was translated into English, these general conclusions became widely accepted.[33] During the second and third centuries, what constituted the boundaries of Christian communities and the identities of individual Christians was complex, contested, and ill-defined. This revolutionary rethinking of the relationship between orthodoxy and heresy likely contributed to the shift in the study of Christian dreams. As we have seen, since

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[30] Bovon, "Ces chrétiens qui rêvent," 645. "Ils ont cru en un Dieu vivant, attesté par les Écritures et manifesté en Jésus-Christ, Dieu qui continue à communiquer avec son peuple;" Bovon, "Ces chrétiens qui rêvent," 649.

[31] On misperceptions of Montanism, see Antti Marjanen, "Montanism: Egalitarian Ecstatic 'New Prophecy'," in *Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics"* (eds. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 185-212. On problems with attributing dream-accounts to Montanism, see Chapter 2.

[32] Bauer argued that the so-called heresies were often earlier and more prominent than the tradition later called "orthodox." Walter Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie; Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1934); Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (eds. Robert Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; trans. R.K.E. al; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

[33] See Georg Strecker and Robert Kraft, "Appendix 2: Reception of the Book," in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity [[by Walter Bauer]]* (eds. Robert Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 268-316; Daniel Harrington, "The Reception of Walter Bauer's *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* During the Last Decade," *HTR* 73 (1980): 289-98.

the 1970s, scholars have increasingly acknowledged that dreams played a role within the broader context of early Christianity, even in texts traditionally identified as "orthodox." Although early Christian authors held diverse views on epiphanies and other dreams, these phenomena were not constrained by those boundaries forcefully promoted in ancient heresiologies and unintentionally perpetuated in some modern scholarship.

Before Bauer's work became influential, the growing popularity of psychological explanations for dreams already persuaded some scholars that dreams could have value for Christians.[34] For instance, Morton Kelsey begins his survey of dreams Western Christianity explaining how he was motivated by his study of Jungian psychology.[35] Yet certain preconceptions inherent in the Western European psychology of dreams have unduly influenced the study of dreams in antiquity. Dodds attributed the dreams of second- and third-century pagans and Christians in part to the "material and ... moral insecurity" of the age—i.e., only psychological "anxiety" could have caused such dreams.[36] Amat's dependence on the psychology of dreams is clear from the first paragraph of her study: "On découvre ainsi une catégorie d'expériences privilégiées par la psychologie ou la parapsychologie moderne."[37] Even Miller's otherwise excellent study occasionally exhibits the influence of modern psychological assumptions about dreams.[38] For instance, she agrees

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[34] For many post-enlightenment thinkers, psychology redeemed dreams—for one familiar with the work of Freud or Jung, dreams had a logic that could be interpreted scientifically. "Freud's use of the dream provided a cultural solution to a Western dilemma;" Susan Parman, *Dream and Culture: An Anthropological Study of the Western Intellectual Tradition* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 15.

[35] Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 2-16; see above.

[36] Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, 3. See critiques in Brown, *Making of Late Antiquity*, 10-11; and Gager, "The Dodds Hypothesis," 6.

[37] Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 9. Although Amat's interest is primarily "la mentalité religieuse du temps," her interpretation of texts borrows "des principes de la Formgeschichte;" Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 11-12.

with Amat that dreams featuring the punishment of the dreamer reflect "subconscious remorse."[39]

The uncritical application of modern Western psychology to ancient dreams is problematic. It imposes a universality on the human subconscious that can cause us to overlook important cultural factors. A dream that appears strange by modern Western standards need not have arisen out of "anxiety." As early as 1978, Peter Brown had already alluded to this problem in his critical response to Dodds:

> A study of the religious evolution of Late Antiquity that consists largely in the search
> for areas of high emotional temperature is misconceived. For if the invisible world
> was as real as the visible, then it could be taken for granted in the same way—no
> greater emotional pressure was required to relate to a god than to a neighbor.[40]

More recently, Burkhard Freiherr von Dörnberg has also criticized the use of modern psychological theories in the study of early Christian dreams. Based on the fact that traditional psychoanalytic dream interpretation requires knowledge of both the dreamer's past and present life-experiences and that the historian has access to neither, Dörnberg argues that the use of such methods obscures the "horizon of the past:"

> Gerade angesichts der modernen psychologischen, psychoanalytischen und
> tiefenpsychologischen Theorien und ihrer Aufnahme in die historische Forschung ...

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[38] Sometimes Miller employs psychological theory as a literary method for "reading against the grain;" see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 165. Such deliberate uses of psychology are not problematic.

[39] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 66; citing Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 100.

[40] Brown, *Making of Late Antiquity*, 10. Lane Fox also alludes to the problem with employing modern psychology: "Here, too, we touch on patterns of psychology which our own modern case histories may not do much to illuminate;" Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 117; cited in Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 30, n.81. On the problem of reading ancient epiphanies in light of modern psychology, see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 112.

besteht bei der Auswertung der antiken Texte die Gefahr, dass der Horizont der

Vergangenheit von den Anliegen der Gegenwart überlagert wird.[41]

His monograph, which largely replicates the study of Amat, positions itself as a corrective to

the psychological interpretations of past scholars; his solution is to engage in a more

thoroughgoing historical-critical interpretation of each early Christian dream-text. Yet even

von Dörnberg falls into the trap of applying modern Western notions of the dream to ancient

texts. For instance, in determining the scope of his study, Dörnberg chooses to focus only on

accounts that fit a modern definition of "dream" found in a "Lexikon der Psychologie."[42]

The problem with applying the categories and explanations of modern Western

psychology to ancient texts is best summarized in two recent anthropological studies on

dreams. Vincent Crapanzano, in an article that summarizes his work on the cultural diversity

of dreams, identifies the following trend in Euro-American scholarship:

[W]e tend to naturalize [the dream] in psychological terms, ignoring the fact that the

'psychological' is itself an historically specific cultural construction. This

naturalization of the dream has considerable rhetorical weight. It encourages, among

other things, a view of the universality of the dream, minimizing its cultural specific

construction, the possible effect of that construction on the 'dream experience', and

its contextual isolation and hypostatization. The 'dream' becomes a meta-discursive

category of universal presumption for the discussion—description, interpretation, and

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[41] Dörnberg, Burkhard von, *Traum und Traumdeutung in der Alten Kirche: die westliche Tradition bis Augustin* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 22.

[42] "Eindeutig als Traum zu klassifizieren sind alle Berichte, die entweder in der Wortwahl (Wortstamm somn-) eindeutig sind oder deren Kontext deutlich zu erkennen gibt, dass das geschilderte Geschehen im Schlaf stattfindet;" Dörnberg, Burkhard von, *Traum und Traumdeutung in der Alten Kirche*, 409; see also 409, n.56. On the problem of limiting the study of ancient dreams to the condition of sleep, see below.

analysis—of the dream.[43]

The "dream" is a cultural category, and not all cultures (ancient or modern) understand the dream to be rooted in the psyche or a state of unconsciousness. Amira Mittermaier introduces her study on dreams in modern-day Egypt by questioning the predominance of this Western psychological perspective:

> I want to call into question the presumption that all dreams are inherently linked to the psyche. [...] The "unconscious" is itself historically constituted, and secular scientific worldviews more generally, while claiming to offer unmediated access to "nature," are built on particular assumptions and sustained by particular power relations. When insisting on locating the dream's origin inside the dreamer, one overlooks the possibility of other subjectivities, other dreams, and other imaginations.[44]

Rather than postulate the psychological causes of early Christian dreams, I focus on the social and cultural functions of dreams in early Christian texts—how they are theorized, narrated, interpreted, and employed. In other words, I follow the recommendation of Mittermaier and "pay closer attention to the very processes through which dreamers and interpreters endow dreams with meaning."[45] To a certain degree, this builds on a scholarly trend that began with Dodds. Before further describing my methodology, therefore, it will be useful to review this trend—i.e., the study of early Christian dreams within their Greco-

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[43] Vincent Crapanzano, "The Betwixt and Between of the Dream," in *Hundert Jahre "Die Traumdeutung:" kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven in der Traumforschung* (ed. Burkhard Schnepel; Studien zur Kulturkunde Köln: Koppe, 2001), 233.

[44] Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams that Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 15.

[45] Mittermaier, *Dreams that Matter*, 15.

Roman cultural context—and how it developed in studies that came after Dodds.

Comparative studies of the literary and cultural contexts of Christian and pagan dreams originally focused on similarities. Dodds showed how second- and third-century Christian dreams fit within the broader Greco-Roman culture. The importance of situating Christian dreams within that context was reaffirmed by John S. Hanson (1980). Hanson demonstrated that narratives about dreams, what he called the "dream-vision" report, could be described as a literary form that was shared by Jews, Christians, and pagans alike.[46] Hanson's arguments were developed further by Klaus Berger (1992), who showed that Christian dream-accounts paralleled in form those from Plutarch's *Lives*.[47] Beyond the formal characteristics of dream-narratives, other scholars identified within pagan and Christian literature similar functions, interpretations, and theories for dreams. Miller, in her monograph on dreams in late antiquity, describes this as a shared cultural "imagination." "Dreaming," Miller explains, "[was] one of the techniques of the care of the self that was a cultural preoccupation not aligned with particular religious persuasions."[48] More recent studies have reaffirmed this conclusion that the narrations and functions of early Christian dreams are best understood as part of a broader Greco-Roman cultural phenomenon.[49]

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[46] John S. Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," *ANRW* 23.2:1395-1427.

[47] Klaus Berger, "Visionsberichte: Formgeschichtliche Bemerkungen über pagane hellenistische Texte und ihre frühchristlichen Analogien," in *Studien und Texte zur Formgeschichte* (eds. Klaus Berger, François Vouga, Michael Wolter, and Dieter Zeller; Tübingen; Basel: A. Francke Verlag, 1992), 177-225.

[48] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 130. Similar conclusions were reached by Robin Lane Fox. Although Lane Fox's study is not devoted exclusively to dreams, it includes two chapters that address the subject; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 102-167, 700-11.

[49] See Frenschkowski, Marco, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie 1: Grundlagen des spätantiken und frühchristlichen Offenbarungsglaubens* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995); Marco Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie 2: Die verborgene Epiphanie in Spätantike und frühem Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997); who focuses primarily on the first centuries BCE and CE. Consider the studies in these edited volumes: Emma Scioli and Christine Walde, eds., *Sub Imagine Somni: Nighttime Phenomena in Greco-Roman Culture* (Testi e studi di cultura

Some scholars, while agreeing that early Christian dreams are best situated within their Greco-Roman cultural context, have emphasized the differences between Christians and their pagan counterparts. It is this scholarship that directly addresses the specific topic of epiphanies in second- and third-century Christian literature. In an important study comparing paganism and Christianity in the pre-Constantinian period, Robin Lane Fox (1987) identifies epiphanies as a significant cultural difference.[50] In a cheeky explanation for why paganism might have been preferable to Christianity, Lane Fox reasons:

> Pagans kept nightly company with their gods and those who sported in dreams with
> Aphrodite needed no new route to heaven. Among pagans, these "visits" were freely
> enjoyed, and there was no restraining orthodoxy, no priestly authority which
> restricted the plain man's access to a nightly contact with the gods.[51]

Lane Fox implies that key differences between the religious practices of pagans and Christians obstructed the early Christian experience of epiphanies.[52] In addition to the restrictive influence of orthodoxy and authority, Lane Fox proposed that another factor contributed to a relative absence of epiphanies among pre-Constantinian Christians:

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classica 46; Pisa: ETS, 2010); Bart J. Koet, ed., *Dreams as Divine Communication in Christianity: From Hermas to Aquinas* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2012); and Jeffrey B. Pettis, ed., *Seeing the God: Ways of Envisioning the Divine in Ancient Mediterranean Religion* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013). See also the articles in the recent special editions of the *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (2004) and *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 15 (2014) devoted to the subject of dreams and epiphanies in Greco-Roman antiquity.

[50] He devotes two full chapters to the subject of dreams and related phenomena in paganism and Christianity, and emphasizes the role of epiphanies; see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 102–167, 375-102–167, 418. By contrast, Miller acknowledges the pervasiveness of epiphanies in the Greco-Roman world during the second and third centuries, but says little about their potential role among early Christians; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 51. In her brief comments on Christian epiphany-dreams, she suggests that they primarily served a therapeutic role—"tropes for an interior dialogue in which heartfelt anxieties are explored;" Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 63.

[51] Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 165.

[52] Yet he suggests that epiphanies may have had a more prominent place among the heretical than the "orthodox;" e.g., Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 398-400.

"Christian dreaming had a quality of its own. Unlike a pagan's, it lacked the ubiquitous aid of art."[53] Other scholars have made similar claims. Consider Stroumsa's explanation for the ostensible absence of epiphanies in early Christian texts: "Early Christian attitudes reflected an ethos vastly different from the traditional ethos of the Hellenistic world. Up to the fourth century, Christianity remained essentially an aniconic religion, which did not favor visions of the Deity."[54] In a more recent study on dreams in the Greco-Roman world, a study that focuses on epiphanies, William Harris agreed that epiphanies held little significance for most Christians before Constantine.[55] Based on what he sees as a lack of evidence, especially among the writings of early Church Fathers, he concludes that epiphanies were not prominent in Christianity during the second and third centuries: "neither god the father nor, more surprisingly perhaps, Jesus appeared very often."[56] In the chapter on "Epiphany" from the new *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, Verity Platt reiterates many of the same ideas as Lane Fox, Stroumsa, and Harris. Platt first cautions, "we must be wary of applying Christian language, such as Paul's notion of a 'face-to-face' encounter with God at 1 Corinthians 13.12, to a phenomenon that is grounded in very different concepts of deity and

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[53] Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 392. The role of art in pagan and Christian epiphanies will be addressed later; here I wish only to show a trend in scholarship that describes epiphanies as relatively insignificant for second- and third-century Christians.

[54] Guy G. Stroumsa, "Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse," in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (eds. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 193.

[55] William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 70. LeGoff likewise identifies the fourth century as the time when Christians began to deal with dreams; Jacques Le Goff, "Christianity and Dreams (Second to Seventh Century)," in *The Medieval Imagination* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 193; cf. Jacques Le Goff, "Le christianisme et les rêves (IIe-VIIe siècles)," in *I sogni nel medioevo* (ed. T. Gregory; Rome: 1985), 171-218.

[56] Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 70. In his otherwise excellent study, Harris addresses second- and third-century Christian dreams in less than two pages. Yet he identifies trends within second- and third-century Christianity that allowed for Christian epiphanies to gain prominence by the time of Constantine; see Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 69-71.

forms of religious practice."[57] Then, in the next sentence, she identifies the visual nature of Greek epiphanies as one of the primary differences: "Most importantly, Greek epiphany [in contrast to Christian epiphany] emerges from the manifold complexities of polytheism, whereby the ability to visualize, identify, and represent divine forms is fundamental."[58] While I agree that there are differences in how pagan and Christian authors discuss and narrate epiphanies in this period, I will argue that such visible manifestations of the divine played an important role in second- and third-century Christian discourse.

Methodology

In addition to building on these developments from the history of scholarship on dreams, my approach to epiphanies is influenced by recent trends in the study of early Christianity discourse and by current anthropological studies on dreams. I study early Christian discourse on epiphanies as a discourse on identity.[59] For the purpose of this dissertation, I treat identity as fluid, as a shifting network of associations and dissociations constituted and reconstituted through discourse.[60] I do not, therefore, attempt to describe an identity, but to trace the discourses Christian authors employed in their struggles to create or

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[57] Verity Platt, "Epiphany," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion* (eds. Esther Eidinow and Julia Kindt; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 493; based, in part, on Mitchell, "Epiphanic Evolutions in Earliest Christianity," 183-204.

[58] Platt, "Epiphany," 493.

[59] I prefer the term "discourse" or "cultural discourse" over "culture" because of the predominantly textual nature of my evidence. I prefer "cultural discourse" over "literary motif" because the trends I study often cross the boundaries of literary genre and are sometimes attested outside of literature, in epigraphy or art.

[60] For Foucault, "Discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined. It is a space of exteriority in which a network of distinct sites is deployed;" Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (trans. A.M.S. Smith; New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 60. Foucault preferred the terms "subject" or "subjectivity" because "identity" implies stability and impermeability. I prefer the term "identity" because the Christian texts included in this study presume or attempt to construct "stable" community boundaries.

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maintain identities. In particular, my focus is their discourse on epiphanies, the myriad ways that early Christians described, theorized, and narrated epiphanies.

This approach to early Christian history—a focus on discourse and identity—is not new. In a recent article on developments in the study of early Christianity, Karen King summarizes this approach as follows:

> It aims to understand the discursive strategies and processes by which early Christians developed notions of themselves as distinct from others within the Mediterranean world (and were recognized as such by others), including the multiple ways in which Christians produced various constructions of what it means to be Christian. Methodologically, it is oriented toward the critical analysis of practices, such as [...] constructing shared history through memory, selective appropriation, negotiation, and invention of tradition; [...] assigning nomenclature and establishing categories; defining 'others' and so on. This approach has the advantage of considering symbolic and discursive activities as social rhetorical practices fully embedded in social material conditions, shaping as well as being shaped by them.[61]

Miller applies this methodology in her study of dreams. Instead of focusing on the cause of dreams—Dodds' "anxiety"—Miller studies dreams as a "discourse" which she defines as "a method that allows for an articulate construction of meaning."[62] She understands dreams as cultural "resources" employed by ancient authors to "understand themselves and their world."[63] In particular, Miller is interested in how dreams might have functioned in the

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[61] Karen L. King, "Which Early Christianity?," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 73.

[62] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 10.

[63] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 12.

articulation of individual identities.[64] She suggests, however, that "the phenomenon of dreaming could be used" to inform "a community's self-definition."[65] My study of epiphanies builds on this approach and focuses on how Christians adapt a cultural discourse on epiphanies that potentially challenges their own cultural or religious identity.

There can be little doubt that culture influences dreams, or as Michel de Certeau says, that "each culture specifies what we should 'expect to see' when we see."[66] It is well-documented. As Peter Burke notes, "in a given culture people tend to dream particular kinds of dream."[67] Jeannette Marie Mageo describes this same conclusion in greater detail when she says, "Dreaming [...] its landscapes, scenes, figures, objects, problematics, and solutions, as well as ways of recounting the dream, are all appropriated from culture."[68] The cultural discourse of dreams influences the experience of the dream, the recollection or invention of a dream, as well as its narration, interpretation, and conceptualization. If Miller is correct, such a discourse should be beneficial since it provides "resources" for people to "understand themselves and their world." So, what happens when a predominant cultural discourse challenges how people understand themselves? What happens when common dreams threaten a group's identity? It is my contention that some early Christians found themselves

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[64] In other words, Miller studies the discourse of dreams as a discourse of identity. She describes her studies of individual authors as "an inquiry into the phenomenon of late-antique dreaming as representative of the construction of new narrative discourses of the self;" Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 130. She acknowledges problems with the word "identity" and suggests that, for purposes of her study of dreams as form of "self-address," that it might be understood as an "interiority;" Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 127.

[65] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 65; here, in reference to "Christian apologetic and heresiological battles."

[66] Michel de Certeau, "The Madness of Vision," *Enclitic* 7 (1983): 26.

[67] Peter Burke, "The Cultural History of Dreams," in *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 25.

[68] Jeannette Marie Mageo, "Subjectivity and Identity in Dreams," in *Dreaming and the Self: New Perspectives on Subjectivity, Identity, and Emotion* (ed. Jeannette Marie Mageo; Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 24.

in this situation and employed different strategies to adapt the predominant cultural discourse in a way that could sustain their identity.

How might a discourse on dreams change? A cultural discourse on dreams is not a closed system.[69] Any cultural discourse on dreams is necessarily bound up with other cultural discourses that influence, shape, and legitimize each other—in the case of the Greco-Roman world, this would include discourses on divination and ecstasy, as well as other cultic and political practices. In addition, there is a dynamic interplay between any dream account, whether real or invented, and cultural discourse. Every time that a dream is narrated, interpreted, or conceptualized, the cultural discourse is consequently reinforced or redefined.[70] Cultural discourses, like the cultural identities they form, are inherently unstable, and are only maintained through work. The dreams that will be discussed in this dissertation represent such work—each account is a snapshot of this process of negotiation. The purpose of my dissertation is to compare these snapshots and identify common themes in order to study how early Christians adapted and innovated within the prevailing cultural discourse. The result of this study will not be a singular, clearly defined Christian identity, but rather a discourse on epiphanies—a range of discursive strategies available to early Christians as they struggled to define, maintain, and practice their Christian identities within the predominant Greco-Roman culture of the second and third centuries.

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[69] Nor is it a "system" in the sense of stable category; Crapanzano suggests that we "question the assumption of a single, systemic theory of the dream in any society, including our own;" Crapanzano, "Betwixt and Between of the Dream," 232.

[70] E.g., Burke describes this phenomenon in respect to common cultural myths, "Myths shape dreams, but dreams in turn authenticate myths, in a circle which facilitates cultural reproduction or continuity;" Burke, "Cultural History of Dreams," 27; cf. Marc Augé, *The War of Dreams: Exercises in Ethno-Fiction* (London; Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1999), 6, 41-6, 42.

<u>Categories and Key Terms</u>

A cultural discourse on dreams includes not only dream narratives, but also the

theories and categories that allow such narratives to be recognizable as "dreams." "Dreams

cannot be separated from their conceptualization and theorization," Crapanzano explains,

"for that conceptualization and theorization affect, if not the experience of the dream, then its

report."[71] This includes the categorization of the dream. For instance, in the modern Western

world, a "dream" could be described as a common experience associated with sleep, whereas

a "vision" or an "epiphany" might be defined as an uncommon religious experience—and if a

vision or epiphany occurred while awake, it might even be classified as a hallucination. The

decision to identify a phenomenon as a veridical vision instead of a hallucination says as

much about someone's cultural discourse as the narration of the experience itself. For the

historian, this insight should be regarded as both a warning and an interpretive tool. In the

modern Western world, terms like "dream" and "vision" might function as post-

enlightenment and psychoanalytic categories for distinct phenomena, but such categories

should not determine how scholars approach ostensibly similar phenomena in antiquity.[72]

Rather than apply our categories, it is important to pay careful attention to theirs.[73]

The English word "epiphany" is derived from the Greek ἐπιφάνεια, one of the terms

used in the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial Period to refer to visible manifestations of the

divine, often in anthropomorphic form.[74] Other Greek and Latin terms that describe such

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[71] Crapanzano, "Betwixt and Between of the Dream," 232.

[72] The problem with such an approach will be discussed below, after a review of key terms in antiquity.

[73] "To move beyond psychologizing and functionalist explanations, or at least to recognize them as historically and geographically specific, we need to pay closer attention to the very processes through which dreamers and interpreters—as well as anthropologists—endow dreams with meaning;" Mittermaier, *Dreams that Matter*, 15.

[74] Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 35, n.40; Athanase Kyriazopoulos, "Les épiphanies des dieux dans les

manifestations and are often translated as "epiphany" include: χρηματισμός, *admonitio*, and *oraculum*.[75] It is common, however, for narrative of epiphanies to feature none of these words.[76] For the purpose of this dissertation, I define "epiphany" as a visible manifestation of one or more divine beings to one or more human beings, in which the deity communicates or interacts directly with the human—e.g., by delivering a message about the future or performing a healing. Sometimes the interaction is non-verbal—e.g., the manifestation of a deity to demonstrate divine favor or acceptance.[77] The term epiphany can be used narrowly to describe that moment in which a god or goddess makes his or her divinity known, sometimes after appearing in disguise.[78] I apply the term "epiphany" even to manifestations of gods in disguise, since the narrator makes it clear for the reader that a divine being is interacting directly with the human character within the narrative. Some authors narrate epiphanies using the Greek or Latin terms translated as "vision" and "dream."[79] I include dreams that feature gods interacting with humans even when those dreams are described as symbolic, not epiphanic. This does not contradict my intention to pay careful attention to the categories of ancient authors. Although ancient authors often distinguish between symbolic and epiphanic dreams, they also acknowledge that the same visual content can be interpreted in different ways. For instance, in the next chapter we will read the account of someone who

papyrus de l'époque impériale," in *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Berlin 1995* (eds. Bärbel Kramer, Wolfgang Luppe, Herwig Maehler, and Poethke Günter; Archiv für Papyrusforschung 1; Stuttgart; Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1997), 559.

[75] See Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 34-36.

[76] A human might simply "encounter" a god (ὑπαντάω or συναντάω).

[77] See discussions on initiation into mystery religions in Chapter 1 and Christian baptism in Chapter 3.

[78] E.g., Platt defines epiphany as "direct, unmediated manifestation of divine presence;" see Platt, "Epiphany," 493.

[79] I have already suggested above that there is a problem with our modern Western distinctions between the

interpreted his dream to be epiphanic even though a professional dream interpreter insisted that its meaning was symbolic.[80] A clear distinction in content is often difficult to maintain—even if we apply our modern categories.[81]

The problem with imagining these phenomena fitting into clear hermetic categories is reflected in the ancient Greek and Latin terms for "vision" and "dream." There are a variety of terms in Greek and Latin that are commonly translated by the English words "dream" and "vision."[82] In Greek, there is ὄναρ, ὄνειρος, ἐνύπνιον, ὕπνος, ὅραμα, ὅρασις, ὄψις, ὀπτασία, φάσμα, φάντασμα, φαντασία, ἀποκάλυψις, ἐπιφάνεια, and εἴδωλον. There are fewer Latin terms—*insomnium*, *somnium*, *somnus*, *visus*, *visum*—so Latin texts often borrow Greek words—e.g., in the *Martryrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, one of Perpetua's dream-accounts begins, *video in horomate hoc*.[83] Different ancient authors had different preferences and used these terms with varying degrees of precision and consistency.[84] For this reason, the translator's decision to render one of these Greek or Latin words as either "dream" or "vision" in English has sometimes depended on whether the literary context indicates sleep;

words "vision" and "dream," and I will say more about the related Greek and Latin terms below.

[80] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 4.71; see Chapter 1.

[81] In fact, using our modern categories "vision" and "dream," Burke suggests that culture can have such an influence that "A vague dream might well be assimilated to the stereotype and both recounted and remembered in a culturally appropriate way;" Burke, "Cultural History of Dreams," 26. Burke uses "religious visions" as an example: "[these] phenomena which are well documented for the early modern period ... may be explained in terms of culturally stereotyped dreams;" Burke, "Cultural History of Dreams," 37.

[82] For lists and discussions see Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," 1407-1409; Gregor Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2000), 31-34; Gregor Weber, "Träume und Visionen im Alltag der römischen Kaiserzeit: Das Zeugnis der Inschriften und Papyri," *Quaderni Catanesi di Studi Antichi e Medievali* 4-5 (2005): 55-121; Gil H. Renberg, "'Commanded by the Gods:' An Epigraphical Study of Dreams and Visions in Greek and Roman Religious Life" (Diss., Duke University, 2003), 40; and Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 34-36.

[83] *Pass. Perp.* 10.1; text and trans. Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 116.

[84] Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," 1408.

if the narrative experience mentions sleep then it is a "dream," otherwise it is a "vision." But this distinction between dream and vision is a modern one.[85] After a careful investigation of the multiple Greek words most often translated as "dream" or "vision," John Hanson reached the following conclusion:

> [T]erminological observations […] indicate the difficulty, if not impossibility, of distinguishing between a dream and a vision. For regardless of the term used, the formal structure and the literary function of these accounts remains the same. Because of the lack of systematic usage, this study tends to employ the phrase "dream-vision". Evidence to support the difficulty of distinguishing terms for dream or vision is found in the lack of consistent discrimination between waking and sleeping in connection with any particular term.[86]

Hanson's hyphenated "dream-vision" has been adopted in a number of studies on dreams in antiquity. It can serve as a useful reminder that distinctions made today between visions and dreams are not paralleled in Greco-Roman antiquity. Yet this combination of two inadequate terms is also problematic. As Gregor Weber has recently argued, this hybrid term is imprecise because some ancient authors did attribute a higher value to "dream-visions" that occurred in a waking state—an experience that, in modern terms, would not be categorized as a "dream."[87]

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[85] "The rather rigid modern distinction between the terms dream (a sleeping phenomenon) and vision (a waking phenomenon) is not paralleled in antiquity;" Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," 1409. See also Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visione*, 31-32; and Stroumsa, "Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse," 189.

[86] Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," 1408.

[87] The assertion that a "vision" occurred while awake rather than asleep was one way to suggest that a dream was important and meaningful, but it was not the only way. Furthermore, it does not follow that sleep negated the import or meaningfulness of a similar experience. "Visions" could occur just as well in sleep as when awake. The variety of means employed by ancient authors to demonstrate that a dream was significant will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Gegen John Hanson und seinen bevorzugten Terminus "dream-vision" ist nachhaltig auf das trotz der Inexaktheit vorhandene Bemühen um eine Ausdrucksweise zu verweisen, die herausstellt, daß der Gott eben nicht im Schlaf gesehen wurde, sondern in einem anderen Zustand. Dies wird dadurch gestützt, daß weiteren Belegen zufolge einer Erscheinung im Wachzustand ein größerer Wert zuerkannt wurde als einem Traum und somit in jedem Fall ein Unterschied in der Sache vorliegt.[88]

To include the word "vision" in this hybrid term is equally problematic. In modern English, the word "vision" connotes a religious or spiritual experience believed to be authentic. Yet some of the Greek and Latin words translated by the English "vision" can simply indicate the visual content of a dream without affirming its veracity or otherworldly origins.[89] The English terms "dream," "vision," and the hyphenated "dream-vision" cannot capture the breadth or nuance of the various ancient Greek and Latin words. This problem cannot be avoided.

For the purposes of this study, I will follow the standard practice of translating words like ὄνειρος and ὅραμα as, respectively, "dream" and "vision"—and I will ask that my reader bear in mind that these words do not necessarily imply a sleeping or waking state. I will also use the term "dream" as a broad category that includes not only those experiences said to occur in sleep, but also "visions" and "epiphanies" described as occurring while awake or between sleep and wakefulness.[90] I recognize that this solution also has its problems. Using the term "dream" in this way, I face the criticism of Weber that, in the modern Western

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[88] Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visione*, 33-34.

[89] See Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," 407-409; e.g., a φαντασία can be a "vision" sent by a deity or the fanciful images of one's own imagination.

[90] On notion of "in-betweenness" in anthropological studies of the dream, see Crapanzano, "Betwixt and Between of the Dream," 237; Mittermaier, *Dreams that Matter*, 2-4.

world, "dream" typically describes a sleeping experience.[91] I want to avoid that implication.

Yet the term "dream" is preferable for two reasons. First, ancient authors used words

frequently translated as "dream"—e.g., ὄναρ, ὄνειρος, *somnus*—to describe a broad category

of experiences that included both the natural processes of sleep and waking encounters with

the otherworldly.[92] Second, the English word "dream" conveys potentialities not permitted

by the alternatives. Whereas the terms "vision" and "dream-vision" bear a religious valence

and imply a divine origin, the term "dream" is unmarked. A dream can be good or bad, true

or false, meaningful or insignificant. A dream might be said to originate with the divine or in

one's own mind. So, despite its modern Western association with sleep and in the absence of

a more precise term, I use the term "dream" as a broad category that includes such

phenomena as insignificant dreams, symbolic visions, and anthropomorphic epiphanies

regardless of the implied state of consciousness.

For scholars to apply the modern Western conception of the dream to the study of the

ancient Greco-Roman world is problematic.[93] To limit one's study of dreams in antiquity to

only those accounts wherein a person is said explicitly to be asleep creates a phenomenon

that never existed in antiquity. Consider the results of applying our modern Western

definition of "dream" to the account of Constantine's vision described at the beginning of

this chapter. Recall that Eusebius reports two distinct encounters between Constantine and

the divine. The first occurs in the middle of the day when Constantine is awake and the

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[91] Unless we hyphenate it—e.g., "day-dream." See Crapanzano, "Betwixt and Between of the Dream," 246.

[92] For instance, some ancient authors included accounts of epiphanies that do not specify a sleeping state in their discussions of "dreams;" see Chapter 1.

[93] Consider Stroumsa's warning: "In early Christian discourse, there is no way of distinguishing clearly between dreams and visions. [...] Hence any study that focuses on dreams while ignoring visions is bound to remain deeply flawed;" Stroumsa, "Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse," 189.

second in the middle of the night when he is asleep. A study of dreams which relies on our modern Western category would necessarily exclude the first encounter and focus on the second. Yet Eusebius connects these two manifestations in his narrative and describes them together as a single "vision" (ὄψις).[94] The words most often translated as "dream" do not appear in this account even though Constantine is described as sleeping (ὑπνόω) when Christ appeared (ὀφθῆναί) to him.[95] Eusebius says nothing to imply that one of the two encounters was more authentic or more real than the other—rather, the second seems to confirm and clarify the first.[96] Again, both of these epiphanies are described as a single "vision." To divide these into separate phenomena based on degrees of consciousness or rationality distorts Eusebius's narrative.

Selection of Sources

This is not a study of epiphanies or dreams *per se*, but of "dream-texts." Burke has cautioned: "Historians need to bear constantly in mind the fact that they do not have access to the dream itself but at best to a written record, modified by the preconscious or conscious mind in the course of recollection and writing."[97] While it may be obvious enough that we have no unmediated access to ancient dreams, it is worth reflecting on the significance of that fact. The distance between modern readers and the ancient dream-experience is not merely temporal—and is not a problem unique to historians. There is distance between any narration of a dream and the experience of the dream. As Vincent Crapanzano has explained, there is a

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[94] The term appears three times in Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* 1.32 alone; text Luce Pietri and Marie-Joseph Rondeau, *Eusèbe de Césarée: Vie de Constantin* (Sources Chrétiennes 559; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2013), 224.

[95] Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* 1.29; text Pietri and Rondeau, *Vie de Constantin*, 220.

[96] It is a sort of double-vision or repeated-vision that will be discussed in the next chapter.

[97] Burke, "Cultural History of Dreams," 28.

difference "between the dreamer as narrator [...] and the dream."[98] The work to recall and

narrate the experience of the dream gives new shape and new meaning to that experience. If

this narrated dream is cemented in writing, it changes again; in Crapanzano's terms, the

"dream-account" becomes a "dream-text."

> Written, it is subject to prevailing attitudes to the written word. They may give the
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> dream a permanence, an evidential quality, that counters its ephemerality. They may
>
> restrict the fluidity of spontaneous—oral—accounts; permit dramatic
>
> recontextualizations and rhetorical usage; and exploit gaps between the original
>
> narration, its textualization, and its various readings. […] As text, the dream is
>
> objectified (in accordance with prevailing notions of the text as object) and this
>
> objectification may depersonalize it, exorcise it even, while preserving it and
>
> permitting its circulation; for the dream can now take on a life of its own (which is far
>
> greater than its quotational possibility in an oral culture or in a culture in which the
>
> dream is not considered worthy of being written down). It circulates.[99]

A dream-text may be inspired by an actual dream-experience, but it is shaped by the cultural

conventions of dream-narration and again by the literary conventions of its genre.[100] Since

the dream undergoes this transformation from experience to text, it may be impossible to

distinguish between the dream-text derived from experience and one invented by an author.

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[98] Crapanzano, "Betwixt and Between of the Dream," 246.

[99] Crapanzano, "Betwixt and Between of the Dream," 250.

[100] "Whatever the reality of its referent, the 'dream' is a cultural category and subject at the discursive level at least, but at the experiential level as well, to all of the contortions of the 'cultural category;'" Crapanzano, "Betwixt and Between of the Dream," 233. The difference is primarily one of interpretation. I want to avoid the essentialist-constructivist debate common to studies of mysticism and dreams by acknowledging the potential influence of actual dreams while necessarily focusing on the cultural-constructedness of the discourse found in extant texts.

For the purposes of cultural history, this is not a problem. A dream-text may be more indicative of cultural norms than a dream-experience since the narrative must adhere to the cultural expectations for dreams in order to be understood as a dream.[101] For instance, Parman notes that when a dream appears in modern science fiction, it still "reflects the twentieth-century Freudian synthesis of scientific and romantic conceptions of the mind."[102] Likewise, as discussed above, the depiction of a fanciful experience in modern Western media is not unambiguously identifiable as a "dream" unless it occurs during sleep.[103] Whether a dream is real or fictional its corresponding dream-text shapes and is shaped by the predominant cultural discourses.

This understanding of dream-texts has significant implications for this study. In scholarship on dreams in the Greco-Roman antiquity there has been a tendency to treat first-person accounts as more authentic.[104] Based on the arguments of both Burke and Crapanzano, however, there is no reason to suppose that a first-person dream-text is any closer to a dream *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Although different modes of narration might suggest to the reader different degrees of authenticity, both fictional and authentic dreams may equally influence and be influenced by predominant cultural discourses. For this reason, my study of cultural discourse includes texts sometimes classified as "fiction," such as the

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[101] Burke, "Cultural History of Dreams," 28.

[102] Parman, *Dream and Culture*, 5.

[103] Today we expect a dream to be associated with sleep in a novel just as it would be in a newspaper; see above.

[104] E.g., Miller, in her study of dreams and identity in the second half of her book, focuses on first-person narratives; see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 131-249. When Harris turns to the subject of ancient "experience" he relies more heavily on first-person narratives; see Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 91-122. When Bowersock argues for the authenticity of fictional dream narratives, he does so by comparing them to first-person dream accounts; see G.W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 77-98.

apocryphal acts and martyrdom accounts.

Ancient fiction can be profitably read as reflecting or reacting against the dominant social and cultural norms of the time and place in which they were written. This is not a new approach. It is summarized succinctly by Tim Whitmarsh in his study of cultural identity in the ancient Greek novels: "Romances are, of course, mimetic of life: their physical and cultural world is more or less that of their target readers (notwithstanding historical displacement in some cases)."[105] Likewise, consider Bowersock's observation about Lucian's satire of travel literature titled "True History"—a self-identified work of fiction that narrates the fantastic sights and creatures encountered during a journey into outer-space.

> Everything, by his own admission, is lies. Yet what Lucian describes inevitably reflects, all too obviously, the world in which he lives. This can be no accident. The people of the moon are at war with the people of the sun, but eventually they conclude a peace treaty that mirrors in its terms and language, as well as in the oath that concludes it, the traditional peace treaties of the Greeks.[106]

In order for a work of fiction to be intelligible to its reader, it must to some degree adhere to those social and cultural realities familiar to the reader—in Bowersock's example from Lucian, that "reality" is the familiar practices of war and treaties. Fiction, of course, is not bound to reflect perfectly all cultural trends; sometimes it is reactive. Fiction, as fiction, is free to explore cultural norms in a way that other genres cannot. For instance, Keith Hopkins'

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[105] Tim Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel: Returning Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 184; see also Suzanne MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 53; and Erich S Gruen, "Cultural Fictions and Cultural Identity," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 123 (1993): 1-14. On the collections between dreams, literary fiction, and cultural imagination, see Augé, *War of Dreams*, 52-56, and passim.

[106] Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 6.

study of Roman social and cultural perspectives on slavery shows how "an invented, generalized caricature of a slave" better "reflect[s] the central tensions in the relations between masters and slaves" than accounts of slaves from histories or biographies.[107] Regarding the importance of fiction for social history, Hopkins concludes:

> Serious historians of the ancient world have often undervalued fiction, if only, as I have said, because by convention history is concerned principally with the recovery of truth about the past. But for social history—for the history of culture, for the history of people's understanding of their own society—fiction occupies a privileged position.[108]

Some historians have already begun to study Greco-Roman fictional literature for insights into the cultural practices surrounding dreams. Bowersock, in his book *Fiction as History*, argues that accounts of dreams in novels reflect contemporary culture because they "were created by a wakeful author in conscious submission to the moral and emotional expectations of his age."[109] Whitmarsh has demonstrated that accounts of epiphanies and other dreams in Greek novels reflect the debates about fate and prophecy that were prominent in the Early Imperial period.[110] Although scholars have studied the apocryphal Acts for other discourses related to cultural identity—such as gender, social class, and social space—this literature has not been thoroughly integrated into the study of Christian dreams.[111] In this study, I read the

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[107] Keith Hopkins, "Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery," *Past & Present* 138 (1993): 12.

[108] Hopkins, "Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery," 12.

[109] Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 98.

[110] Whitmarsh, *Returning Romance*, 193-204.

[111] For examples of scholarship that include the apocryphal Acts in the study of gender, social class, and social space, see Stevan L Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980); Judith Perkins, "The Social World of the Acts of Peter," in *The*

apocryphal Acts with other Christian literature on epiphanies as equal evidence.

Epiphanies appear more frequently in early Christian literature than is often supposed.[112] Many second- and third-century Christian authors discuss or narrate epiphanies. Apologies, homilies, commentaries, and theological treatises reinterpret Old Testament theophanies as manifestations of Christ.[113] Apologists call into question the virtue of the pagan gods that appear.[114] Likewise, heresiologists cast aspersions on heretics by dismissing their epiphanies as deceptive inventions or condemning them as dream-senders who consort with demons.[115] Apocryphal gospels, acts, dialogues, and apocalypses reimagine the apostolic age as filled with manifestations of Christ, angels, and demons.[116] Martyrdom texts describe similar manifestations occurring in the more recent history of second- and third-century Christians.

I will not discuss all accounts of epiphanies in Christian literature from the second and third centuries. In chapter two, I focus on those Christian texts that show engagement

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Search for the Ancient Novel (ed. James Tatum; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 296-307; Judith Perkins, "Fictional Narratives and Social Critique," in *Late Ancient Christianity* (ed. Virginia Burrus; A People's History of Christianity Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 46-69; Judith B. Perkins, "Social Geography in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," in *Space in the Ancient Novel* (eds. Michael Paschalis and Stavros A. Frangoulidis; Ancient Narrative Supplementum 1; Gronigen: Barkhuis, 2002), 118-131; for other examples, see Jo-Ann A Brant, Charles W Hedrick, *et al.*, eds., *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005). Studies on dreams that include some references to the apocryphal Acts include Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 102–167, 375-102–167, 418; and Bovon, "Ces chrétiens qui rêvent," 643.

[112] Arguments about the lack of evidence for Christian epiphanies in this period depend in part on definitions of what constitutes evidence; e.g., both Lane Fox and Stroumsa bemoan the absence of a "Christian Artemidorus;" see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 391; Stroumsa, "Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse," 189.

[113] This dissertation does not address the interpretation of Old Testament theophanies as manifestations of Christ since I focus on Pagan/Christian rather than Jewish/Christian identity; see below.

[114] Discussed in chapter two.

[115] E.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.4; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.42.2.

[116] Discussed in chapters two and three.

with the idea that pagan gods were appearing. In chapter three, I focus on Christian texts that

apply the Greco-Roman discourse on epiphanies to manifestations of Jesus; for instance, by

describing the form or physical appearance of Jesus.[117] I also do not include every example

of non-Christian epiphanies from this period. When I introduce examples of pagan and

Jewish epiphanies in the first chapter, I focus on broad trends supported by diverse evidence.

This necessarily excludes some developments in the Greco-Roman discourse on epiphanies

that are not directly relevant to my argument.[118] Sources will be discussed further in the

chapter summaries below. My purpose here is to address what this study is not.

This dissertation is not intended to represent a complete picture of the Christian

discourse on epiphanies. I focus primarily on Christian authors' engagement with particular

visual aspects of a pagan discourse on epiphanies, but my early Christian sources were not so

myopic. There are important topics and texts that I do not address here, ones that merit their

own studies. How did epiphanies function in discourse that distinguished Christians from

Jews—for instance, by interpreting Old Testament theophanies as manifestations of Christ?

How did epiphanies function in discourse that distinguished Christians from other

Christians—for instance, by calling into question the epiphanies of heretics or disputing the

legitimacy of dreams more broadly? I do not address either of these important topics or the

early Christian texts relevant to them.

With the focus on a comparison of "pagan" and "Christian" discourse, and in the

absence of any discussion on inner-Christian dream-discourse, this study risks producing the

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[117] I only address briefly the many Christian epiphany narratives that do not include a description of physical appearance; for instance, when Jesus appears to his apostles in the apocryphal Acts, they often recognize him immediately and no physical description is provided.

[118] E.g., theurgy in mid-third-century Neoplatonism; see Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell, *Iamblicus: On the Mysteries* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 4; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), xxvi-xxxvii.

false impression that there existed a consensus among early Christians when, in fact, there was diversity. Although I will not address in detail how Christian authors supported or negated the possibility of epiphanic experiences for themselves or their fellow Christians, I want to state unequivocally that early Christians held a variety of opinions on the significance of epiphanies.[119] That said, I will argue that trends can be identified among various discursive strategies that Christians developed for interpreting certain dream-experiences as divine and others as demonic. These discursive strategies may have been more available in some locations and times than in others, but to the degree allowed by the evidence I try to identify trends that span times and geography. Nevertheless, I do not contend that all early Christians experienced the divine and demonic in dreams, and I would not insist that all who had such experiences necessarily interpreted them as epiphanic or agreed on their significance.

Chapter Summaries

In the first chapter, I argue that epiphanies mattered to early Christians because they lived, worked, and socialized in a world where divine manifestations were a prominent cultural discourse. I demonstrate the prominence of this discourse by introducing examples from epics, histories, biographies, novels, philosophical treatises, medical texts, handbooks, letters, inscriptions, and art. These examples describe deities appearing in order to reveal the future, advise, punish, promise or provide protection, promote or celebrate love and marriage, command particular actions or honors, perform miraculous healings, and to

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[119] These opinions do not separate neatly into the traditional categories of orthodox and heretical groups; e.g., Origen considered epiphanies to be better than symbolic dreams (*Ep. Afr.* 10); the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies claim that epiphanies, dreams, and visions were from demons (17.13-19); and the Coptic Apocalypse of Peter insists that only the wicked would say dreams came from demons. Hippolytus suggested that heretics were led astray by epiphanies (*Haer.* 6.42.2; *Comm. Dan.* 4.19); and an unidentified source from the same period recalled how one Christian was redeemed from heresy through an epiphany (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.28.11-17).

demonstrate divine favor. I also include examples from the writings of philosophers and dream interpreters, such as Cicero, Philo, and Artemidorus, in order to illustrate the range of opinions on the origins and significance of epiphanies and other dreams. Although accounts of divine manifestations are often narrated as private individual encounters, I show that epiphanies were implicated in the cultural practices and societal relations of daily life. Manifestations of the divine could be elicited through the assistance of specialists and at special public locations; for instance, priests at a temple of Asclepius could prepare the sick to be healed by the god in a dream—a practice known as incubation. In response to divine manifestations, individuals engaged in public actions, such as offering a sacrifice or dedicating an inscription, and they recounted their experiences to friends or professional dream interpreters. Large groups of people often participated in commemorations of past epiphanies; divine manifestations were reenacted at locations throughout the empire during festivals, games, and other political or cultic events. The chapter concludes with a summary of the common characteristics that formed the Greco-Roman discourse on epiphanies. I also propose that this discourse posed a problem for early Christians, which I analyze in the second chapter.

In the second chapter, I argue that Christians had dreams just like everyone else and that some Christians found manifestations of pagan deities problematic. I then show how the Christian discourse on dreams developed to deal with these epiphanies. The chapter is divided in two parts treating the theorization of dreams and dream narratives respectively. The first half focuses on the writings of Tertullian, as well as the apologetic writings of Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras, and Origen; it shows how Christians redefined dreams of pagan gods as manifestations of evil demons. I then analyze Christian narratives from the second

and third centuries that include manifestations of non-Christian deities or evil demons: these include the apocryphal Acts of Thomas and the Acts of Peter, as well as the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. I demonstrate that there is significant correspondence between these narratives and the polemic against pagan dreams in the apologetic writings: in both, demons are associated with pagan gods and their images as well as with beliefs and practices the authors consider un-Christian; demons manifest themselves in order to deceive, tempt, or attack non-Christians and weak Christians, but have no power against devoted Christians. I then introduce another trend in Christian dream narratives that allowed for pagan content and even demons to be interpreted as part of a divine Christian dream. In order to explain the relationship between these two trends, I return to the writings of Tertullian, since he is the only Christian author in this period to both theorize and narrate contemporary Christian dreams. I argue that Tertullian interprets dreams according to their purpose instead of their images and that this interpretive method allowed for Christians to find the divine in any dream.

The third and final chapter focuses on manifestations of uniquely Christian dream-images, especially epiphanies of Christ. Focusing on the apocryphal Acts and drawing informative parallels from texts such as the Letters of Cyprian and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua*, I show how some Christian authors, like their pagan contemporaries, described the divine as manifest to guide, protect, heal, teach, foretell, and to accept new devotees. Traditionally it has been assumed that Christians in the second and third centuries were aniconic and, therefore, did not experience epiphanies of Jesus in the same way that pagans experienced epiphanies of Dionysus, Asclepius, and other gods or daemons. Nevertheless, recent art historians have demonstrated that Christians were not aniconic and that the second

and third centuries represent a period of selective adoption of popular images and innovation in Christian art. I argue that this provides an informative parallel. Throughout the chapter, I show how the Christian discourse on epiphanies followed similar trends—adopting and innovating within the cultural traditions of the Greco-Roman world. Some Christians adopted the popular pagan images of the young man or shepherd as manifestations of Christ, others imagined Christ in the uniquely Christian images of an apostle, a deacon, or even the cross. I conclude that all of these images, with their different origins and functions, attest to Christian participation in the broader Greco-Roman discourse on epiphanies.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE GRECO-ROMAN DISCOURSE ON EPIPHANIES

In the Summer of 165 CE, Aristides Aristides experienced an epiphany.[1] A plague had struck his town. People young and old, and even animals, were dying from the illness. Doctors had given up hope and even pronounced Aristides himself a lost cause. Aristides could feel his life slipping away. He retired to his bed expecting to pass away at any moment. Then, Aristides encountered a god:

> Athena appeared with her aegis and the beauty and magnitude and the whole form of the Athena of Phidias in Athens. There was also a scent from the aegis as sweet as could be, and it was like wax, and it too was marvellous in beauty and magnitude. She appeared to me alone, standing before me even from where I would behold her as fairly as possible. I also pointed her out to those present—they were two of my friends and my foster sister—and I cried out and I named her Athena, saying that she stood before me and spoke to me, and I pointed out the aegis.[2]

When Aristides later recorded this experience he could not remember all of the words that Athena had spoken to him. He did however recall that she spoke of Homer's *Odyssey*:

> She reminded me of the *Odyssey* and said that these were not idle tales, but that it was fitting to judge even by the present circumstances. Therefore it was necessary to

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[1] The following account is derived from Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

[2] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.40-41 (*Sacred Tales* 2); unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Aristides's *Orations* come from Charles A. Behr, *P. Aelius Aristides, The Complete Works: Volume II, Orationes XVII-LIII* (Leiden: Brill, 1981).

persevere. I myself was indeed both Odysseus and Telemachus, and she must help me.[3]

Aristides survived the plague and recorded his numerous encounters with the divine in a work now titled the *Sacred Tales*.

Aelius Aristides was not the only person to describe a divine encounter during the second and third centuries CE. Literary and material evidence suggests that this period witnessed a dramatic increase in literary and visual accounts of divine manifestations.[4] This has led scholars to characterize the era variously as an "Age of Faith," "of Converts," "Spirituality," or "Credulity;" other scholars suggest a psychological cause for the credulity, characterizing the period as an "Age of Anxiety," "of Crisis," or "Anger."[5] Although scholars

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[3] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.42 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

[4] Examples follow below. For surveys of the evidence for an increase in epiphanies and other dreams in this period, see E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 102-134; E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [org. 1965]), 37-68; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 102–67, 700–11; William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), passim. Regarding inscriptions, Harris notes that "Greek inscriptions alluding to the appearances of gods in dreams are... at least six times as common in the second century AD as in the first;" Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 201-202; citing Gil H. Renberg, "'Commanded by the Gods:' An Epigraphical Study of Dreams and Visions in Greek and Roman Religious Life" (Diss., Duke University, 2003). For more on epiphanies in inscriptions and papyri, see Athanase Kyriazopoulos, "Les épiphanies des dieux dans les papyrus de l'époque impériale," in *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Berlin 1995* (eds. Bärbel Kramer, Wolfgang Luppe, Herwig Maehler, and Poethke Günter; Archiv für Papyrusforschung 1; Stuttgart; Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1997), 556-562; and Gregor Weber, "Träume und Visionen im Alltag der römischen Kaiserzeit: Das Zeugnis der Inschriften und Papyri," *Quaderni Catanesi di Studi Antichi e Medievali* 4-5 (2005): 55-121. On increase in art and shrines, see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 75-75; for more on epiphanies in art from this period, see John R Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 315* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 73-94; Jas Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality & Subjectivity in Art & Text* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 225-252.

[5] On "Age of Anxiety" or "Age of Crisis," see Dodds who argues that "misery and mysticism are related facts" Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, 3. Peter Brown suggests that misery or anxiety were not requirements for epiphanic experience; see Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 10-11; see also Ramsay MacMullen, *The Roman Government's Response to Crisis, A.D. 235–337* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 1-23. Brown argues that manifestations increased primarily among a few chosen individuals, "friends of god," and he characterizes the era as an "Age of Ambition;" see Brown, *Making of Late Antiquity*, 27-53. MacMullen calls the period an "Age of Converts;" see MacMullen, *Roman Government's Response to Crisis*, 80. On "Age of Spirituality," see Kurt Weitzmann,

continue to dispute the conditions that led to an increase in epiphanies and debate whether

the increase was gradual or sudden, most agree that manifestations of divine beings were

meaningful for many people in the second and third centuries CE. This was the social world

of the early Christian authors that will be studied in the following chapters.

This chapter is an introduction to the Greco-Roman cultural discourse on epiphanies.

As I sketch the range of cultural expectations and discursive resources available to those who

experienced or wrote about divine encounters, it is necessary to focus on predominant trends

and those patterns of discourse most likely to be familiar to early Christian authors.[6] I begin

with a small collection of Greco-Roman epiphany accounts from a wide range of literary

forms and media. This will show the prominence of such accounts and the potential of

epiphanies to influence almost every aspect of life. After the review of epiphany narratives, I

introduce common theories of epiphanies and other dreams in order to show how people

determined whether such experiences were significant. Finally, based on the examples of

narratives and theories, I will summarize the common practices of encountering the divine,

determining the significance of the encounter, and narrating the experience.

Throughout this review, I include Jewish examples alongside pagan as representative

of the larger Greco-Roman discourse. Jews were familiar with the cultural expectations,

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"Introduction," in *Age of Spirituality: A Symposium* (ed. Kurt Weitzmann; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), 1-5. On "Age of Faith" and "Age of Anger," see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 64-65. *Pace* Dodds, Lane Fox argues that there is no necessary link between "misery and mysticism;" see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 125. François Bovon describes the period as "un âge de grande crédulité;" François Bovon, "Ces chrétiens qui rêvent: L'autorité du rêve dans les premiers siècles du christianisme," in *Geschichte, Tradition, Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (eds. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 649. Kee refers to this period as the "heyday of Asclepius;" Howard C. Kee, "Self-definition in the Asclepius cult," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (eds. Ben F. Meyer and E.P. Sanders; 3; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 134.

[6] I acknowledge that any attempt to describe broad cultural trends inevitably obscures significant regional and local differences—one can no more speak of a single Greco-Roman discourse of epiphanies than of a single Greco-Roman culture. See Introduction Chapter.

practices, and discourse of their pagan contemporaries. This is attested as early as the third

century BCE, in an inscription on a marble stele from the city of Oropus, Greece: "Moschus

(son) of Moschion, a Jew, (set this up), having seen a dream with the god Amphiaraus and

Hygeia commanding (him), in accordance with what Amphiaraus and Hygeia ordered, to

write it on a stele and set it up by the altar."[7] This inscription is not representative. Most

Jews, if they had dreams of pagan gods, did not share those experiences in writing. Yet

Greco-Roman patterns of theorizing and narrating dreams influenced Jewish authors as much

as non-Jewish authors in this period. Frances Flannery-Daily, at the end of her study of

Jewish dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, concludes that Jewish dream-texts changed

in this period, specifically by adopting epiphanic motifs: "Unlike pre-exilic biblical texts,

many early Jewish dream texts contain angels who sometimes impart messages in the typical

fashion of Greek and Latin *oneiroi*."[8] Since Jewish authors participated in this Greco-Roman

discourse on dreams that Christians inherited, I include examples from Jewish and pagan

authors under the same headings.

Content and Functions of Divine Manifestations

There are hundreds of examples from which I could draw, but this brief overview

requires a more limited selection. I have selected accounts from diverse literary forms and

media in order to demonstrate the prevalence of epiphanies and their ability to cross textual

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[7] Ach45; trans. David Noy, Alexander Panayotov, and Hanswulf Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis I: Eastern Europe* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 177-180.

[8] Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 201-208, here 208. Flannery-Dailey explains that some Jewish texts are unique in that they combine Greco-Roman epiphany and symbolic dreams: "angels act as interpreters and guides for the main revelation, which occurs in the form of symbolic visions, otherworldly journeys, or messages from the LORD;" Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 208.

boundaries. I have also chosen accounts representing the diversity of human experience so that it will be clear that epiphanies had the potential to influence many aspects of social life. Most of these accounts were written around the second century CE; a few texts were written earlier, but remained influential in this later period. These examples should provide a sense of the prominence of epiphany accounts and of a predominant cultural discourse that surrounds them during the early Christian period.

Health and Healing

Matters of health and healing could involve epiphanies. The manifestations of gods in times of sickness and disease are attested throughout Greek and Latin literature, inscriptions, and art. The most common way to solicit a god's help to cure a disease or some other physical ailment was the practice of incubation. Although practices of incubation varied, most culminated with the pilgrim or "patient" entering the *abaton*—the dream/sleep chamber of the god—and sleeping there for the night. In these dreams, the gods might offer a prescription for a cure or they could act directly to cure the ailment. Multiple examples for both types of healing epiphany can be found in the writings of Aelius Aristides and in inscriptions associated with the god Asclepius.

In the Winter of 146 CE, Aristides sought help at the temple of Asclepius in Pergamum. Due to the severity of his illness he was bedridden for several months. So he took up residence in the home of the temple wardens, Asclepiacus and Philadelphus, where he was visited by his doctor, Theodotus. One night he experienced an epiphany of Asclepius, who provided him with a cure. Aristides describes the experience as similar to initiation into the mysteries:[9]

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[9] For more on epiphanies in mystery religions, see below.

For there was a seeming, as it were, to touch him and to perceive that he himself had come, and to be between sleep and waking, and to wish to look up and to be in anguish that he might depart too soon, and to strain the ears and to hear some things as in a dream, some as in a waking state. Hair stood straight, and there were tears with joy, and the pride of the heart was inoffensive. And what man could describe these things in words? If any man has been initiated, he knows and understands.[10]

The dream began with Aristides himself standing "at the propylaea of the Temple," where he saw "many others also gathered together, as whenever there is a purificatory ceremony."[11] From the propylaea, Aristides cried out "to the God and called him 'the arbiter of fate.'"[12] What happened next Aristides describes in vague terms:

And after this there was wormwood, made clear in some way. It was made clear as possible, just as countless other things clearly contained the presence of the God. For there was a seeming, as it were, to touch him and to perceive that he himself had come.

For Aristides, the message of the god was clear. As soon as it was dawn he summoned his doctor and related to him the dream and its meaning: he was to drink wormwood. The doctor accepted the dream as divine, but Theodotus was skeptical and refused at first to administer the cure because of the severity of Aristides's condition. Yet Theodotus changed his mind when it was discovered that Philadelphus had experienced "a marvelous vision" that same night. Aristides reports the dream as follows:

Philadelphus dreamed—for so much can I remember—that there was a multitude of

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[10] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.32 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

[11] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.31 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

men in the Sacred Theater, who wore white garments and were assembled because of

the God, and that standing among them, I spoke and hymned the God, and that I said

many different things, and how many another time he averted my fate and recently

when he found the wormwood and commanded me to drink it diluted with vinegar, so

that I might not be nauseated.[13]

To settle the disagreement between Aristides and his doctor, they summoned the temple

wardens who both related this dream of Philadelphus. "Since the dreams agreed, now we

used the curative," Aristides reports, "and I drank as much as no one before."[14] He was cured

because of prescription that he received in an epiphany of the god, Asclepius.

Inscriptions at Asclepian temples provide another source of epiphany accounts. When

pilgrims were cured of their afflictions they often left behind votive offerings, dedicatory

inscriptions, and stories of their experiences, some of which were preserved by temple

officials in inscriptions. These functioned as propaganda for the cult but also prepared the

pilgrim for their experience in the temple.[15] Inscriptions have been discovered at excavations

of Asclepian Temples in Rome, Lebena, and Pergamon, but the most famous are the

inscriptions from Epidaurus.[16] One of these inscriptions describes a "man from Torone" who

became ill after his stepmother tricked him into drinking a potion that included leeches. The

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[12] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.31 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

[13] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.30 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

[14] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.35 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

[15] Internal evidence suggests reading as activity of pilgrims; see Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis, *Truly Beyond Wonders: Aelius Aristides and the Cult of Asklepios* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 231; Lynn R. LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 18; see also A3, A4, B16.

[16] One stele from the Asclepian temple at Epidaurus dates to the fourth century BCE, though it continued to be influential well into the second century CE; see Pausanias, *Descr.* 2.27.3. On the date and continued influence, see LiDonnici, *Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions*, 76-82.

inscription explains how the god appeared to him in the night to perform surgery:

> When he was sleeping, he saw a dream. It seemed to him that the god ripped open his chest with a knife, took out the leeches and gave them to him in his hands, and sewed his breast together. When day came he left having the animals in his hands, and had become well.[17]

Although the inscription begins by categorizing the experience as a dream and as only "seeming" to happen, such language is typical of epiphany-narratives that were understood to be very real.[18] Notice that when he awoke the following day, not only had he recovered from his illness, but he also discovered in his hands the very leeches the god had placed there after removing them from his stomach.

Not everyone who sought healing during the second and third centuries went to a temple; some visited physicians. Physicians also experienced epiphanies and received divine guidance in dreams. Galen, the famous second-century physician, admits that he relied on dreams in his practice.

> I have often made a diagnosis from dreams and, guided by two very dear dreams, I once made an incision into the artery between the thumb and index finger of the right hand and allowed the blood to flow until it ceased flowing on its own, as the dream had instructed. I have saved many people by applying a cure prescribed in a dream.[19]

This particular example may not refer to an epiphany. Galen does not provide much detail and he believed that prescriptions could come from different types of dreams. In addition to

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[17] A13; LiDonnici, *Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions*, 95.

[18] See Introduction.

[19] Galen, *Comm. in Hippocr. de humor.* 2.2 (ed. Kuhn, 16:222-223); trans. as found in Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 46.

his belief in prophetic epiphanies and other dreams, he believed that some dreams reflected the way that the body suffered and could therefore function diagnostically.[20] Although there is not a definitive example of a god revealing a diagnosis to Galen, there are other epiphany accounts in his writings. Galen once refused to join the emperor on a campaign to Germania because Asclepius told him to stay behind.[21] Furthermore, Galen suggests that he only became a physician because Asclepius appeared to his father, Nicon, and commanded that Galen should become a physician.[22]

Love and Marriage

In the case of divine healings, humans sought the help of the gods at temples or shrines. They performed sacrifices, prayers, and other rituals to solicit the help of the gods. Many of these same practices could draw the attention of the gods for help with other situations. The gods could also intervene without request. For instance, there are numerous accounts of divine involvement in issues of love and marriage. From Homer's early epics to the later Greek novels, gods intervened (and interfered) in human affairs of the heart.[23] The

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[20] For a discussion of Galen's views on dreams, see A.H.M. Kessels, "Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification," *Mnemosyne* 22 (1969): 422-424; Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 64; Juliette Harrisson, *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empire: Cultural Memory and Imagination* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 197-199. On dreams reflecting the way that the body suffered, see Steven M. Oberhelman, "Galen, *On Diagnosis from Dreams*," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 38 (1983), 36-47. For primary texts, see Kühn 6:832-835, esp 833 (= Galen, *De Dignatione ex Insomn.*) and Kühn 16:219-226 (= Galen, Comm. in *Hippocr. de humor.* 2.2).

[21] Galen, *De Libris Propriis* 2; Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 205; Harrisson, *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empir*, 198.

[22] Galen, *De Methodo Medendi*, "On the Therapeutic Method" 9.4 (Kühn X 609).

[23] For a collection and discussion of Greek examples, see Georgia Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies: Contextualising and Conceptualising Epiphanic Narratives in Greek Literature and Culture (7th BC-2nd AD), Vol. 1" (Diss., University of Exeter, 2006), 197-211.

Book of Tobit, a Jewish novel from the early second century BCE, provides an example.[24]

There, the angel Raphael appears in disguise as a distant relative of Tobit in order to help

Tobit's son find a bride.[25] He leads Tobit's son, Tobias, to a woman named Sarah and plays a

pivotal role in the success of their wedding. First he convinces Tobias to marry her, then he

convinces Sarah's father to allow the marriage, and finally he dispatches a demon who would

have interfered.[26]

Some people did not want to wait for gods to act on their own. Magical practices

avoided dependance on divine agency and compelled the divine to act. A common use of

magic was to attract romantic interest. One such spell is titled, "Another love spell of

attraction."[27] It is addressed to Hekate "of many names," "many-formed" Artemis / Kore /

Dione's (= Aphrodite's) guard.[28] Not all love spells sought the direct involvement of a god,

but this one calls upon Hekate to stand above the head of the person targeted by the spell.[29]

Here, the god is asked to remove sleep from this person and to cause her to think only of the

one casting the spell.

> Go stand above her (NN) head and take
>
> Away from her sweet sleep. And never let
>
> Eyelid come glued to eyelid, but let her
>
> Be sore distressed with wakeful cares for me. /

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[24] For dating, see Carey A. Moore, *Tobit: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries 40; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 40-41.

[25] Tob. 3:17.

[26] Tob. 6:11-18; cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (CEJL; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 4-6.

[27] PGM IV.2708-84 (Betz).

[28] PGM IV.2727, 2745 (Betz).

And if she lies with someone else in her

Embrace, let her thrust him away and take

Me in her heart. Let her abandon him

At once and stand before my door subdued

In soul at longing for my bed of love.[30]

It is not clear in this situation whether the actions of the god resulted in a visible

manifestation.[31] Yet similar spells did involve the god acting directly to arouse the sexual

desire of a woman.

The *Alexander Romance* begins with the story of Alexander's conception and birth.

Contrary to popular opinion, the author explains, Alexander was not the son of the

Macedonian King Philip but the son of Egyptian royalty and divinity. Alexander's father was

both an Egyptian King, the powerful magician/prophet named Nektanebos, and the Egyptian

god, Ammon.[32] Nektanebos arrives in Macedonia and meets Queen Olympias, Alexander's

mother, while King Philip is away. He convinces her that she "must have intercourse with a

god on earth," and later disguises himself as that god in order to sleep with Olympias—a

deception so successful it is perpetrated on multiple occasions.[33] This "pseudo-epiphany"

was successful in part because Nektanebos had previously sent to the queen a dream of the

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[29] This language is common for epiphanies and divinely inspired dreams.

[30] PGM IV.2735-2744 (Betz).

[31] Other spells make it clear that a visible manifestation was anticipated. For instance, PGM IV.930-1114 is titled, "Charm that produces a direct vision" and provides a step-by-step guide to create an encounter with a god. The visible and physical nature of this divine encounter is demonstrated by the following instructions: "When he comes in, after greeting him, step with your left heel on the big toe of his right foot, and he will not / go away unless you raise you heel from his toe and at the same time say the dismissal" (PGM IV.1054-1056 [Betz]).

[32] *Alexander Romance* 1.1*, 30.*

[33] *Alexander Romance* 1.4, 70.

god Ammon.[34]

> So Nektanebos left the queen and picked from the wasteland herbs he knew for
> bringing dreams and extracted their juices. Then he made a wax model in the shape of
> a woman and wrote on it the name of Olympias. He lit lamps and, sprinkling the juice
> from the herbs over them, invoked with oaths the demons appointed for this function
> so that Olympias had a vision. And she saw the god Ammon embracing her that night
> and as he arose from her, saying to her, "Woman, you have a male child in your
> womb to be your avenger!" Olympias arose from her sleep in amazement and with all
> speed sent for Nektanebos, and when he came, said to him: "I have seen the dream
> and the god Ammon you told me about. I beg you prophet, bring me together with
> him again. [...]" He replied: "First of all, mistress, what you saw was a dream. When
> the god comes in person into your sight, he will see to your needs."[35]

Nektanebos employed magical practices in order to send a sex-epiphany to Olympias. In this
case, the "dream" (ὄνειρος) is distinguished from the manifestation of the god "in person"
(ὅτε δὲ αὐτὸς ἐπ᾽ ὄψει ἔλθῃ σοι).[36] Although Ammon may have impregnated Olympias
through the dream, the primary function of the dream within the narrative was to arouse the
queen sexually, to introduce her to the appearance of the god, and to lead her into the arms of
Nektanebos disguised as that god.[37]

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[34] *Alexander Romance* 1.5-6. Nektanebos later sends dreams to Philip in order to convince him that his wife was impregnated by a god; see *Alexander Romance* 1.7.

[35] *Alexander Romance* 1.5-6; trans. Ken Dowden, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2008 [org. 1989]); ellipsis added.

[36] *Alexander Romance* 1.6; Greek from Helmut van Thiel, *Leben und Taten Alexanders von Makedonien: Der griechische Alexanderroman nach der Handschrift L* (Texte zur Forschung 13; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974).

[37] Nektanebos's response to the queen's dream seems to imply that the dream is less real—or at least less satisfying—than the manifestation of a god "in person." Yet Ammon's pronouncement within the dream, that

After Olympias's first sexual encounter with the god "in person," she asks

Nektanebos, "Will this god be coming back to me? I had such pleasure from him."[38]

Nevertheless, not all sex-epiphanies were desired. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is filled with

examples of rape and attempted rape of mortals by gods. For instance, recall Jupiter's attempt

to seduce Io and lure her to a secluded location; then, when all subtlety had failed, he forced

her into a secluded location by concealing her with a cloud and raped her.[39] This story was

already known from Aeschylus's tragedy, *Prometheus Bound*. Yet Ovid's collection and

rewriting of such stories demonstrates that tales of divine rape persisted into the early

centuries of the common era. Other authors from this same period attributed the immoral

actions and passions of the gods to lesser divinities and *daemons*. For instance, in his

Obsolescence of Oracles, Plutarch describes "appeasement and conciliation for evil

daimones" as an attempt to satisfy "the insane and despotic erotic passion of beings incapable

of or unwilling to have sexual intercourse in a physical way."[40] Whether anyone believed that

this actually happened or could happen to them cannot be established through the work of

Ovid and Plutarch alone. But when one considers the prevalence of this motif in literature

and art, it becomes increasingly plausible that some people experienced frightening dreams

involving lustful gods and daemons.[41] In fact, a second-century collection of dream-accounts

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she now had a male child in her womb, could imply that he (the god) had impregnated her in the dream. In fact, the author insists that the god Ammon is Alexander's legitimate father when he later narrates an epiphany to the grown Alexander; see *Alexander Romance* 1.30. A similar pseudo-epiphany involving sex is found in Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.65-80.

[38] *Alexander Romance* 1.7; trans. Dowden.

[39] Ovid, *Metam.* 1.583-751; esp. 1.600.

[40] Plutarch, *Def. orac.* 14 (417d-e); trans. as found in Frederick E. Brenk, "In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," *ANRW* 16.3:2119. For more on the sexual attacks of daemons, see Brenk, "Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," 2119, 2133, 2138-2140.

[41] Regarding art, consider the popular statues of Priapus, a god characterized by his extraordinarily large and

and interpretations includes a category titled, "to have sex with a god or goddess or to be penetrated by a god." This category is divided into two subcategories: dreams in which the recipient "delight[s] in the intercourse" and those in which "they do not delight in it."[42]

Divine Directions and Interventions

One of the common functions of epiphanies was to reveal information about the present or the future. We have already seen two examples. Asclepius revealed to Galen's father that his son would be a physician and, in the *Alexander Romance*, Apollo revealed that Queen Olympius would give birth to a male child. Another famous example of a predictive epiphany is found in Plato's *Crito* and is retold in Cicero's *On Divination*. Socrates's execution had been delayed pending the return of a certain ship from the island of Delos. The dialogue begins with Crito waking the peacefully sleeping Socrates to warn him that the ship would arrive that very day. Yet Socrates insists that he will not yet die and relates this dream to Crito: "I thought that a beautiful and comely woman dressed in white approached me. She called me and said: 'Socrates, may you arrive at the fertile Phthia on the third day.'"[43] Socrates interpreted the message to mean that he would not die for another three days.[44]

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erect phallus, and the vulgar inscriptions that accompanied them: *uerve, haec cunnum, caput hic praebeat, ille nates. Per medios ibit pueros mediasque puellas mentula, barbatis non nisi summa petet*; see Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21; and Marguerite Johnson, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature : A Sourcebook* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 145.

[42] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 1.80; trans. Daniel E. Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus' Oneirocritica: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[43] Plato, *Crito* 44a-b; trans G.M.A. Grube, *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianopolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

[44] Both Socrates and Crito proclaimed that the meaning of this dream was "clear," but scholars continue to debate the meaning of this quotation of Achilles about his Phthian home; cf. *Iliad* 9.363. For commentary, see R.G.A. van Lieshout, *Greeks on Dreams* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: HES Publishers, 1980), 106-107; Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 25.

Socrates's future was revealed by an unnamed goddess in a dream.[45]

The second-century C.E. interpreter of dreams, Artemidorus, shares an example of a predictive dream that seemed to be an epiphany, but turned out to be an enigmatic divine message. "A certain person imagined that Pan said to him: 'Your wife will administer poison to you by means of a certain so-and-so who is an acquaintance and familiar to you.'"[46] According to Artemidorus, this seemingly unambiguous divine message about a future poisoning was actually a warning about adultery: "The wife of this man did not poison him, but had an affair with that man through whom it was said that she would administer the poison."[47] Artemidorus insists that the message was actually true but enigmatic:

> The wife of this man did not poison him, but had an affair with that man through whom it was said that she would administer the poison. For in fact adultery and poisoning both arise through stealth and both are said to be plots, and the adulteress and the woman administering poison both do not love their husband. And, in addition to these things, not long afterwards his wife received a divorce. For death releases all things, and poison has the same logic as death.[48]

What this "certain person" had experienced as a predictive epiphany, Artemidorus interprets as a predictive enigmatic dream. For Artemidorus, it would seem that the proper response to any such experience was to seek the help of a dream interpreter like himself.[49]

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[45] The description of the woman as beautiful, comely, and dressed in white demonstrates her divinity; see discussion on recognizing gods below. See below for discussion of this epiphany in Cicero, *Div.* 1.52.

[46] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 4.71.

[47] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 4.71.

[48] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 4.71.

[49] For more on Artemidorus's interpretation of dreams, see below.

In the case of Socrates and the "certain person" described by Artemidorus, a god intervened to provide information about their futures. Sometimes divine intervention was more direct. In the Homeric epics, gods fought alongside humans, gathered support or supplies for those in need, and counseled their human friends and deceived their enemies. They often performed these actions in disguise or out of sight so that only the results were seen by human eyes. In the *Iliad*, Ares appears in the form of Acamas, the Thracian captain, in order to rally the Trojans.[50] Apollo, invisible, strikes Patroclus with his hand, stunning him so that Hector can deal the fatal blow.[51] Apollo hides Agenor from Achilles, then takes on Agenor's form in order to lead Achilles away from his target.[52] In the *Odyssey*, Athena assumes the form of Telemachus in order to prepare a ship and gather a crew for Telemachus.[53]

This idea of direct divine intervention was not limited to Homeric literature. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, towards the end of the first century BCE, records the story of an early Roman ruler who received similar direct divine assistance. Numa, the fabled successor to Romulus, was believed to lead the Romans with divinely granted wisdom. Dionysius relates a popular account that had convinced some people Numa was favored by the nymph, Egeria (Hygeria), or one of the Muses.

> ...when people were incredulous at first, as may well be supposed, and regarded the story concerning the goddess as an invention, he, in order to give the unbelievers a manifest proof of his converse with this divinity, did as follows, pursuant to her

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[50] Homer, *Il.* 5.462.

[51] Homer, *Il.* 16.787-796.

[52] Homer, *Il.* 21.600.

[53] Homer, *Od.* 2.383.

instructions. He invited to the house where he lived a great many of the Romans, all

men of worth, and having shown them his apartments, very meanly provided with

furniture and particularly lacking in everything that was necessary to entertain a

numerous company, he ordered them to depart for the time being, but invited them to

dinner in the evening. And when they came at the appointed hour, he showed them

rich couches and tables laden with a multitude of beautiful cups, and when they were

at table, he set before them a banquet consisting of all sorts of viands, such a banquet,

indeed, as it would not have been easy for any man in those days to have prepared in

a long time. The Romans were astonished at everything they saw, and from that time

they entertained a firm belief that some goddess held converse with him.[54]

In this account, a god is not seen, but the results of her presence prove that she had

appeared—and, in this case, that she regularly appeared to Numa. Long after Homer, there

were still stories of the gods directly assisting their favored humans.

Worship and Divine Acceptance

Sometimes gods appeared, not to reveal information or offer direct aid, but simply to

show their approval of the faithful and to participate in acts of worship or conversion.

Pausanias travelled throughout Greece in the mid-second century CE and produced a series

of books describing the Greek cities, their monuments, and their architecture. Pausanias

imbued these landscapes and cityscapes with a sense of the divine by chronicling religious

festivals and manifestations of the gods that occurred in the various locations. For instance,

in his discussion of the Sanctuary of Dionysus in the southern Greek city of Eleia, he

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[54] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.60; trans. Earnest Cary, *Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Anitiquitates romanae*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937). Dionysius seems to doubt the reliability of this account; see discussion in Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 289.

includes an epiphany. It occurred regularly at the Feast of Thuia that was celebrated outside of the city in honor of Dionysus.

> The priests take three empty basins in the presence of the citizens and of any foreigners there may be and deposit them in a building. The priests themselves and anyone else who wants put seals on the doors of the building; the seals can be inspected the next day, and then when they go inside they find the basins full of wine.[55]

In this description of the miraculous manifestation of wine, there is no account of a visible anthropomorphic appearance of Dionysus. Nevertheless, those who participated in the festival insist that "the god himself visits them at the feast of Thuia."[56] It is not clear whether they believed the wine to be evidence that the god had been present during the night or whether the wine itself was understood to be a manifestation of the god of wine—after all, Dionysus was known to transform his appearance.[57] Regardless, it was widely accepted that Dionysus was present at their festival.[58]

Sometimes worship prepared a person to encounter divinity. While little is known about the Mystery Religions of Isis, Dionysus, Mithras, and others, central to some of them was a ritual practice that prepared initiates to present themselves before the gods in an

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[55] Pausanias, *Descr.* 6.26.1-2; trans. Peter Levi, *Pausanias Guide to Greece* (London: Penguin Books, 1971).

[56] Pausanias, *Descr.* 6.26.1; trans. Levi.

[57] See *Hymn Dion*. For more on the idea that a God's "sign", such as wine for Dionysus, could function as a manifestation of the God, see Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 67-73. For more on divine transformations or "polymorphy," see the section with that title below.

[58] Pausanias admits that he was not present for the feast, but he provides examples of similar miracles from other cities to corroborate the claims of the Eleans; see *Descr.* 4.26.2.

experience that is best described as an epiphany.[59] There is evidence from texts and monuments that would suggest that priests or initiates wore masks or they carried and presented objects that represented the deities.[60] It is possible that initiates were inducted into the presence of gods by encountering priests dressed as the gods, statues of the gods, or certain ritual objects representing the gods. The Eleusinian Mysteries, for instance, culminated with priests acting as the gods in the presence of a large fire.[61] Nevertheless, the experience is most often described as a direct encounter with the gods themselves. One famous account is found in the Latin novel of Apuleius called *Metamorphoses* or the *Golden Ass*. The story concludes with protagonist, Lucius, inducted into the mysteries of Isis. He describes the final ceremony as follows:

> I approached the confines of death. I trod the threshold of Proserpine; and borne through the elements I returned. At midnight I saw the Sun shining in all his glory. I approached the gods below and the gods above, and I stood beside them, and I worshipped them.[62]

Although the actions of the priests are described in other parts of Lucius's initiation rituals, here, at the climax, it is the gods themselves who appear.

Similar epiphanies could accompany individual conversions. The Jewish

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[59] On Mystery Religions, see Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); Marvin W. Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook of Sacred Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999 [org. 1987]); Jan N. Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014). On Mysteries in the Roman Imperial Period, see esp. Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 81-141.

[60] Meyer, *Ancient Mysteries*, 11-12.

[61] See Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 11-16; and K Clinton, "Epiphany in the Eleusinian Mysteries," *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (2004): 85-101. Similarly, the Mithras Liturgy describes a ritual that culminates in an encounter with Mithras; see Meyer, *Ancient Mysteries*, 212.

[62] Apuleius, *Metam.* 11.23; trans. Meyer, *Ancient Mysteries*, 189.

pseudepigraphical work *Joseph and Aseneth* includes an epiphany in the story of Aseneth's

conversion to Judaism.[63] After she repents of her worship of idols and false gods, an angel

appears to her. "[A]nd behold, close to the morning star, the heaven was torn apart and great

and unutterable light appeared. And Aseneth saw (it) and fell on (her) face on the ashes. And

a man came to her from heaven and stood by Aseneth's head."[64] Unlike the Mystery

initiations that culminated with an epiphany, here the divine being functions as the priest who

guides Aseneth through an initiation.[65] He instructs her to wash and put on new clothing,

offers her special food and drink, anoints her and give her a new name, then guides her

through an unusual ritual involving honeycomb and bees.[66] When he had finished, "the man

went away out of her sight. And Aseneth saw (something) like a chariot of four horses

traveling into heaven toward (the) east."[67] Aseneth's conversion was completed by an angel,

she was initiated through an epiphany.

Art as Epiphany

The potential for divine epiphany was experienced by all. It was experienced not only

though literary and epigraphical accounts like those reviewed above, but also in images.

Public and private spaces were filled with images of the gods in the form of paintings,

mosaics, reliefs, statues, statuettes, and coins. Materially, the gods were omnipresent. The

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[63] For dating, see John J. Collins, "Joseph and Aseneth: Jewish or Christian?" *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 14 (2005): 97-112.

[64] *Joseph and Aseneth* 14.3-4; trans. C. Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (ed. by James H. Charlesworth; New York: DoubleDay, 1985) 177-247.

[65] For a comparison of the "initiation" of Aseneth to Mystery Religions, see Randall D Chesnutt, *From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth* (Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 217-253.

[66] *Joseph and Aseneth* 14-17.

[67] *Joseph and Aseneth* 17.6; trans. Burchard.

difference between these material representations of the gods and the manifestations of the gods themselves is often ambiguous. As H.S. Versnel explains, "Images and statues were regarded as the vehicle of the divine parousia far more directly and concretely than we usually realize."[68] Fritz Graf's observation reinforces this point:

> The distance between a god's statue and a god's personal appearance is shorter than we think. Divinities could appear in the form of their statues, both in dreams and in visions. ... And once the anthropomorphic form is seen not as the real physical image of a divinity, but as just another form to make the divine essence accessible to human perception, the distance between god and image can become even smaller.[69]

There are numerous examples that demonstrate this close connection between the gods themselves and their material images.

Consider Plutarch's early second-century CE account of the "second founder of Rome," Camillus.[70] After the Battle of Veii (c.396 BCE), Camillus had intended to take the city's statue of Juno back to Rome. Plutarch describes the scene as follows: "Camillus was sacrificing and praying the goddess to accept of their zeal and to be a kindly co-dweller with the gods of Rome, when the image, they say, spoke in low tones and said she was ready and

[68] H.S. Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See when he Saw a God? Some Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," in *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions* (ed. Dirk van der Plas; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 46.

[69] Fritz Graf, "Trick or Treat? On Collective Epiphanies in Antiquity," *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (2004): 125. This idea is reflected in the writings of Artemidorus, the second-century dream interpreter: "It makes no difference whether one sees the goddess as we imagine her to be or her statue. For whether the gods appear in the flesh or as statues crafted from matter, they possess the same logic;" *Interpretation of Dreams* 2.35. It must be acknowledged that all dream images possessed the same logic for Artemidorus because they all had an allegorical meaning; ee Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 277. Yet this particular connection between a god's appearance as statue or "in the flesh" is seen in other texts as well; see below.

[70] Plutarch, *Life of Camillus* 1.1; trans. Bernadotte Perrin, *Plutarch: Life of Camillus*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984 [org. 1916]).

willing."[71] The goddess revealed her will by addressing Camillus through her statue.[72] Another example is found in Suetonius's *Life of Galba*. Writing around the same time as Plutarch, Suetonius describes an epiphany of Fortune that occurs in a dream and through a statue. When Galba was old enough to begin his political career, he had a dream. In this dream, Fortune appeared in order to reveal that she was standing outside his door and would leave unless he admitted her quickly. When he awoke, he opened his door and discovered a bronze statue of Fortune. He took this statue with him to his summer home in Tusculum and honored her there "with monthly sacrifices and a yearly vigil."[73] The goddess was her statue.[74]

Even this cursory review of epiphany accounts reveals their prominence in the cultural discourse of the second and third centuries CE. These accounts come from epics, histories, biographies, novels, philosophical treatises, medical texts, handbooks, and inscriptions. In them, divine beings appear in various circumstances for diverse purposes. They appear in times of illness or pain, providing strength and encouragement, performing healings including surgeries, and offering prescriptions and other medical advice. They appear in order to arrange marriages, encourage love and sex, and to engage in sex

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[71] Plutarch, *Life of Camillus* 6.1; trans. Perrin.

[72] Plutarch acknowledges that some people doubt this version of the story and do not believe that the statue spoke. He then provides evidence of similar marvels, "such as statues often dripping with sweat, images uttering audible groans, turning away their faces, and closing their eyes;" Plutarch, *Life of Camillus* 6.3; trans. Perrin. Plutarch himself cautions against believing or rejecting such phenomena too quickly: "But in such matters eager credulity and excessive incredulity are alike dangerous;" Plutarch, *Life of Camillus* 6.4; trans. Perrin.

[73] Suetonius's *Life of Galba* 4.3; trans. J.C. Rolfe, *Suetonius; Life of Galba*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984 [org. 1916]).

[74] This connection between the manifestation of the god in a dream and as a statue is also seen at the end of his reign. Galba had a special necklace made for his statue of Fortune, but decided suddenly to consecrate it to Capitoline Venus instead. That night Fortune appeared in his dreams and complained that she had been robbed. See Suetonius's *Life of Galba* 18.2.

themselves. The gods were believed to aid humans in times of war and in times of peace. They foretold births, deaths, future occupations, and other affairs. Divine beings appear in order to fight alongside their human devotees, to guide them on journeys, and even to prepare a banquet. They participate in religious festivals, aid in religious conversions, and welcome new initiates into their presence. Gods also appear in order to direct people in how to worship and what to worship.

Trends in the Narration and Practice of Epiphanies

These epiphanies occurred in a great variety of circumstances and are represented in diverse literary genres. Despite this diversity, there are common threads that run through many of these accounts. The following sections will focus on key themes in the narration of epiphanies and the practices that surround them, including: (1) the function of the gods' many forms, (2) how those gods were recognized, (3) how epiphanies were validated in public life, (4) the role of dream specialists, and (5) the authorizing power of epiphanies.

Polymorphy of the Gods in Epiphanies

The divine beings who appeared manifested themselves in multiple forms. Gods were recognized as gods, despite their human form, because of their differences from humans. As Versnel explains:

> Greeks, including Greeks in Hellenistic times, and Romans after their first contacts with the Greek world imagined their gods as beings distinct from mortals in power, size, beauty, eternal health and vigour, but not in appearance. With a few minor exceptions gods look like human beings even to having their own specific features.[75]

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[75] Versnel, "Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," 43. The identifying features of gods will be addressed below.

Yet the divine appearance was not always easy to discern.[76] The gods of the Greco-Roman world could appear in the form of other gods, humans, plants, animals, and various objects. This diversity of forms is exemplified by Petridou's summary of Asclepius's manifestations:

> Polymorphism is particularly characteristic of Asklepios. His devotees often experience his presence in the form of his cult statue, in the form of a snake, as well as in the form of a beautiful youth, and even clad in gleaming military attire, resembling thus the belligerent gods of the *Iliad*.[77]

This divine metamorphic ability, or polymorphy, served different functions in the ancient narratives and discussions of epiphanies. These functions can be described as falling into at least five different categories: (1) theological, (2) anthropological or epistemological, (3) soteriological, (4) narratological, and (5) practical.[78] Polymorphy functions <u>theologically</u> when divine transformation demonstrates or reveals divinity. When Dionysus is captured by pirates in the Homeric Hymn, all but the helmsman doubt his divinity because he appeared as "a young man."[79] The crew realize their error and flee in terror when vines full of grapes

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[76] After describing how gods could be identified by their specific features, however, Versnel acknowledges that "we are ... confronted with an ambiguity;" Versnel, "Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," 45. That ambiguity is 'polymorphy.'

[77] Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 21.

[78] These divisions and labels are my own and serve only to demonstrate the diverse functions of polymorphy. For more on polymorphy in Greek and Latin literature, see respectively Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 19-31; Christian Zgoll, *Phänomenologie der Metamorphose: Verwandlungen und Verwandtes in der augusteischen Dichtung* (Classica Monacensia 28; Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2004). On epiphany and polymorphy in Homer, see B.C. Dietrich, "Divine epiphanies in Homer," *Numen* 30 (1983): 53-79; H.J. Rose, "Divine Disguisings," *HTR* 49 (1956): 63-72; Warren Smith, "The Disguises of the Gods in the 'Iliad'," *Numen* 35 (1988): 161-178; Daniel Wallace Turkeltaub, "The Gods' radiance manifest: an examination of the narrative pattern underlying the Homeric divine epiphany scenes" (Diss., Cornell University, 2003). For discussion of polymorphy in early Christian literature, see Chapter 3.

[79] *Hymn Dion. l.*3; trans. Apostolos Athanassakis, *The Homeric Hymns* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004 [org. 1976]).

spread through the ship and Dionysus transforms into "a fearsome, loud-roaring lion."[80] Polymorphy can also serve an anthropological or epistemological purpose by reflecting a person's character or a person's capacity to see the gods. This is portrayed with comedic effect in Aristophanes's play, *The Clouds*. There the "clouds," or goddesses, appeared as wolves when seen by "a predator of public funds," as centaurs when seen by "a savage with long hair, one of these furry types," and as women when viewed by an effeminate man.[81] Philo of Alexandria, the first century Jewish philosopher, also employs polymorphy in this way when he suggests that God's initial appearance to Abraham in the form of three angelic beings was the result of human weakness: "He in his oneness is likened to a triad because of the weakness of the beholders."[82] Since the gods often transformed themselves in order to hide their identity as they tested or aided human beings, another function of polymorphy could be described as soteriological. Recall how Ares, Apollo, and Athena assumed different disguises in the Homeric epics—as did the angel Raphael in Tobit—in order to intervene more directly in human affairs.

These categories of polymorphy were not mutually exclusive. In fact, the three described so far could function consecutively or simultaneously within a narrative in order to further the plot. In such instances, polymorphy might be said to have a narratological function—what Petridous calls a "functional metamorphosis." Based on Greek narratives spanning pre-classical and the Roman imperial periods, Petridou has argued that the

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[80] *Hymn Dion. l.*44; trans. Athanassakis.

[81] Aristophanes, *Nub.* 341-364; trans. Jeffrey Henderson, *Aritophanes: Clouds*; LCL (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); adapted.

[82] *QG* 4.8; trans. Ralph Marcus, *Philo: Questions and Answers on Genesis*; LCL (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1953). For discussion, see Scott D. Mackie, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: The Logos, the Powers, or the Existent One?" *Studia Philonica* 21 (2009): 40.

polymorphic forms chosen by the "Greek gods aim for what could be described as a 'functional metamorphosis,' namely an anthropomorphic likeness that would guarantee ... effectiveness in their interaction with the human perceiver."[83] She supports this claim with a lengthy list of examples that begins as follows:

> It makes sense for a god to disguise himself as a belligerent king when intending to destroy a part of mankind, just as it makes sense for a goddess who wants to find a surrogate baby to disguise herself as a nurse. It is reasonable for Dionysus, who seeks to introduce his cult to a new city, to disguise himself as a wandering priest; but when he wants to scare the pirates, he can revert to his more terrifying zoomorphic guise.[84]

In other words, narratives of polymorphic epiphanies often present a connection between the god's disguise and god's actions that functions logically within the development of a plot.

Finally, polymorphy could serve <u>practical</u> purposes. Robin Lane Fox has suggested that, in certain circumstances, polymorphy could help to distinguish between different gods whose visual identities had not been established:

> Since the age of the epic heroes, statues and paintings had become a fundamental influence on the way the divine world was "envisioned." It is particularly significant that the dreams and visions in Homer show none of art's effects, for Homer had composed the epics before portrait statues had been widely available: we have seen how, by night and day, his gods appeared always in disguises, taking the form of other men and women. How else could they appear clearly, with separate identities? As Greek sculpture developed, it fixed mortals' ideas of their gods as individuals: the

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[83] Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 27-28.

[84] Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 27.

distinct "personality" of the Greek gods has been questioned, but art was an enduring

mould which helped to form it.[85]

Lane Fox suggests that the gods' disguises allowed them to "appear clearly, with separate

identities" in a time before their visual identities were well known.[86]

Even after certain visual identities had become popular, polymorphy could allow a

form associated with one god to be interpreted as belonging to another. Charles King, in his

article on Roman religious beliefs, suggests that one practical function of polymorphy was

that it "provided a counter-balance to the fragmenting nature of polythetic diversity" by

associating one god with another.[87] King explains:

> Polymorphism could reduce the amount of ceremonial obligation that each
>
> worshipper owed the gods. If deities could be equated with each other, then it was not
>
> necessary to worship them all separately. In one prayer, Catullus prayed to Diana,
>
> mentioned that the goddess had three other manifestations, and then included a broad
>
> formula that allowed her to have any number of additional identities.[88]

In King's example, Catullus addresses the goddess, Diana, and through the course of his

prayer calls her Juno Lucina, Trivia, and Luna.[89] He then concludes by saying, "May you be

hallowed by whatever name pleases you."[90] With this single prayer, Catullus addresses four

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[85] Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 153.

[86] Lane Fox argues that this explains Christian polymorphy as well: "If nobody knew what Christ looked like, some such variation was anyway a fact of Christian experience;" Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 396-397. For more on polymorphy in early Christianity, see Chapter 3.

[87] Charles King, "The Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," *Classical Antiquity* 22 (2003): 292.

[88] King, "Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," 295.

[89] Catullus 34.13-16.

[90] Catullus 34.21-22; trans. as found in King, "Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," 293.

or more goddesses as one. Although Catullus does not describe an epiphany of these goddesses, King stresses that his prayer reflects not merely polyonymy but polymorphy: "the goddesses being identified with each other do not simply have different names, but distinct personas and attributes."[91] The virgin goddess Diana, for instance, had her own mythology and visual representation that differed from Juno, the wife of Jupiter and mother of Mars and Vulcan. A form associated with one god could be interpreted as the form of another.

Polymorphy could also make the identification of divine beings complicated.[92] In a world where a divine being might assume any form, any form might be a divine being. Versnel suggests that beliefs about the polymorphy of the gods created a world in which "ancient man could never be sure whether the person he was talking with was not actually a god in disguise."[93] Although it is not clear how many people believed that gods regularly walked among them, Versnel's statement aptly characterizes the problem: identification of the gods was not straight forward.[94] Even though divine transformation could demonstrate divinity, it also left the individual identity of a god ambiguous.

Recognizing Gods by their Common Characteristics

Whereas polymorphy emphasized the fluidity of divine forms, other characterizations of divine beings in literature, and especially art, had a stabilizing effect. Verity Platt describes this effect as a "mutually reinforcing bond" between epiphany and representations

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[91] King, "Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," 293-294.

[92] King acknowledges, "Polymorphism could also have the opposite effect, increasing the number of gods by adding new aspects to existing paradigms;" King, "Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," 295.

[93] Versnel, "Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," 46.

[94] Regarding this aspect of polymorphy, Petridou cites Plato, *Resp.* 2.380d and comments,"It is exactly this kind of divine polymorphism, as incorporated in poetry and popular culture, that Plato criticises in the second book of his Republic as harmful for the young Guardians;" Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 21.

of the gods:

> ...within Greek culture, epiphany (by which I mean the manifestation of deities to mortals) inspired, and was in turn inspired by, practices of visual and literary representation, generating a mutually reinforcing bond that operated within both identifiably sacred contexts and the cultural imagination at large.[95]

The gods could appear extraordinarily tall, especially beautiful, pleasant smelling, or magnificently bright, emanating light, and could transform their physical appearance. Such characteristics made the gods identifiable as gods, but did not help in identifying the individual personality of a god. Material representations of the gods could help to establish their visual identities. In the above quotation from Robin Lane Fox on polymorphy, he suggested that, by the time of the Roman imperial period, "statues and paintings had become a fundamental influence on the way the divine world was 'envisioned'" and that they "fixed mortals' ideas of their gods as individuals."[96] In fact, narratives of epiphanies often affirm that a deity resembled a popular depiction in art. In the appearance of Athena to Aelius Aristides, Athena quoted Homer to Aristides. It is possible that Aristides's familiarity with Athena from literary works influenced his identification of her—after all, Athena bore the aegis familiar from myth. Yet, in his own description of the experience, Aristides suggests that the goddess was identifiable as Athena because she appeared as "the whole form of the Athena of Phidias in Athens."[97] He recognized Athena because her appearance matched the

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[95] Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 7; cf. Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 19. For a similar theory on the relationship between epiphany and visual representations in the modern world, see David Morgan, "Image, Art and Inspiration in Modern Apparitions," in *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art and History* (ed. Colum Hourihane; Index of Christian Art, Occasional Papers Princeton: Index of Christian Art in association with Princeton University Press, 2010), 265-282.

[96] Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 153.

[97] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.42 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

famous statue in Athens, crafted by Phidias. Aristides was not the only one to identify a god

by appealing to art. In the novel *Daphnis and Chloe*, nymphs are identified by comparison

with their statues: "Then the three Nymphs appeared to him, tall and beautiful, half-naked

and bare-footed, with their hair loose, looking in every respect like their statues.[98] In

Chariton's novel, *Callirhoe*, the role of art in recognizing a god is central to the plot. The

protagonist, Callirhoe, is mistaken for the goddess Aphrodite because her appearance is

similar to a statue in the local temple.[99] The connection between art and the manifestations of

the gods was seen above in examples from histories and biographies. In Plutarch's *Camillus*,

the statue of Juno was itself the manifestation of the goddess.[100] In Suetonius's *Life of Galba*,

the identification motif was reversed. Rather than recognizing the god by comparison to a

statue, Galba recognized the statue outside his door because it looked like the goddess who

had appeared in his dream.[101] By the second century CE, visual representations of the gods

were commonly associated with epiphanies in literature, and in the social world of the empire

visual representations of the gods were prevalent.[102]

Epiphanies in Public Life

Most epiphanies are private, subjective experiences that occur between a single

individual and a god. The social acceptance of epiphany narratives is, therefore, dependent

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[98] Longus, *Daph.* 2.22-23; trans. as found in Petridou, "On Divine Ephiphanies."

[99] Chariton, *Chaer.* 2.3.

[100] Plutarch, *Cam.* 6.1

[101] Suetonius, *Galb.* 18.2.

[102] On the prevalence of artistic representation of the gods by the second century CE, see Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 73-94. For more on gods resembling their statues in epiphanies, see Renberg, "Epigraphical Study of Dreams and Visions,"240-243; Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 61, 204; Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 258.

on successful public demonstrations of a private phenomenon. This can be challenging, as Verity Platt explains.

> The subjectivity of oneiric experience and the inevitable lack of witnesses mean that the dream's cognitive reliability is particularly open to challenge. Accordingly, dream visions are often supported by external 'proof' mechanisms, such as daylight epiphanies that corroborate the dreamer's experience; identical dreams experienced by another individual; the leaving of symbolic tokens by the visitor ('apport' dreams); or ... repeated visitations.[103]

These "proof mechanisms" rely on this-worldly aspects of otherworldly experiences. Some examples of these proofs were already seen above. For instance, Aelius Aristides described divine encounters as occurring while awake or "between asleep and awake."[104] Another account from Aelius Aristides demonstrated how an individual dream could be corroborated by the dreams of others. Theodotus refused to accept Aristides's dream until it was verified by Philadelphus who had received a similar dream.[105] Shared or corroborating dreams could benefit not only the individual, but also an entire community. For instance, Artemidorus explains that different dreams from different people could combine to foretell a future "common good" coming to their community: "[W]hen a common good is about to occur for a city, one will hear of thousands of dreams being mentioned that signify the coming event with visions that are various and different from each other."[106] The idea that a physical object

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[103] Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 256.

[104] E.g., Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.33 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

[105] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 48.30 (*Sacred Tales* 2).

[106] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 1.2.

or "apport" might be left behind by the otherworldly visitor was also seen above.[107] In the account of healing from the Epidaurus inscription discussed above, the patient awoke to find in his hands the leeches that he had seen Asclepius remove during his dream.[108] In the Jewish apocryphal work, 2 Maccabees, Judas Maccabeus brandishes a sword that he received in a dream from Jeremiah, the long deceased prophet.[109] In both of these accounts a physical object transitioned from an otherworldly to a this-worldly state, from a private experience to an experience that could be publicly demonstrated.

Dream Specialists

The transition from subjective experience to the social practices of narrating, interpreting, and acting in accordance with the message of an epiphany or other dream could be aided by specialists. If one had experienced a dream in connection with a temple—e.g., in response to a prayer, sacrifice, or incubation—the temple wardens or priests could help to interpret, as Aelius Aristides described. Yet official cults were not the only option. In the marketplace, one could find dream-interpreters who, for a fee, could explain the meaning of dreams, sometimes predicting the future.[110] Likewise, if one needed a spell to solicit the help of a particular god, other dream-specialists could be found in the market.[111] If someone

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[107] For more on apports, see Kessels, "Dream-Classification," 390; Lieshout, *Greeks on Dreams*, 22; Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 43-44.

[108] A13; LiDonnici, *Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions*, 95.

[109] 2 Macc. 15:11–16. On apports in Jewish literature, see Robert Karl Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Traditio-Historical Analysis* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1996), 259.

[110] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 1.praef. According to the Babylonian Talmud, in the Roman period there were 24 rabbinic dream-interpreters practicing in Jerusalem for a fee; cf. *b. Berakot* 55a-b. For a nuanced discussion on the number of dream interpreters during the Roman Imperial period, see Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 134-135.

[111] Plautus, *Mil. glor.* 692–694; Origen, *Cels.* 1.68; Matthew Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 128; cf. 208, 217.

experienced a bad dream, a *pharmakis* or *saga* could provide means of purification and protection to avoid that dream or its consequences in the future.[112] As Matthew Dickie has shown, itinerant magicians and holy men or women could be found not only in the marketplace, but also "at street-corners [...], and around the theatres, amphitheatres, hippodromes and temples of the more substantial towns."[113] As Harris has argued, however, "It seems to be precisely at religious centres [such as Epidaurus and Memphis] that dream-interpreters flourished most, quite naturally."[114] Some dream-specialists were sought because of their ethnicity. Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Jews were all considered innately qualified as interpreters of dreams.[115] Sometimes an acquaintance or close friend who was not a professional dream interpreter would be sought out if she or he were considered gifted. An example of this is found in Plutarch's *Life of Cimon* when Cimon has a dream that foretells his death. For Cimon "the vision was difficult to interpret," so he asked his close friend, Astyphilus of Posidonia whom he considered "inspired," to help interpret the dream.[116] Temple officials and cult priests, professional dream interpreters or magicians, as well as individuals or peoples presumed to be gifted were consulted to confirm or explain dreams and to protect from or solicit divine encounters. These various specialists were not valued equally. Whether a dreamer consulted a specialist and which specialist he or she visited, would depend on the social status of the dreamer. For instance, citing Plutarch's account of

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[112] Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 14, 104, 159.

[113] Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 217.

[114] Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 168.

[115] Chaldeans (Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.27, Diodorus Siculus, 2.29.1-4 and Lucian, *Dial. mort.* 21.1), Egyptians (Origen, *Cels.* 1.68), Jews (Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.542–547); cf. Harrisson, *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empir*, 186-188; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 109-110.

[116] Plutarch, *Cim.* 18.

Cimon as an example, Harrisson has argued that, "the elite tended to interpret their dreams themselves."[117] When Cimon struggles to interpret his dream, he seeks help from a friend who is also "of high social standing."[118] Social status affected how one responded to an epiphany or other dream. It also affected how that experience was received by others.

Cultural Authority and Epiphanies

Epiphanies did not *de facto* grant any cultural authority. This was a consequence of what Platt describes as the "subjectivity of oneiric experience and the inevitable lack of witnesses."[119] As a form of cultural currency, the value of epiphanies was ambiguous. The probability that an epiphany or other divine dream would be accepted by a community was dependent on the social status of the dreamer within that community. It is the virtue or authority of the dreamer that grants the dream credibility.[120] For instance, historians and biographers who report such phenomena often acknowledge questions about the legitimacy of an epiphany, and only affirm its authenticity based on the status or virtue of the dreamer. In his *Life of Dion*, Plutarch acknowledges that "there are those who deny such things and say that no man in his right mind was ever visited by a spectre or an apparition from Heaven (φάντασμα δαίμονος μηδὲ εἴδωλον)," but then affirms the legitimacy of such phenomena because "Dion and Brutus, men of solid understanding and philosophic training and not easily cast down are overpowered by anything that happened to them, were so affected by a

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[117] Harrisson, *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empir*, 188.

[118] Harrisson, *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empir*, 188.

[119] Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 256.

[120] Below we will see how some philosophers taught that an individual's virtue or the condition of an individual's soul directly influenced the ability to receive and understand divine guidance in dreams.

spectre (ὑπὸ φάσματος) that they actually told others about it."[121] The importance of a

dreamer's social status is demonstrated by Artemidorus. If an individual receives a dream

that foretells of something good or bad that is about to happen in his city, Artemidorus

explains, "he alone is not qualified to receive the outcome, unless that someone is one of the

generals or <those> holding a different public office or a priest of a prophet of the city."[122] It

is that individual's culturally accepted status and authority within the community that

determines the credibility of his dream and its interpretation.[123] This prerequisite cultural

authority was not limited to class status. For instance, in his history of the late second-

century BCE slave uprising that occurred in the Roman province of Sicily, Diodorus Siculus

includes an account of Eunus, a slave who gained political authority through his epiphanies

and other dreams.[124]

> There was a certain Syrian slave, [Eunus,] ... [who] had an aptitude for magic and the
>
> working of wonders. He claimed to foretell the future, by divine command, through
>
> dreams (καθ᾽ ὕπνον), and because of his talent along these lines deceived many.
>
> Going on from there he not only gave oracles by means of dreams (ἐξ ὀνείρων), but
>
> even made a pretence of having waking visions of the gods (ἐγρηγορότως θεοὺς
>
> ὁρᾶν) and of hearing the future from their own lips. ... Prior to the revolt he used to
>
> say that the Syrian goddess appeared to him (τὴν Συρίαν θεὸν ἐπιφαινομένην), saying

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[121] Cf. Plutarch, *Dion* 2.4-6; Greek and translation by Bernadotte Perrin, *Plutarch: Life of Dion*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918).

[122] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 1.2.

[123] On dream interpretation among the elites, see Harrisson, *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empir*, 188-189. For dream and their interpretation among the emperors of Rome, see Gregor Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2000), 98-133.

[124] Eventually he is crowned king, see Fragments of Book 34.2.14

that he should be king, and he repeated this, not only to others, but even to his own master.[125]

As a slave, he did not have a class status that would grant any credibility to his claims about epiphanies. Yet his master, Antigenes, was persuaded.[126] Although it is possible that Diodorus is characterizing Antigenes as gullible, Matthew Dickie's alternative explanation has merit. Situating this account among others that describe the patronage of Syrian wonder-workers, Dickie suggests, "Their charismatic power lies in part in their ability to exploit the conviction of Greeks and Romans that as Syrians they were endowed with special powers and had access to especially potent and mysterious deities."[127] Eunus lacked a class status that would lend credibility to his dreams. Yet in a culture that prized Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Jews as dream-specialists, a Syrian in direct communication with "the Syrian goddess" could be trusted despite his class status.[128] Epiphanies and other divine-dreams could grant authority to an individual or legitimacy to an idea, but that effect was dependent on the dreamer's preexisting social and cultural authority.

Classification of Epiphanies and other Dreams

Most of the epiphany-narratives reviewed above were accepted by their authors or by the characters in the narratives as authentic manifestations of divine beings and as trustworthy. Yet seeing a god did not guarantee that a dream could be trusted. The purpose of

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[125] Diodorus Siculus, *Hist.* 34.2.4-5, 7; trans. Francis R. Walton, *Diodorus Siculus: Library of History, Volume 12, Fragments of Books 33-40*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); Greek, brackets, and ellipses added.

[126] ὁ μὲν Ἀντιγένης ψυχαγωγούμενος ἐπὶ τῇ τερατείᾳ (Diodorus Siculus, *Hist.* 34.2.8); Greek and trans. Walton. Diodorus himself is not persuaded—εἰς δὲ γέλωτα τρεπομένου τοῦ πράγματος (Diodorus Siculus, *Hist.* 34.2.8).

[127] Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 110.

[128] See Harrisson, *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empire*, 186-188; and see above.

this section is to describe common forms of dream classification that were influential by the second and third centuries CE in distinguishing between an epiphany and related phenomena.[129] As early as Homer, some dreams were categorized as deceptive.

> For two are the gates of shadowy dreams, and one is fashioned of horn and one of ivory. Those dreams that pass through the gate of ivory deceive men, bringing words that find no fulfillment. But those that come forth through the gate of polished horn bring true issues to pass, when any mortal sees them.[130]

In this passage from the *Odyssey*, a dream's significance depends on its origin.[131] R.G.A. van Lieshout has identified two general theories about the origins of dreams in pre-classical and classical Greek literature: "[E]ither the dream is represented as caused by the interference of supernatural powers, or it is represented as caused by something in a person's own mind and body."[132] Patricia Cox Miller labels these two explanations "theological" and "psychobiological."[133] Miller's summary of similar evidence from late antiquity suggests that, in broad terms, these two explanations remained remarkably consistent:

> Basically, there were two ways of conceptualizing the 'mechanics' of the production of dreams. One was psychobiological and attempted to naturalize the phenomena of

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[129] Remember Crapanzano's warning: "Dreams cannot be separated from their conceptualization and theorization, for that conceptualization and theorization affect, if not the experience of the dream, than its report;" Vincent Crapanzano, "The Betwixt and Between of the Dream," in *Hundert Jahre "Die Traumdeutung:" kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven in der Traumforschung* (ed. Burkhard Schnepel; Studien zur Kulturkunde Köln: Koppe, 2001), 232. See Introduction.

[130] Homer, *Od*. 19.562-7; trans. A.T. Murray, *Homer: Odyssey*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995 [org. 1919]).

[131] On the challenge of interpreting Homer's "gates," see Lieshout 38-39. In other passages, Homer suggests that dreams come from the gods; E.g. Homer, *Il.* 1.63, 10.495-507; *Od.* 4.795-801; 5.47-48.

[132] Lieshout, *Greeks on Dreams*, 34.

[133] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 42.

sleep and its attendant phantasms; the other was theological and connected the

dreaming soul with an invisible but very real realm of spiritual beings—angels,

daemons, gods.[134]

Those who accepted both explanations usually associated epiphanies and other divinatory

dreams with "theological" origins and considered "psychobiological" dreams to be

insignificant. The following section will address "psychobiological" explanations in order to

show how visible manifestations of gods could be dismissed as insignificant dreams.

Afterward, "theological" explanations will be reviewed to demonstrate how epiphanies could

be distinguished from other dreams that featured gods.

Psychobiological Origin of Insignificant Dreams featuring Gods

Dreams were not always accepted as meaningful messages sent from the divine. They

could be dismissed as insignificant and attributed to natural causes such as strong emotions,

appetites, and other physiological conditions. This view is exemplified in Cicero's *On

Divination*, which encapsulates the various dream-theories that were prominent in the first

century BCE and that continued to be influential in the centuries that followed.[135] It is written

as a Socratic dialogue. The character Quintus presents Stoic arguments that affirm the

legitimacy of divination through dreams, and the character Marcus argues that gods would

not communicate through dreams.[136] Their discussion of dreams includes epiphanies.

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[134] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 42.

[135] *On Divination* was written around 45 or 44 BCE as part of Cicero's encyclopedic work on Greek philosophy for a Latin speaking audience. Having completed his work on the subjects of logic and ethics, he proceeded to the subject of physics. *On Divination* formed the middle part of his trifecta on physics which included, first, *On the Nature of the Gods* and last, *On Fate*. For more background, see David Wardle, *Cicero On Divination: De Divinatione, Book 1* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 8-20.

[136] Quintus is Cicero's brother and Marcus, Cicero himself. Whether the arguments of this dialogue actually represent the views of Cicero and his brother remains a matter of debate; see Wardle, *Cicero On Divination*, 20;

William Harris has noted that epiphanies make up nearly one-third of the dream-narratives presented as evidence for divination in Cicero's work.[137] The examples include many of the same types of epiphanies reviewed above. The account of the epiphany that foretold Socrates's death is also included.[138] Marcus argues that Quintus's ostensible examples of epiphanies are actually insignificant dreams.

Marcus suggests that dreams arise 'naturally' from an individual's "ever-active soul" (*animus agitatus*) that "sees in sleep what it saw when the body was awake."[139]

> By 'nature,' in this connection, I mean that force because of which the soul can never be stationary and free from motion and activity. And when, because of the weariness of the body, the soul can use neither the limbs nor the senses, it lapses into varied and untrustworthy visions, which emanate from what Aristotle terms 'the clinging remnants of the soul's waking acts and thoughts.'[140]

Marcus seems to build his theory on Aristotle's idea that dreams arise from the remnants of waking-images (*phantasmata*) that linger in the sense-organs and then, during sleep, arrive at the soul's faculty of "imagination" (*phantastikon*).[141] The nature of this chapter does not

also Malcolm Schofield, "Cicero for and against Divination," *JRS* 76 (1986): 47-65; Bram ten Berge, "Dreams in Cicero's *De Divinatione*: Philosophical Tradition and Education," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 15 (2014): 53-66. This debate need not concern us here. Even if the opinions expressed by Cicero's characters do not represent his personal views, they nevertheless reflect a range of perspectives available within his culture at the time and available to his future readers in the second and third centuries CE.

[137] Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 52 and n.149; Harris identifies epiphanies in Cicero, *Div.* 1.48-49, 52-53, 55-56, 59. In Cicero, *Div.* 1.56, 59 it is not clear whether the anthropomorphic messengers are divine beings. On Cicero, *Div.* 1.55 as epiphany of Jupiter, see Wardle, *Cicero On Divination*, 246.

[138] Cicero, *Div.* 1.52. For discussion, see above.

[139] *...mobiliter animus agitatus, quod vigilans viderit, dormiens videre videatur*; Cicero, *Div.* 2.129; unless otherwise indicated, all translations and Latin of Cicero's *On Divination* come from W.A. Falconer, *Cicero: Divination*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923); altered.

[140] Cicero, *Div.* 2.128; see also *Div.* 2.139-140.

[141] Aristotle does not use Marcus's phrase "ever-active soul." For Aristotle, only some faculties of the soul

permit a detailed analysis of the psychological and epistemological theories of Cicero's

Marcus and Aristotle.[142] These philosophers are presented only as examples of the view that

insignificant dreams arise from within the human mind or soul. This view was not exclusive

to philosophers. For instance, Herodotus's history, written at the end of the fifth century

BCE, includes a similar explanation of dreams' human origin. When Xerxes was frightened

by the manifestation of a god, Artabanus explained, "dreams don't come from

gods...whatever thoughts occupy a man's mind in the daytime tend to pervade the visions of

his dreams."[143] Here, what seemed to be an epiphany is dismissed as an inconsequential

dream that originated from the day's lingering thoughts inside the human mind.

Even those who believed that the divine communicated through dreams accepted that

some dreams were meaningless and of human origin. For instance, in Cicero's *On

Divination*, Marcus's Stoic interlocutor Quintus allows that some dreams can be attributed to

the condition of a person's soul and body. Quoting Plato, Quintus argues that dreams will be

"peaceful and worthy of trust" only when one has satisfied in careful moderation the portion

of the soul that "feeds on carnal pleasures," having quieted the portion "in which the fire of

anger burns," and "having the thinking and reasoning portion of his soul eager and erect."[144]

Strong emotions, excessive appetites, and even certain foods can produce conditions in the

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remain active during sleep, the faculties of judgement and sense perception do not. Since we "see" in dreams
even though our sense organs and the faculty of sense perception are inactive, Aristotle reasons that dreams
must originate from a related faculty, the imagination (*phantastikon*). See David Gallop, *Aristotle on Sleep and
Dreams: A Text and Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Glossary* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press,
1990), 85-103.

[142] For more on Aristotle, see Gallop, *Aristotle on Sleep and Dreams*; on Cicero, see Wardle, *Cicero On
Divination*.

[143] Herodotus, *Hist*. 7.16; trans. Robin Waterfield, *Herodotus: The Histories*, OWC (Oxford: Oxford University
Press, 1998). Note, however, that Artabanus changes his opinion after the god appears to him as well; see
Herodotus, *Hist*. 7.16-18.

[144] Cicero, *Div*. 1.61; cf. Plato, *Resp*. 9.571c-572a.

body and soul that are not conducive to divine dreams.

> Now Plato's advice to us is to set out for the land of dreams with bodies so prepared
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> that no error or confusion may assail the soul. For this reason, it is thought, the
>
> Pythagoreans were forbidden to indulge in beans; for that food produces great
>
> flatulence and induces a condition at war with a soul in search of truth.[145]

For Quintus, a "psychobiological" theory of dreams explains why some dreams are illusive,

uninterpretable, or inaccurate.[146] In sum, the evidence considered so far from Cicero and

other authors suggests that dreams, even those featuring gods, were not always accepted as

divine messages. They could be dismissed as insignificant and attributed to natural causes

such as strong emotions, appetites, and other physiological conditions.

Classifying Epiphany as a Type of Divine Dream

In Cicero's *On Divination*, Quintus the Stoic allows that some dreams can be

categorized as "psychobiological," but he attributes "theological" origins to others. Quoting

from the early first-century BCE Stoic philosopher Posidonius, Quintus proposes three

different categories of divine or predictive dreams.[147] The early first-century CE Jewish

philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, developed a similar threefold classification of divine-

dreams in his treatise, *On Dreams*. Likewise, Artemidorus of Daldis, the late second-century

CE dream interpreter, distinguished between three types of predictive dream and two non-

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[145] Cicero, *Div.* 1.62.

[146] Again, much could be said about the complex philosophical theories that undergird the arguments of Plato and Cicero's Quintus; for commentary, see Wardle, *Cicero On Divination*, 260-264. I introduce Quintus here primarily because he exemplifies how the classification of some dreams as meaningless and influenced by human psychobiological conditions did not preclude other forms of dream classification—his other forms will be addressed below.

[147] Posidonius's categories, as well as those of Philo of Alexandria and Artemidorus of Daldis, will be discussed below.

predictive types. Each of these authors developed their categories based on the dream's origin, its content, or some combination of both. Categories based on the origin of divine-dreams are grounded in philosophical theories about the nature of the human soul and the relationship between that soul and the universe, divine intermediaries, or god(s). Categories based on the predictive or revelatory content of divine-dreams focus on the degree to which that content is clear or enigmatic.

Academic debate on the categories of Posidonius, Philo, and Artemidorus has centered on the literary and theoretical relationships between the three classification systems. For instance, Robert Berchman has argued that Artemidorus may have been influenced by philosophers like Posidonius, but did not derive his categories from them: "[H]is use of dream theory and practice echoes the clinical concerns of the Asclepion [not the concerns of philosophers]."[148] Berchman further argues that Philo's categories correspond to those of Artemidorus.[149] Although scholars have accepted Berchman's conclusion regarding the difference between Posidonius and Artemidorus, the connection between Philo and Artemidorus has been largely rejected. Philo's categories are considered to be closer to those of Posidonius than to those of Artemidorus. Derek Dodson suggests that Berchman mistakenly read the five dream-categories of Artemidorus into Philo's classification, even though Philo explicitly describes only three categories.[150] A.H.M. Kessels acknowledges that if one were to omit the two categories of non-predictive dreams from Artemidorus's system, one is left with the same number of predictive dream-categories as in Posidonius and Philo.

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[148] Robert M. Berchman, "Arcana Mundi: Magic and Divination in the De Somniis of Philo of Alexandria," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 26 (1987): 412.

[149] Berchman, "Magic and Divination in the De Somniis," 414-415.

[150] Derek S. Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30 (2003): 308-309.

Nevertheless, Kessels insists that the systems of Philo and Artemidorus are not the same.[151] For Kessels, the two systems are different because they are answering two very different questions. Posidonius is trying to answer the question, "How is it possible that human beings (with the aid of God) are able to get a certain knowledge of the future in their dreams;" Artemidorus, however, is trying to answer the question, "[When] one sees certain things happen in a dream, are they signs of future events or are they not?"[152] Kessels describes the classification of Posidonius and Philo as "philosophico-psychological" and that of Artemidorus as "practical."[153] Similarly, Sofía Torallas Tovar describes two major trends that developed in the Greco-Roman classification of dreams: "la corriente filosófica," represented by Posidonius and Philo, and "la tradición onirocrítica," represented by Artemidorus.[154] It will be clear from the discussion below that Philo's classification system is closer to that of Posidonius than to that of Artemidorus. It is problematic, however, to describe Philo's system of classification as "philosophical" when that is contrasted with a "practical" or "dream-interpretation" system. When Philo applies Posidonius's categories to biblical accounts of dreams, he demonstrates a correspondence between the "philosophical" categories and the interpretation of dreams. Dodson's conclusion is persuasive: "Philo's dream classification has a practical correlation with the dream theory of Artemidorus ... and a formal one with the dream classification of Posidonius."[155] Since Philo and some early Christians were

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[151] Kessels, "Dream-Classification," 397, 399-397, 400.

[152] Kessels, "Dream-Classification," 399-400.

[153] Kessels, "Dream-Classification," 400. See also Dario Del Corno, *Graecorum de re onirocritica scriptorum reliquiae* (Milano: Istituto editoriale cisalpino, 1969), 174-175.

[154] Sofía Torallas Tovar, "Sobre la clasificación de los sueños de Filón de Alejandría y sus implicaciones posteriores," *Cuadernos de filología clásica: Estudios griegos e indoeuropeos* 9 (1999): 210.

[155] Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications," 311.

influenced by Posidonius, the following section will describe his system of dream-classification. Then we will focus on the writings of Philo and Artemidorus. The classification systems of each of these authors include a category for epiphanies, but allow that the content of other types of divine or predictive dream might feature a god. The writings of Philo and Artemidorus will be analyzed to show how the categorization of a dream's origin or content relates to the identification of epiphanies.

Classification in Posidonius

In Cicero's *On Divination*, Quintus quotes from the early first-century BCE Stoic philosopher Posidonius who argued that divine-dreams could come from three sources:

> [T]here are three ways in which men dream under divine impulse (*deorum adpulsu*). In the first the soul foresees all by itself because of the relationship with the gods it possesses; in the second, the air is full of immortal souls on which the marks of truth are clear, as though hallmarked; in the third, the gods themselves speak with people as they sleep.[156]

Commentaries on this passage have focused on how Posidonius's threefold classification fits within the larger philosophical developments of Stoicism and Platonism.[157] The origin of each type of divine dream is explicit, so debate has centered on the mechanism of each dream-type. For instance, it is clear that Posidonius understood some divinatory dreams to originate within the human soul, but scholars have questioned how Posidonius understood the soul's relationship with the gods to function in the process of producing dreams. Both

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[156] Cicero, *Div*. 1.64; trans. Wardle.

[157] For a review of literature, see Charles Brittain, "Posidonius' Theory of Predictive Dreams," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 40 (2011): 213-214, n.1-2.

Charles Brittain and David Wardle have persuasively argued that Posidonius is relying on the Stoic notion of *sympatheia*—that the cosmos, including the human soul and the divine, is comprised of and connected by divine spirit-material or *pneuma*.[158] This connection, or *sympatheia*, allows the soul to become aware of events unfolding in the world at some distance. This is Posidonius's first category of dreams "under divine impulse."

In Posidonius's second category, the "divine impulse" for dreams is provided by intermediaries between the divine and the human, the "immortal souls" or daemons who inhabit the air.[159] In Posidonius's explanation, it is not clear how daemons produce dreams.[160] Nevertheless, the idea that daemons caused dreams became increasingly popular in the following centuries. Even in the first century BCE, Diogenes Laertius cites the Pythagorean belief: "The whole air is full of souls which are called *daimones* or heroes; these are they who send men dreams and signs of future disease and health, and not to men alone, but to sheep also and cattle as well."[161] By the second century CE, this notion appears in the novel of Achilles Tatius, where the hero explains, "The gods (τὸ δαιμόνιον) often like to reveal the

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[158] Some have appealed to the Platonic notion of ratiocination or recollection in order to explain Posidonius's logic; they point to *Div*. 1.60-63, 115; cf. Plato, *Resp*. 9.571d-572a. Yet the Stoic concept of *sympatheia* can explain it without the problematic appeal to the Platonic notion of an eternal soul. Charles Brittain has summarized this debate and his conclusion as follows: "Scholars have either mistrusted this passage because it looks too Platonist or misinterpreted it as confirming a Posidonian origin for the threefold division of dreams in Philo and Iamblichus. Both groups take it to propose a Platonist view, that intrinsic divination involves a process of ratiocination that relies on the soul's ability to Platonically 'recollect' information it already possesses... More cautious scholars have thus rejected the passage as a Ciceronian conflation of Platonic and Posidonian material, while others have used it to ascribe a Platonizing epistemology and psychology to Posidonius. But if we read the passage Stoically, these problems disappear: there is no substance dualism here and no theory of innate knowledge;" Brittain, "Posidonius' Theory of Predictive Dreams," 216. On *sympatheia*, see Cicero, *Div*. 2.124; cf. Cleanthes, *Hymn Zeus* 4; see also Epictetus. *Diatr*. 1.14.9-10; Wardle, *Cicero On Divination*, 268.

[159] For the Stoic belief in daemons, see Diogenes Laertius, *Pyth.* 7.151; cf. Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 277, n.275.

[160] For theories on the meaning of "marked" (*notae, insignitae*) by "truths," see Wardle, *Cicero On Divination*, 269.

[161] Diogenes Laertius, *Pyth*. 8.32; trans. R.D. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2;

future to mortals at night."[162]

The third type of divine-dream seems to require the least explanation: "[G]ods themselves speak with people as they sleep."[163] Harris describes this category as "an approximate description of the commonest form of epiphany dream."[164] In the context of Quintus's many examples of epiphanies, Harris may be correct. It must be remembered, however, that Posidonius is describing only the origins of dreams, not their content. Whether Quintus or Posidonius believed that these different forms of divine dream could be distinguished based on content is not clear from Cicero's dialogue.[165] The point of Cicero's dialogue was not to discuss the practical implications of dream classification. Cicero was interested in the possibility of divination, not its practice. In the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Artemidorus of Daldis, however, the connection between a dream's content and its origin or significance is addressed.

Classification in Philo of Alexandria

Philo's three categories of divine-dreams are similar to those of Posidonius, but he discusses them in reverse order. Philo's first category includes dreams delivered through the direct action of God: "[T]he Deity of His own motion sends to us the visions which are

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LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925).

[162] Achilles Tatius, 1.3.2; trans. Tim Whitmarsh, *Achilles Tatius: Leucippe and Clitophon*, OWC (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [org. 2001]); Greek from S. Gaselee, *Achilles Tatius: Leucippe and Clitophon*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

[163] Cicero, *Div*. 1.64; trans. Wardle, *Cicero On Divination*.

[164] Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 34, n.48. On Stoic belief in direct divine communication, see Wardle, *Cicero On Divination*, 269; citing Chrysippus 2.130. See also Brittain, "Posidonius' Theory of Predictive Dreams," 215, n.6.

[165] In fact, Cicero's Marcus argues that it is impossible in practice to distinguish between the Stoic categories of dream; see Cicero, *Div*. 2.127-128.

presented to us in sleep."[166] Philo's third category includes dreams that originate in the

activity of the human soul alone, "whenever the soul in sleep, setting itself in motion and

agitation of its own accord, becomes frenzied, and with the prescient power due to such

inspiration foretells the future."[167] There is wide agreement that Philo's first and third

categories, dreams originating in the soul and those directly from God, correspond with two

of Posidonius's categories.[168] Whether the second categories of Philo and Posidonius

correspond is a matter of debate. Posidonius's second category emphasizes the role of divine

intermediaries. In Philo's second category, the dream originates from the simultaneous

motion (συγκινούμενος) of the human mind (νοῦς) or intellect (διανοία) with that of the

universe (τῶν ὅλων).[169] Wardle suggests that Philo intentionally removed divine

intermediaries from the category of Posidonius.[170] Yet Philo's universe is full of divine

intermediaries. Divine dreams include, as Philo explains, those "which are revealed through

the agency of [God's] interpreters and attendant messengers."[171] As Tovar argues, "[Philo's]

Mind of the Universe is the Divine Logos, who occupies the same level as God's

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[166] Philo, *Somn.* 1.1; cf. Cicero, *Div.* 1.64. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of *Philo: De Somniis* come from F.H. Colson, G.H. Whitaker, *Philo: On Dreams*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934 [org. 1656]).

[167] Philo, *Somn.* 2.1.

[168] For Philo's dependence on Posidonius, see Kessels, "Dream-Classification," 396-397; Tovar, "Sobre la clasificación de los sueños de Filón," 210; Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications," 299-312; Wardle, *Cicero On Divination*, 267. For a review of literature on the subject, see Earle Hilgert, "A Survey of Previous Scholarship on Philo's *De Somniis* 1-2," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 26 (1987): 394-402.

[169] Philo, *Somn.* 1.1.2; 2.1.2.

[170] Wardle, *Cicero On Divination*, 269.

[171] Philo, *Somn*. 1.33; adapted. Regarding divine intermediaries, Dodson notes Philo's examples of dreams sent by angels (*Somn.* 1.23), the archangel (*Somn.* 1.24); the logos (*Somn.* 1.33; 1.39); see Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications," 311.

messengers, the angels, in this hierarchy of the Divine."[172] Each of Philo's categories, therefore, corresponds with those of Posidonius.

Unlike Posidonius, Philo's categories are based not only on the dream's origin but also on its content. Jason Reddoch has argued, "Aside from the mechanisms that bring about the dreams (i.e. God, World Soul, soul), the most important way Philo distinguishes between the three classes of dreams is that each is characterized by a different grade of clarity."[173] Philo describes content of the dreams in each of his three categories as follows:.

> In accordance with these distinctions, the Sacred Guide gave a perfectly clear and lucid interpretation of the appearances which come under the first description, inasmuch as the intimations given by God through these dreams were of the nature of plain oracles. Those which fall under the second description he interpreted neither with consummate clearness nor with excessive indistinctness. A specimen of these is the Vision that appeared on the heavenly stairway. For this vision was indeed enigmatic, but the riddle was not in very high degree concealed from the quick-sighted. The appearances of the third kind being more obscure than the former, owing to the deep and impenetrable nature of the riddle involved in them, demanded a scientific skill in discerning the meaning of dreams. Accordingly all the dreams of this sort recorded by the lawgiver received their interpretation at the hands of men who were experts in the aforesaid science.[174]

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[172] Sofía Torallas Tovar, "Philo of Alexandria's Dream Classification," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 15 (2014): 73. Consider also Miller's explanation: "In fact, dream, divine word, and angels are so closely associated in Philo's dream-theory that it is difficult to distinguish between them in a categorical sense;" Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 61.

[173] M. Jason Reddoch, "Enigmatic Dreams and Onirocritical Skills in *De Somniis* 2," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 25 (2013): 2.

[174] Philo, *Somn.* 2.1; cf. Gen. 28.

For Philo, dreams that originate from the direct action of God alone are, by nature, clear and require no interpretation. Dreams that originate from the interaction of the human mind with that of the universe require interpretation, but their meaning is not difficult to discern—"the riddle (αἴνιγμα) was not in very high degree concealed from the quick-sighted."[175] Dreams that originate from the movement of the human soul alone are "more obscure" than dreams from the previous categories; these require someone skilled in the interpretation of dreams.[176] For each of Philo's three categories, the dream's content corresponds with its origin.

Since Philo associates each of his categories with specific types of dream-content, it should be clear which category includes epiphanies. The category of Posidonius that seemed to describe epiphanies, "gods themselves speak with people as they sleep," corresponds with Philo's dream-type that "the Deity of His own motion sends to us."[177] These descriptions are not quite the same, and Harris has argued that "Philo's dream taxonomy seems to have no room for epiphany dreams."[178] Unfortunately, Philo's discussion of this category, his first, was the focus of a book that preceded *On Dreams* 1-2 and is now lost.[179] Yet, based on the surviving work, Tovar has convincingly argued that the lost book included epiphany-narratives, most likely featuring examples of Isaac's divine encounters in Genesis.[180]

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[175] Philo, *Somn.* 2.1.

[176] Philo, *Somn.* 2.1.

[177] Philo, *Somn.* 1.1; cf. Cicero, *Div.* 1.64.

[178] Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 68. Harris described Posidonius's corresponding category as "an approximate description of the commonest form of epiphany dream;" see Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 34, n.48.

[179] See Philo, *Somn.* 1.1.

[180] See Torallas Tovar, "Philo of Alexandria's Dream Classification," 78; see also Reddoch, "Enigmatic Dreams and Onirocritical Skills in *De Somniis* 2," 1-16. For more on epiphanies and the vision of God in Philo, see Mackie, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria," 25-48.

Examples from Philo's middle category, addressed in *On Dreams* 1, support Tovar's conclusion. Philo's middle category seems to blend the types of content from his other two categories; in the middle category, content is neither perfectly clear or too obscure. Philo begins his discussion of the second category with the example of Jacob's Ladder from Genesis, which included a divine manifestation: after describing the ladder, the account continues, "And the Lord stood firmly on it; and He said [to Jacob], 'I am the God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac.'"[181] For Philo, the Lord's message was direct and clear, but the angels on the ladder required interpretation. Were the content only symbolic, it would have fit in Philo's third category. By the same token, the manifestation and direct address of the Lord, an epiphany, would most likely fit in Philo's first category.

In addition to categorizing divine-dreams by origin and content, Philo suggests that each category corresponds to the condition of the dreamer's soul. For instance, Philo explains that "those who are not very well purified" experience "things that resemble dreams" and believe them to be "great and brilliant and desirable" even though they are "small and dull and ridiculous."[182] Elsewhere, Philo describes the dreams of the "wicked" (φαῦλος) in similar terms: "And that deep and abysmal sleep which holds fast all the wicked robs the mind of true apprehensions, and fills it with false phantoms and untrustworthy visions and persuades it to approve of the blameworthy as laudable."[183] Although Philo's three categories of dreams' origins were based on the Stoic model of Posidonius, he added to that model a Platonic distinction based on the condition of the dreamer's soul. Tovar summarizes Philo's categories as follows:

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[181] Philo, *Somn.* 1.1; brackets added. Cf. Gen. 28:13.

[182] Philo, *Somn.* 2.19.

Here Philo adds a new distinction of Platonic origin, a two-fold category of dreams based on the state of the soul. The most perfect soul deserves to see God Himself, the practising soul deserves to see the angels sent by God, or the Divine Logos, which belongs to the same level in the hierarchy of the Divine. The imperfect soul does not deserve to see any clear visions.[184]

Philo implies that the type of dreams experienced, the clarity of dream-messages, and the ability to discern the meaning of dreams are all dependent on the state of an individual's mind or soul.

If someone familiar with Philo's theories were to apply them to their own dreams, not every encounter with a divine being would be interpreted as an epiphany. Whether one accepted the appearance of the divine as an epiphany instead of a symbolic dream or an insignificant dream would depend on one's evaluation of any additional dream-content and the condition of the dreamer's soul. Admittedly, this description of a practical application for Philo's theories is conjecture. Philo applies his theories only to biblical interpretation. Yet this imagined application does find support in the work of Artemidorus.

Classification in Artemidorus

During the late second century CE, Artemidorus of Daldis wrote a five-volume work, *On the Interpretation of Dreams*.[185] According to the preface of his first volume, he wrote

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[183] Philo, *Somn.* 2.23.

[184] Torallas Tovar, "Philo of Alexandria's Dream Classification," 77; citing Plato, *Resp.* 571c. On the Platonic origin of this theory, see Torallas Tovar, "Philo of Alexandria's Dream Classification," 77; Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications," 301, 311. See also Mackie, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria," 25-48; and Philo, *QG* 4.2-8.

[185] For date, see Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus' Oneirocritica*, 2. In antiquity, Artemidorus's work was not unique. Dario Del Corno has collected fragments of other dream-interpretation authors, many of whom predate Artemidorus; see Del Corno, *Graecorum de re onirocritica scriptorum reliquiae* (Milano: Istituto editoriale

with two purposes in mind. First, he intended to rebuff attacks on dream divination—perhaps a reference to the sort of philosophical attacks found in Cicero's *On Divination*.[186] Second, he intended for his work to assist practitioners of dream-interpretation. Most of his book thematically catalogues the content of common dreams and the potential meanings of that content.

Artemidorus distinguishes his work on the interpretation of dreams from the work of philosophers on the origins of dreams. He states explicitly that he "would not, as Aristotle does, raise the difficulty of whether the cause of dreaming is external to us, arising from a god, or if there is some internal cause, which disposes the soul within us and shapes it in accordance with natural processes."[187] Although Artemidorus does not, like Aristotle, develop a theory dreams' origins, he does have opinions about them. As Miller has noted, "On the question of the source of dreams, Artemidorus' opinion wavers."[188] S.R.F. Price has demonstrated that Artemidorus sometimes describes dreams as creations of the human soul and "also believes that the gods are in some way involved and that their appearances in dreams are absolutely authoritative." In fact, as Price shows, "Artemidorus is clear that the

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cisalpino, 1969). In fact, Artemidorus mentions some of these authors and interacts with them in his work. For instance, he praises the work of Aristander of Telmessus on tooth-related dreams for being the best and fullest account (*Oneir.* 1.31); he refers the work of contemporary authors on bath-related dreams (*Oneir.* 1.64), and criticizes the work of others on medical diagnosis dreams (*Oneir.* 4.22). Regarding medical diagnosis dreams, the Hippocratic author of *Regimen IV* had already created a catalogue of dreams and interpretations similar to Artemidorus's, though less extensive, more than 500 years earlier. Furthermore, Artemidorus's work is not the only collection of dream and epiphanies accounts from the period; consider the works of his contemporaries Phlegon of Tralles and Valerius Maximus. For trends in the study of Artemidorus, in particular the use of his collection of dreams for social history, see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 79.

[186] Cf. Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus' Oneirocritica*, 3-5.

[187] Artemidorus*, Oneir.* 1.6.

[188] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 82, n.32.

gods can send dreams in response to an appropriate prayer."[189] It is clear that Artemidorus

was influenced by notions of the dream's origin seen in the philosophical theories above. Yet

his primary interest lies in the interpretation of a dream's content.

As a dream interpreter he is interested in the causes or influences behind a dream

primarily when they might affect its meaning. For instance, Artemidorus explains that the

time a dream occurred does not affect its significance, but food might:

> [W]hether a dream is observed by night or day, or in early or late evening, it makes
>
> no difference for the prognosis so long as the person sleeping ate [his] food in
>
> moderation. For immoderately eaten food will not allow one to see the truth, even at
>
> dawn.[190]

He allows that one's physical condition could affect dreams in other ways: for instance, a

hungry person might dream of eating, someone who is thirsty of drinking, the sick of doctors,

and so on.[191] Artemidorus also believed that the kind of life one leads can affect the

significance of one's dreams. For instance, he explains that one must lead "a life that is good

and of good moral purpose" in order to receive meaningful dreams.[192] He cautions his

readers that a professional dream interpreter or anyone skilled in the interpretation of dreams

may dream differently from others: "For whatever the majority desire or fear, they also see

these things during sleep. But, conversely, those who are wise and skilled in these matters,

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[189] S.R.F. Price, "The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidorus," *Past & Present* 113 (1986): 16. On the involvement of the gods, Price cites Artemidorus*, Oneir.* 1.6; 2.69; 4.3; 4.63; 4.71; and on dreams as the creation of the human soul, he cites *Oneir.* 3.22; 4.27; 4.59; see Price, "The Future of Dreams," 16.

[190] Artemidorus*, Oneir.* 1.7.

[191] Artemidorus*, Oneir.* 1.1. For Artemidorus, such dreams are meaningless. They belong to his *enhypnion* category, the insignificant dream; see *Oneir.* 1.1. For more on Artemidorus's categories of dreams, see below.

[192] Artemidorus*, Oneir.* 4.praef.

whatever they desire, they render these things symbolically."[193] The circumstances of other

dreamers, Artemidorus suggests, affect primarily the interpretation of the dream. For that

reason, Artemidorus often provides several interpretations for each dream-theme depending

on the dreamer's gender, social status, interpersonal relationships, and occupation. For

instance, in his discussion of apparel in dreams, Artemidorus explains: "And to wear soft and

costly clothing is good for both rich and poor men. For, the former, their present prosperity

will abide and, for the latter, their affairs will become more noteworthy. And for slaves and

those in poverty it foretells illness."[194] Beyond the few examples above, Artemidorus says

little about the origins or causes of dreams.

Since Artemidorus does not distinguish between dream-types based on their origin,

his classification focuses on the meaningfulness of dreams and how they should be

interpreted. Artemidorus's system of classification of dreams is typically described as having

five categories, which include two insignificant and three meaningful types of dreams.[195]

Scholars' emphasis on five dream-types in the writings of Artemidorus may be influenced by

frequent comparison to the classification found in Macrobius's fourth-century CE

Commentary on the Dream of Scipio—Macrobius numbers five different dream-types whose

names and descriptions are similar to those in Artemidorus.[196] Yet emphasis on five dream-

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[193] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 4.praef.

[194] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 2.3.

[195] E.g., Kessels, "Dream-Classification," 395; Berchman, "Magic and Divination in the De Somniis," 412-413; Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications," 305; Torallas Tovar, "Philo of Alexandria's Dream Classification," 68.

[196] Cf. Macrobius, *Comm. Scip.* 3.2. Kessels suggests an exact parallel between the categories of Artemidorus and Macrobius despite noting important differences; Kessels, "Dream-Classification," 395. Dodson describes Artemidorus's theory as "the dream theory of Artemidorus/Macrobius;" Dodson, "Philo's *De Somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications," 311. Tovar writes of "the five-fold classification of dreams, as represented by Macrobius and Artemidorus;" Torallas Tovar, "Philo of Alexandria's Dream Classification," 68.

types can obscure Artemidorus's most important categorical division, the distinction between dreams with clear meanings and those that convey meaning through symbols: "Of this distinction," Kessels has observed, "no trace can be found in Macrobius."[197] The following description of Artemidorus's categories focuses on his most important divisions, then locates epiphanies within those categories.

Artemidorus first divides dreams into two general categories: (1) the insignificant dream, which he labels *enhypnion*, and (2) the dream that is meaningful for the future, *oneiros*.[198] He then divides the *oneiros*-type into two subcategories: "some are 'directly perceived' (*theōrēmatikoi*) and some are 'allegorical' (*allēgorikoi*)."[199] Allegorical dreams are the focus of Artemidorus's multi-volume work. As the name of this category suggests, these dreams feature images and actions that symbolize what will happen in the future of the dreamer. Artemidorus interpreted these dreams, as Luther Martin has shown, "based upon a system of correspondences between dream content and dream signification established by a principle of similitude. Artemidorus employed, in addition, a correlate 'principle of opposites,' ... in which an allegorical dream might signify something contrary to its content."[200] For instance, as seen above, Artemidorus's interpretation of apparel in dreams suggests that a dream of wearing costly clothing foretells illness for a slave.

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[197] Kessels, "Dream-Classification," 395.

[198] I leave these Greek words, *enhypnion* and *oneiros*, untranslated since both terms are most commonly rendered into English as "dream"—this reaffirms the problem with modern English terminology that was discussed in the Introduction. Even though Artemidorus defines these words, *enhypnion* and *oneiros*, in very specific ways at the beginnings his volume one and volume four, he is not consistent in his use of these terms in other parts of his work—e.g., he sometimes uses the term *enhypnion* in referring to a dream that fits his definition of an *oneiros* (cf. *Oneir.* 4.praef.). I transliterate the Greek words that denote classifications following the practice in academic discussions of these categories.

[199] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 1.2.

[200] Luther H. Martin, "Artemidorus: Dream Theory in Late Antiquity," *The Second Century* 8 (1991): 102.

Artemidorus includes epiphany (*chrēmatismos*) in the *theorematic* category, dreams

that are "directly perceived."[201] He introduces the category only to dismiss it. Since the

meaning of direct messages from the gods should be "immediately evident," Artemidorus

explains, "I have deliberately omitted a detailed explanation of these phenomena."[202]

Although Artemidorus insists that he will not discuss epiphanies, his work does include

dreams that feature manifestations of the gods.[203] Harris, while lamenting the relative

absence of epiphanies in Artemidorus's work, notes that "four epiphany dreams" appear "in

Book V of his Oneirocritica."[204] Additionally, Versnel, in his study of epiphanies, draws

attention to Artemidorus's "distinction between gods who can be perceived by the senses (he

mentions Hecate, Pan, Ephialtes and Asclepius) and gods who can only be apprehended by

the intellect: the Dioscures, Heracles, Dionysus, Hermes, etc."[205] The boundary between an

epiphany and a symbolic dream is often porous. For Artemidorus this is a problem, so he

offers suggestions for distinguishing between the categories of *allēgorikoi* and *theōrēmatikoi*.

Near the beginning of his fourth volume, he explains:

> [A]ny dream that is theorematic comes to pass in a time of need and straightaway.
>
> But any that is allegorical always after some time has elapsed, either a lot or a little
>
> [or in an extreme case after a single day]. Next, it would also be simple-minded to

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[201] On *chrēmatismos* as "epiphany," see Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 34-36. The *theorematic* or "directly perceived" category also includes *horama*—dream-images that occur in waking life exactly as they were seen in the dream; for instance, if someone were to dream of a shipwreck in which only the dreamer and a few companions were saved, and then live through that exact experience soon after; cf. Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 1.2.

[202] Artemidorus*, Oneir.* 1.2; trans. Robert J. White, *Artemidorus: The Interpretation of Dreams* (Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1975).

[203] Artemidorus interprets these allegorically, even when a god addresses the dreamer directly; see example below.

[204] Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 28.

[205] Versnel, "Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," 50.

view monstrosities and things that are in no way possible when awake as theorematic. For example, if someone should suppose that he has become a god or flies or has horns or has descended into Hades…[206]

Even with such strategies to aid in the interpretation of dreams, one dream-type could still be mistaken for the other—that is, people might think that they had experienced an epiphany and understood the god's message when in fact the dream was symbolic. Recall Artemidorus's example of the husband who claimed Pan appeared to him and revealed that he would be poisoned by his wife and an acquaintance. Although the husband interpreted this as an epiphany and theorematic, Artemidorus shows how it was actually allegorical:

> The wife of this man did not poison him, but had an affair with that man through whom it was said that she would administer the poison. For in fact adultery and poisoning both arise through stealth and both are said to be plots, and the adulteress and the woman administering poison both do not love their husband. And, in addition to these things, not long afterwards his wife received a divorce. For death releases all things, and poison has the same logic as death.[207]

Such an interpretation might very well be motivated by self-interest—Artemidorus, the dream interpreter, seems to suggest that one should always consult a dream interpreter. Nevertheless, this story also demonstrates an important point. It was possible to misinterpret a symbolic dream as an epiphany, or an epiphany as a symbolic dream.

All of these writings, in particular those of Cicero, Philo, and Artemidorus, exemplify the common forms of dream-classification that were influential by the second and third

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[206] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 4.1.

[207] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 4.71.

centuries CE. The origins of dreams were variously attributed to the body or soul of the dreamer and to gods, daemons, or angels. Those who argued that dreams were insignificant usually attributed their origin to one or more of the former—i.e., the body or soul—while those who presented dreams as meaningful attributed their origin variously to all of the above depending on their content. Some, like Philo, described a correlation between the origin of a dream, its content, and the condition of the dreamer's soul. Others, like Artemidorus, categorized dreams based primarily on their content and interpreted some dreams allegorically by comparing their content to the dreamer's situation in life. Most if not all of these authors included epiphanies in their classification of dreams and described them as clear messages from the divine. Nevertheless, their texts also demonstrate that, in practice, distinguishing between epiphanies and the manifestations of gods in other dream-types was not easy.

A Cultural Discourse on Epiphanies

This chapter represents, in broad strokes, a Greco-Roman cultural discourse on epiphanies. In sum, we saw that epiphanies are prominent in literature, inscriptions, and art by the second century CE. Despite the great diversity of genres and media in which they appear, common trends are identifiable in the narratives of epiphanies and the practices that surround them. We saw that the gods could assume many forms, but they were frequently recognized by comparison to their literary and material representations. In addition, how epiphanies functioned in social life might depend on legitimating evidence, the support of religious specialists, and the dreamer's preexisting social status. Finally, we saw that epiphanies were categorized as distinct from other types of dream, but that distinguishing between those dream-types could be challenging in practice. This chapter represents the

range of narrative-forms, theories, and practices surrounding epiphanies that were most likely available to second- and third-century Christians and their contemporaries. Although it is not proposed that any one person necessarily subscribed to all of these beliefs and practices—some of them, of course, are contradictory—this cultural discourse can best be summarized as a series of choices that an individual might make in response to an epiphany.

Imagine that a second-century pagan, who was familiar with the cultural discourse reviewed in this chapter, experienced a message delivered by the visual manifestation of an anthropomorphic being. Based on this cultural discourse, how would he respond? First, it might depend on whether that anthropomorphic being was identifiable as a god by the size, features, beauty, and brightness of the visible form(s). Then it would depend on whether he believed that gods, and in particular that god, could and would communicate in this way. It would also depend on whether he accepted that a god would appear *to him* given his status, occupation, character, state of mind and body, piety, or other current circumstances such as location and needs. Regardless of whether he believed that this god would appear to him and that he was qualified to receive the god's message, he would still need to determine what kind of message it was. Was its meaning clear or enigmatic, was it true or deceptive? If it was symbolic, he could try to interpret it on his own or seek the help of a dream-specialist. If the message was clear, he would still need to determine whether it was true—and if it was true, he might still need to convince others of its truthfulness. He might determine (or demonstrate) its validity by recalling whether the experience occurred while he was awake or in-between sleep and wakefulness, whether it happened more than once, whether an acquaintance had experienced a similar phenomenon, or whether the god had left behind some physical object. He might also consider whether the experience occurred in a location

where epiphanies were expected—for instance, in a temple or at a crossroads—and whether the god's physical appearance and actions coincided with familiar representations of that god. Once the message was understood and determined to be true, how might he respond? In addition to acting in accordance with whatever the message revealed, he could honor the god by offering a sacrifice, dedicating an inscription, or by publicly declaring the god's favor. Many of the questions that this imagined pagan would consider as he determined the validity and significance of his own experience, he could also apply to evaluate an epiphany experienced by another person.

With this imaginary scenario, I am not suggesting that any individual in the Greco-Roman world would have proceeded methodically through such a checklist—nothing so mechanical or self-conscious. For many people, the answers to most of these questions were already given. For instance, someone like Aelius Aristides did not question whether the gods could appear to him. Given Aristides's special relationship with Asclepius, his temple, and his priests, Aristides had no reason to ask most of the questions in the previous paragraph. This point is key. The fact that Aristides did not need to ask these questions demonstrates the cultural embeddedness of this discourse on epiphanies. The early Christian authors discussed hereafter were not as fortunate as Aelius Aristides. They were aware of these questions, they shared this cultural discourse, but the answers provided by their pagan counterparts had the potential to threaten a Christian identity. How Christians navigated these questions and adapted this discourse on epiphanies is the subject of the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER TWO:
CHRISTIANS AND THE DREAMS OF THE OTHER

Christians had dreams just like everyone else. There is no reason to suppose that Christian dreams were free from the sights and sounds of the pagan world that surrounded them. There is no reason to think that conversion from paganism to Christianity necessarily removed the most basic, culturally ingrained expectations and assumptions about dreams. In fact, what Christians in the second and third centuries say about dreams can sound quite similar to the pagan accounts reviewed previously.

Tertullian, a Christian writing in Carthage at the beginning of the third century, complains that the images of the gods seen in temples during the day appear in bedrooms during the night.[1] Another Carthaginian Christian, Perpetua, writing around the same time, records a dream wherein she competes in a pagan festival and an anonymous divine figure awards her the golden apples of Apollo.[2] Celsus, a second-century pagan philosopher, had challenged Christians by claiming that anyone could visit a temple of Asclepius and witness the god manifest himself. When Origen, the third-century Christian philosopher, responds to Celsus he does not deny the manifestations of Asclepius, but he insists that it would be better to stay sick than to seek the help of that god.[3]

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[1] Tertullian, *An*. 46; unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Tertullian *De Anima* come from Rudolph Arbesmann, *Tertullian, Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix, Octavius*; FC (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1950).

[2] *Pass. Perp*. 10.6-14.

[3] Origen, *Cels*. 8.62. Each of these examples will be discussed later in this chapter.

Christians had dreams just like everyone else, but some of these dreams threatened Christian identity. Manifestations of pagan deities were especially problematic since they demonstrated the legitimacy and power of non-Christian religious beliefs and practices. This chapter is about those dreams—dangerous dreams, the dreams of the "other"—and how Christians developed ways of dealing with such dreams. Options were limited. Christians could have rejected the manifestations of pagan gods as meaningless dreams—perhaps the result of a bad piece of meat.[4] Yet not one Christian author from the second and third centuries takes this approach. The experience of epiphanies was too well attested and their meaningfulness too ingrained into the cultural expectations of the time. So, Christian authors accepted that such epiphanies occurred and that they were meaningful. Their only option was to reinterpret that meaning. Some Christians redefined dreams of pagan gods as manifestations of evil demons. Other Christians reinterpreted dreams that featured evil demons as divine messages. I will argue that the former practice led to the latter—the transformation of common dreams into demonic encounters necessitated a new form of dream, a divine dream that featured demons.

Demon dreams are mentioned primarily in early Christian apologies, apocryphal acts of the apostles, and martyrdom accounts. This chapter is organized into four major sections—the first two sections will treat the theorization of dreams and the final two, dream narratives. I will begin and end with Tertullian's writings because he is the only Christian author in this period who both theorizes about dreams and narrates contemporary dreams. As such, Tertullian provides unique insight into the effects of theory on practice.

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[4] See Chapter 1.

Tertullian's Theory of Dreams

Christians have little to say about how dreams work. The most developed Christian theory of dreams from this period is found in Tertullian's treatise, *On the Soul*, written in Carthage near the beginning of the third century.[5] Yet Tertullian's explanation of dreams is incredibly brief when compared with the writings of Cicero, Philo, and Artemidorus that were discussed in the previous chapter. Beyond Tertullian, there are only hints of dream-theories in the writings of some early Christian apologists, such as Tatian and Athenagoras.[6] This is significant. It would seem that second- and third-century Christian authors discussed the nature of dreams primarily in attempts to defend the truthfulness of Christianity. The Christian theory of dreams was reactive. That should not be a surprise considering the prominence of epiphanies in this period, not to mention their association with Greco-Roman polytheism and its accompanying religious practices. Since Tertullian has the most to say on this issue, I will begin with his works. Then I will discuss how his view compares with other Christians who addressed the subject before and after him; these include Justin Martyr, Tatian, Minucius Felix, Athenagoras, and Origen.

Before I address Tertullian's work on dreams, it is necessary to say something about his larger theological commitments. Tertullian's interest in dreams has long been attributed to his affiliation with the "New Prophecy," later called Montanism. This Christian movement, later declared a heresy, was characterized by its interest in spiritual gifts including divinely inspired dreams.[7] Tertullian writes favorably about the New Prophecy and

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[5] J.H. Waszink, *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, De Anima* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 100; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010 [org. 1947]), 5*-6*.

[6] Discussed below.

[7] Antti Marjanen, "Montanism: Egalitarian Ecstatic 'New Prophecy'," in *Companion to Second-Century*

some of the early prophets associated with the movement.[8] The question that needs to be

considered here is whether Tertullian's writings about dreams reflect beliefs particular to the

New Prophecy or whether they reflect broader trends in early Christianity that included the

proto-Orthodox in that period. Early scholars, who argued that Tertullian abandoned the

Catholic Church for Montanism, saw his writings on dreams as indicative of his conversion

and as influenced by that conversion.[9] Tertullian's writings were divided into Catholic and

Montanist periods, and categorization of Tertullian's works as Montanist was often based on

identifying passages that presented a positive view of dreams.[10] Today, most scholars

acknowledge that such clear boundaries between orthodoxy and heresy did not exist in the

Carthage of Tertullian's day and that his esteem for the New Prophecy does not indicate a

separation from his "proto-Orthodox" church community. As Christine Trevett explains,

"Tertullian the Montanist was Tertullian the Montanist catholic."[11] Still other scholars have

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Christian "Heretics" (eds. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 185-212.

[8] Tertullian uses the name "New Prophecy" in *Marc*. 3.24.4; 4.22.4; and mentions Montanus, Prisci(ill)a, and Maximilla in *Prax*. 1.5; *Jejun*. 1.3; 12.4; *Res*. 11.2; *Exh*. *cast*. 10.5. For a succinct review of the evidence, see William Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments: Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reactions to Montanism* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 129-132.

[9] Waszink, *De Anima*, 480-481; Jacqueline Amat, *Songes et Visions: L'au-delà dans la littérature latine tardive* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), 94; Barnes troubled the prior consensus that Tertullian was schismatic by calling into question the reliability of Jerome as a source for Tertullian's life and the influence of Montanism in Carthage; see Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 60-84. Ultimately, however, Barnes concluded that Tertullian did move away from "the Church" toward Montanism: "As the church of Carthage moved away from Montanism, Tertullian moved towards it;" see Barnes, *Tertullian*, 83. For a summary of scholarship on this issue, see David E. Wilhite, *Tertullian the African: An Anthropological Reading of Tertullian's Context and Identities* (Millennium Studies 14; Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 24-25 and notes.

[10] For the most influential categorization of Tertullian's works, see Barnes, *Tertullian*, 38-48. On problems with the criteria used to determine Montanist-period writings, see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 69; Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 73; and Laura Salah Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (Harvard Theological Studies 52; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 100-101.

[11] Trevett, *Montanism*, 4.

argued that adherents to the New Prophecy in Carthage formed a distinct body within the church—an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*.[12] This argument is often based on the same passages that had previously been used to argue for Tertullian's turn to heresy, including those that present dreams in a positive way.

Arguments that Tertullian sometimes reflects uniquely Montanist beliefs and practices often involve convoluted interpretations of pronouns. For instance, consider David Rankin's reading of Tertullian's work, *On the Veiling of Virgins*. Rankin argues that Tertullian belonged to a New Prophecy group within the Church at Carthage. So when Tertullian affirms that "we are one church" (*una ecclesia sumus*) and when he twice refers to practices familiar "among us" (*apud nos*), Rankin says that Tertullian "clearly means by this 'nos' all orthodox Christians."[13] Rankin even accepts that Tertullian includes all "orthodox" Christians within the *nos* in his statement, "The Lord has measured the length of the veil for us (*nobis*) even through revelations."[14] But when, immediately after that statement, Tertullian mentions a specific contemporary revelation received by "our sister" (*sorori nostrae*), Rankin insists that this "is clearly a reference exclusively to the New Prophecy group."[15] She had received a dream and Tertullian accepted that dream as meaningful, but it is *not* clear— contrary to Rankin's claim—that *soror nostra* is "our New Prophecy sister" and not "our Christian sister." The assumption that only Montanists found meaning in dreams or that belief in meaningful dreams is indicative of Montanism is untenable. Belief that the divine

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[12] E.g., David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See below.

[13] Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 36. See Tertullian, *Virg*. 2.2; 3.1; 11.6.

[14] *nobis Dominus etiam revelationibus velaminis spatia metatus est*; Tertullian, *Virg*. 17.3; my translation; Latin from CSEL. Cf. Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 36.

[15] Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 36.

could communicate through dreams did not make one a Montanist, it made one ordinary. Most people in this period believed that the divine could communicate through dreams.[16]

I have not argued that Montanist beliefs are absent from the writings of Tertullian. I only contend that Tertullian's work on dreams is representative of trends that extend beyond a Montanist framework. As will become clear in this chapter, Tertullian's theories and narratives of dreams, as well as those of other so-called Montanist texts like the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, share common themes with other Christian works from the second and third centuries CE.

Tertullian's 'On the Soul'

Tertullian's theory of dreams appears in his work, *On the Soul*. Tertullian wrote this treatise in response to a Christian "heretic," Hermogenes.[17] Tertullian was particularly troubled by Hermogenes's claims that matter was co-eternal with God and that the human soul derived from matter: "Moreover, we properly and especially insist on calling it breath (or spirit), in opposition to Hermogenes, who derives the soul from matter instead of from the *afflatus* or breath of God."[18] Tertullian refutes Hermogenes's ideas by attributing them to Greek philosophy, in particular to Stoicism, and by countering with a "Christian" explanation

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[16] See chapter 1.

[17] *De Anima* was Tertullian's third work responding to Hermogenes. It followed *De Censu Animae*, and *De Anima*; see Waszink, *De Anima*, 7*, n.1. Little is known of Hermogenes since none of his writings survive in full. Yet his beliefs caused enough trouble that several prominent Christians wrote responses to his theology. In addition to Tertullian, Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, wrote a treatise against the heresy of Hermogenes in the late-second century (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.24.1), and in the early-third century Hippolytus included a section on Hermogenes in his *Refutation of All Heresies* (8.10). For a reconstruction Hermogenes's theology, see Waszink, *De Anima*, 7*-14*.

[18] Tertullian, *An.* 11 (ANF).

for the origin, development, and fate of the human soul.[19]

Tertullian's treatise, *On the Soul*, expends more ink on Greek philosophers than it does on any particular text of Hermogenes.[20] It was a common trope in heresiologies to attribute the heretic's beliefs to non-Christian sources such as pagan philosophy.[21] This strategy provided two advantages. First, the heresiologist was no longer limited to the writings of the heretic. For instance, by associating the heretic with Stoic philosophy, all Stoic authors became surrogates for the heretic. Second, the association allowed refutations of Christian dissidents to function simultaneously as refutations of paganism. Heretics were not Tertullian's only concern. His writings also reveal a profound concern about the allure of paganism.[22] This is clear in his discussion of dreams.

Tertullian's theory of dreams only exists by happy accident. It was necessitated by his own explanation of the nature of death and sleep. In chapter 42, Tertullian introduces his final topic, death and the fate of the soul. He begins by discussing sleep, since sleep is a "mirror of death."[23] His attempt to explain the nature of the soul by discussing sleep leads to the topic of dreams, since, for Tertullian, dreams are evidence of the soul's divine nature.[24] In

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[19] The focus of Tertullian's treatise is a refutation of Hermogenes's views on the nature of the human soul, its qualities (*An*. 4–22), its origin and development (*An*. 23–41), as well as its fate (*An*. 42-58).

Since Hermogenes' ideas only survive in the writings of these heresiologists it is impossible to know for certain just how dependent Hermogenes was on the Stoics.

[20] Out of the 58 chapters of *De Anima*, Hermogenes is mentioned directly in only five (Tertullian, *An*. 1; 11; 21-22; and 24).

[21] For a succinct review of this tendency in early Christian heresiologies, see Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 191-192.

[22] See below.

[23] *speculum eius somnus*; Tertullian *An*. 42.3 (ANF).

[24] *quod diuinitatis et immortalitatis est ratio*; Tertullian, *An*. 45.1; Latin from Waszink. Dreams are first

order to prove that he is in the majority when he claims that dreams can be true and prophetic, Tertullian cites a series of well-known examples of dreams.[25] In total, Tertullian provides fourteen examples of non-Christian dreams that accurately predicted the future or revealed some otherwise hidden truth. To acknowledge that pagans receive prophetic dreams, however, presents a problem for Tertullian—these examples seem to validate non-Christian beliefs and practices. Tertullian does not deny that these dreams occurred and appeared to be beneficial, but he insists that Christians "must interpret them in another way."[26] To solve this problem, Tertullian presents a "Christian" theory of dreams.

But the dilemma that Tertullian created for himself was much greater than I have so far indicated. Even more problematic than acknowledging that some pagans have received beneficial dreams, a number of Tertullian's examples refer to well-known manifestations of Greco-Roman gods. Among his fourteen examples, Tertullian includes the following: Caesar escaped death "in obedience to a vision of Artorius;" "Cicero's eminence while he was still a little boy was seen by his nurse;" "the boxer Leonymus is cured by Achilles in his dreams;" and "Sophocles the tragic poet discovers, as he was dreaming, the golden crown, which had been lost from the citadel of Athens."[27] Each of these refers to a well-known epiphany. Cassius Dio and others recount how Minerva appeared to Caesar's doctor, Artorius, and commanded that Caesar leave his tent and head into the battlefield despite his ill health—an

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mentioned in *An.* 43.12, but do not feature prominently until 46.1.

[25] Tertullian, *An.* 46.3-10. For survey of literature with references to the narrative accounts of dreams mentioned by Tertullian, see Waszink, *De Anima*, 487-496.

[26] *Haec quantum ad fidem somniorum a nobis quoque consignandam et aliter interpretandam*; Tertullian, *An.* 46.12; my translation; Latin from Waszink.

[27] Tertullian, *An.* 46.8, 9 (ANF).

epiphany that saved Caesar's life when his camp was invaded.[28] According to Plutarch, "a phantom appeared to [Cicero's] nurse and foretold that her charge would be a great blessing to all the Romans."[29] Pausanius, in his description of White Island and the Temple of Achilles, relates the story of Leonymus the Boxer. Leonymus visited the island because the Pythian Priestess told him that "Ajax would appear to him there and cure his wound." When Leonymus returned, he was cured and "he said he had seen Achilles."[30] Sophocles, the tragic poet, discovered the bowl stolen from the Temple of Hercules because, according to Cicero's *On Divination*, "he saw in a dream the god himself saying who had done it."[31] This dream repeated itself frequently until Sophocles listened. Tertullian had affirmed the reality of each of these epiphanies of pagan gods. Now he had to explain how a Christian might make sense of the fact that non-Christian gods appeared in dreams to provide help or reveal some truth.

Tertullian's solution was to introduce his own "Christian" theory of dreams.[32] He classifies dreams according to their origin and identifies four sources.[33] First are those dreams "inflicted on us by demons."[34] In this work, Tertullian does not describe the

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[28] Valerius Maximus, *Fact. dict. mem.* 1.7.1; and Cassius Dio, *Rom. hist.* 47.41.

[29] Plutarch, *Cic.* 2; trans. Perrin.

[30] Pausanias, *Descr.* 3.19.12-13; trans. Peter Levi, *Pausanias: Guide to Greece, vol 2* (London: Penguin Group, 1979 [org. 1971]).

[31] Cicero, *Div.* 1.25.54; trans. David Wardle, *Cicero: On Diviniation Book 1* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

[32] Tertullian states explicitly that he is going to provide a "Christian" theory of dreams in *An.* 45.1 and 46.1.

[33] Waszink's paraphrase suggests four categories, but it is not clear from his comments how or whether he distinguishes between dreams from the soul and those from ecstasy; Waszink, *De Anima*, 500-503. Some scholars who appeal to Waszink identify only three categories: A.H.M. Kessels, "Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification," *Mnemosyne* 22 (1969): 400; Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 94-96. Others also rely on Waszink but identify four categories: Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 68-70; Dörnberg, Burkhard von, *Traum und Traumdeutung in der Alten Kirche: die westliche Tradition bis Augustin* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 45-57. My analysis is closest to that of Dörnberg.

[34] Tertullian, *An.* 47.1.

mechanism demons employed to disseminate dream-images, but in his *Apology* he suggests

that demons breathe dreams—especially images of false gods—into the soul.[35] The second

source of dreams is God.[36] Again, Tertullian only hints at the process. By quoting from Joel

2:28, he implies that the pouring out of God's "Spirit on all flesh" leads to divine dreams.

Tertullian's third category includes dreams that arise from the human soul itself "from an

intent contemplation of the surrounding circumstances."[37] Up to this point, Tertullian seems

to derive his theory about the origins of dreams from the Stoics—in general terms,

Tertullian's first three categories can be easily mapped on to the classifications of Posidonius

and Philo.[38] His definition of dreams from the soul follows the Stoic notion that, when the

senses are at rest, mind or reason is freed to contemplate surrounding circumstances.[39] Here,

however, Tertullian diverges from the Stoic tripartite classification and adds a fourth

category: dreams arising from ecstasy. Tertullian had previous suggested that the soul could

not dream on its own. In chapter 45, Tertullian argued that the soul's capacity to dream was a

result of ecstasy—he based this argument on Gen 2.21, which says that God "sent an ecstasy

(*ecstasin*) into Adam and he slept."[40] So, in chapter 47, when Tertullian arrives at the Stoics'

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[35] *adspiratio daemonum*; *Tertullian, Apol.* 22.6-7. It is not clear whether Tertullian understood demonic *adspiratio* to convey particular dream-content or whether it "inspired" the human soul to produce content. On the function of demon "inspiration" in darkening the human soul, see Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 165. On the divinatory function of *pneuma* as power sent from the gods in Plutarch, see *Def. orac.* 42 (433D-E); 51 (438C-D). For Tertullian, the corollary divine "inspiration" for dreams occurs with God pours out his *pneuma* on human beings; see *Tertullian, An.* 47.2; cf. Joel 2:28.

[36] Tertullian, *An.* 47.2.

[37] Tertullian, *An.* 47.3; my translation with consideration of Waszink and Arbesmann.

[38] See chapter 1. For Tertullian's dependence on the Stoic model of dream classification, see Waszink, *De Anima*, 500; Kessels, "Dream-Classification," 400; Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 96; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 67; Dörnberg, Burkhard von, *Traum und Traumdeutung in der Alten Kirche*, 48, 57.

[39] Tertullian, *An.* 45.5; *SVF* 2.1198; cf. Waszink, *De Anima*, 500-501.

[40] *et misit deus ecstasin in Adam et dormiit*; Tertullian, *An.* 45.3, Latin from Waszink. In *An.* 45 Tertullian argues against the ideas from ch. 44 that the soul might leave the body or that the soul slept along with the body

third category of dreams, he reminds his readers of that previous discussion and distinguishes

between dreams that arise from the soul and a fourth category of dreams, those inspired

entirely by ecstasy.[41] For Tertullian, the "natural form" of the dream is his third category:

dreams originating from the soul. Sensory deprivation and suspension of the rational faculties

allows the soul to contemplate surrounding circumstances and produce dream images.[42] The

fourth category describes dreams that do not "proceed from God, from a demonic source, or

from the soul."[43] These dreams arise when ecstasy "works on its own" to produce images.[44]

In addition to creating a fourth category, Tertullian also deviates from the Stoic

classification model in his definition of demon dreams.[45] In the theory of Posidonius and

Philo, daemons were divine intermediaries who were not necessarily malevolent. For

Tertullian, however, all daemons were evil demons. Although Tertullian derived his category

of demon dreams from Posidonius, his notion of demonic character and purpose comes from

the Jewish and Christian tradition. As Hubert Cancik explains regarding Tertullian's

demonology: "Die Dämonisierung als System war ihm durch die römische Theologie [...]

vorgegeben. Die Verteufelung, der Götzenspott, die spirituelle Aggressivität waren ihm in

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by claiming that the soul is active while the body sleeps and that this allows for dreams.

[41] For more on the difference between these two categories, see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 68-70; Dörnberg, Burkhard von, *Traum und Traumdeutung in der Alten Kirche*, 45-57.

[42] The deprivation of senses (*excessum sensus*; Tertullian, *An*. 45.3) and the suspension of rational faculties (*auocat mentem*; *An*.45.5) is ecstasy, but the origin of the dream images here is the soul. Cf. Waszink, *De Anima*, 503.

[43] *quae neque a deo neque a daemonio neque ab anima*; Tertullian, *An*. 47.4; Latin from Waszink.

[44] *ecstasin autem hoc quoque operari de suo proprio, ut sic nobis sapientiae imagines inferat, quemadmodum et erroris*; Tertullian, *An*. 45.6; Latin from Waszink.

[45] Waszink, *De Anima*, 500, 502-500, 503.

jüdischer und christlicher Tradition überliefert."[46] The history of demonology in the Jewish,

Christian, and wider Greco-Roman world is complex, but by the second century CE certain

trends had emerged. For many Jews and Christians, the gods of the Greeks and Romans were

daemons. The Septuagint had rendered Psalm 96:5 (LXX 95:5), "all the gods of the nations

are *daemons*" (πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια). Paul reiterated this notion in his

discussion of meat sacrificed to idols: "What pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and

not to God."[47] While not every Jewish or Christian author agreed on the origin of these

beings or on their relationship to other supernatural beings such as the fallen angels of

Enochic tradition, by the second century CE, they commonly identified these daemons with

evil spirits.[48] In some regards, Jewish and Christian understandings of daemons shared much

in common with the views of their pagan contemporaries. Most everyone agreed that

daemons inhabited a space between human beings and god/s and that they could appear in

anthropomorphic form.[49] Furthermore, Jews and Christians were not the only ones who

believed that there were evil daemons who caused sickness, possessed the bodies of humans,

desired sacrifices, and were mistaken for gods. Similar ideas can be found in the writings of

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[46] Hubert Cancik, "Römische Dämonologie (Varro, Apuleius, Tertullian)," in *Die Dämonen (Demons): Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt (The Demonology of Israelite-Jewish and Early Christian Literature in Context of their Environment)* (eds. Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger, and K.F. Diethard Römheld; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 458.

[47] 1 Cor 10:19–21 (NRSV). This is "Paul's only explicit reference to demons" according to Dale B. Martin, "When Did Angels Become Demons?" *JBL* 129 (2010): 674.

[48] The earliest Jews to adopt the Greek term δαίμονες used it to refer to the foreign gods of the Greeks, but did not always equate those beings with evil spirits or fallen angels. In 1 Enoch, for instance, demons receive sacrifices from Gentiles but are not equated with evil spirits or fallen angels; see Martin, "When Did Angels Become Demons?" 667-672. On the development of this discourse in early pre-Rabbinic Judaism, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 84-121.

[49] See examples in Frederick E. Brenk, "In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," in *ANRW* 16.3:2068-2145.

Plutarch, Apuleius, Varro, and Philostratus.[50] For instance, Plutarch used the category of evil

daemon to make sense of contradictory facts in popular myths: "[I]t is incredible that gods

would demand or receive the human sacrifices we hear about in the myths. On the other

hand, kings and generals would not have handed over their children, offered them up, and

slain them, for no purpose whatever." He concludes that such sacrifices were "not performed

for any god, but [...] for evil *daimones*."[51] Second-century Jews and Christians differed from

their contemporaries primarily in their insistence that all daemons were evil and that all

divine beings—except for the Jewish and Christian ones, of course—were evil daemons.[52]

It is not surprising that *daemon* became an important category for Christian authors,

especially apologists, in a period when Christians struggled to carve out an identity between

pagans and Jews.[53] As Jonathan Z. Smith has argued, "demon" functions as "a measure of

distance, a taxon, a label applied to distinguish 'us' from 'them.'"[54] Tertullian was concerned

about Christian participation in Greek and Roman religious practices that he believed to be at

odds with Christian identity.[55] He discusses this in a number of his writings under the rubric

of "idolatry," and he often laments Christian participation in this non-Christian social life.

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[50] These authors' demonologies do not agree in every respect, but they all allow for some evil daemons; see Brenk, "Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," 2068-2145; Cancik, "Römische Dämonologie," 447-460.

[51] Plutarch, *Def. orac.* 417c; trans. Brenk, "Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," 2093-2094.

[52] See Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 104-134; Martin, "When Did Angels Become Demons?" 675-677.

[53] Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, "Christian Apologists and Greek Gods," in *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations* (eds. Jan N. Bremmer and Andrew Erskine; Edinburgh Leventis Studies Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 442–464.

[54] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," *ANRW* 16.1:429.

[55] See Barnes, *Tertullian*, 85-114. For a nuance and insightful analysis of Tertullian's efforts to negotiate a Christian identity among the various competing social and cultural identities of Roman Carthage, see Wilhite, *Tertullian the African*.

For example, Tertullian argues against those Christians who celebrate pagan festivals in order to be culturally accepted, lamenting that such Christians "do not fear to be declared pagans (*ethnici*)."[56] He also complains that some Christians and even some Christian leaders are employed as idol-makers, and he insists that making an idol is tantamount to worshipping it.[57] He likewise disapproves of Christians who sell incense.[58] It is clear that he is working to establish a more definitive boundary between pagan and Christian identities.[59] Yet, for Tertullian, the term "identity" is too neutral. His polemic is more vivid and menacing. Joining Christian apologists from the period, Tertullian identifies idolatry with the Devil, and the idols with demons.[60] This polemic appears in several of Tertullian's works.[61] For instance, he begins his work *On Spectacles* by distinguishing between the Christian identity and an idolatrous pagan identity:

> When we step into the water and profess the Christian faith ... we bear public witness
> that we have renounced the Devil and his pomp and his angels. What, however, shall
> we call the chief and foremost manifestation by which the Devil and his pomp and his

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[56] Tertullian, *Idol.* 14.7; adapted. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Tertullian *De idololatria* come from J.H. Waszink and J.C.M. Van Winden, *Tertullianus, De Idololatria: Critical Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1987).

[57] Tertullian, *Idol.* 6-7.

[58] Tertullian, *Idol.* 11.

[59] On Tertullian and idolatry, see J.C.M. Van Winden, "Idolum and Idololatria in Tertullian," *VC* 36 (1982): 108-114; and Waszink and Winden, *Tertullianus, De Idololatria*. Tertullian has an expansive definition of idolatry that encompasses anything associated with pagan religious identity; e.g., *Idol.* 2.

[60] On the commonness of this trope see, Smith, "Demonic Powers in Antiquity," 426. Many Christians who identified pagan gods with demons relied on Psalm 95.5 (LXX), "For all the gods of the nations are demons." See also Ferguson, *Demonology*; and Jean-Marie Vermander, "La polémique des Apologistes latins contre les Dieux du paganisme," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 17 (1982): 3-128.

[61] E.g., Tertullian, *Apol.*, *Cor.*, and *Idol.*

angels are recognized, if not idolatry?[62]

The connection that he makes between the Devil and idolatry is clear, as is the distinction he makes between Christian identity and idolatry. When Tertullian transitions to his critique of gladiatorial contests, he becomes more explicit about the connection between idols and demons: "It is, furthermore, in the images ... that the demons have their abode."[63] Elsewhere demons are said to appear in the form of the gods.[64] Here, the demons are said to reside inside of the statues of pagan gods. Yet the influence of these demons is not limited to the statues. Even the announcements of gladiatorial contests and the purple robes of those presiding over such games are idolatrous, Tertullian says, because they "do not lack the pomp of the Devil and the invocation of demons."[65] For Tertullian, locations dedicated to the gods are likewise under the influence of demons. The amphitheater is the "temple of demons;" since "[t]here, as many unclean spirits have their abode as the place can seat men."[66] Statues, and any object or location dedicated to a god, marked the domain of demons. Tertullian illustrates the danger of a Christian entering these spaces through a haunting example of one Christian woman who became possessed by a demon because she attended the theater. At her exorcism, the demon was questioned as to why he dared to invade a Christian. The demon's response proves Tertullian's point: "[I]n truth I did it most

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[62] Tertullian, *Spect*. 4.1-2; unless otherwise indicated, all quotations of Tertullian *De Spectaculis* come from Rudolph Arbesmann, *Tertullian: Disciplinary, Moral and Ascetical Works*; FC (New York: Catholic University of America Press, 1959).

[63] Tertullian, *Spect*. 12.5; cf. 13.2.

[64] E.g., Tertullian, *An*. 57.

[65] Tertullian, *Spect*. 12.6.

[66] Tertullian, *Spect*. 12.7.

righteously, for I found her in my domain."[67] For Tertullian, any object, place, or practice associated with pagan gods was demonic.

The examples from Tertullian considered above demonstrate how he participated in this common polemic. But they do not illustrate the extent of his polemic. Tertullian's discussions of idolatry and demons reached into every waking moment of life—but he did not stop with 'waking moments.' The same polemic that identified demons in the theater and at the gladiatorial games also revealed demons in dreams.

Rhetoric against Demonic Dreams

Tertullian describes four sources of dreams, and one of them is demons. As discussed previously, Tertullian introduced his theory of dreams in order to explain how it was possible for pagans to experience beneficial dreams, including epiphanies. These beneficial non-Christian dreams are what Tertullian identifies as originating from demons. His discussion of this category suggests three characteristics of non-Christian dreams.

First, they may feature demons who can alter their form—they might pretend to be a god or a ghost.[68] In the previous chapter we saw that gods sometimes disguised themselves as human beings in order to hide their true identity. Here, Tertullian suggests that evil demons disguise themselves as gods in order to hide their true identity. Since pagan gods were often identified by their statues in dreams, Tertullian suggests that those very images should be recognized as demonic disguise: "So no one should doubt that homes are also accessible to demons, that people are afflicted by their images not only in the temples, but in our

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[67] Tertullian, *Spect*. 26.

[68] On ghost, see Tertullian, *An*. 57.

bedrooms."[69] Tertullian was familiar with the idea that gods could be identified by comparison to their statues. It is worth noting that Tertullian does not object to the practice of identifying dream-images, including manifestations of divine beings, by using art. In his work, *Against Marcion,* Tertullian relates the account of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and asks how it was possible for Peter to recognize the manifestations of Moses and Elijah: "For how could he have known who Moses and Elijah were, except in the spirit—for the Jewish people could have had no pictures or statues of them, since the law also forbids similitudes."[70] Although his solution was to attribute Peter's insight to inspiration from the Holy Spirit, it is significant that Tertullian first considers the common practice of recognizing the divine through comparison with art. Tertullian does not object to this practice. Here, in *On the Soul,* Tertullian suggests that this practice should be used to recognize demons in disguise.

Demons might also appear in disguise as a manifestation of the dead. Tertullian addresses this demonic disguise in his discussion of magic near that end of *On the Soul.* According to Tertullian, demons use this disguise in various circumstances. During an exorcism, a demon might "pose as a relative of the person possessed, or sometimes as a gladiator or as a fighter of the beasts, or even as a god."[71] Demons can also make it appear as though a magician has summoned the soul of the dead; Tertullian provides the example of

[69] *Quo nemo dubitaverit domus quoque daemoniis patere nec tantum in adytis, sed in cubiculis homines imaginibus circumveniri*; Tertullian, *An*. 46.13; my translation; Latin from Waszink.

[70] *Quomodo enim Moysen et Heliam cognovisset, nisi in spiritu (nec enim imagines eorum vel statuas populus habuisset, et similitudines lege prohibente)*. Tertullian, *Marc*. 4.22.5; unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* come from E. Evans, *Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1972).

[71] *cum in exorcismis interdum aliquem se ex parentibus hominis sui affirmat, interdum gladiatorem uel bestiarium, sicut et alibi deum*; Tertullian, *An*. 57.5; trans. Evans; Latin from Waszink. This does not only describe a demon addressing the exorcist through the mouth of the possessed, but includes visual manifestations (*phantasma praestatur*); see *An*. 57.6.

the witch of Endor who, he insists, did not bring back the actual soul of Samuel the prophet but only a demon disguised as Samuel.[72] Here Tertullian also mentions those who believe that the dead often appear during the night—he provides examples of groups who consult their deceased relatives or leaders for oracles by staying at their tombs throughout the night.[73] It is important to note that Tertullian, even while acknowledging how demons can assume different forms to accomplish their purposes, still reminds his audience of the demons' use of divine disguises. When he mentions the exorcised demon's claim to be different deceased persons, he finishes his list with the demonic claim to be a god.[74] After he discusses the demon who had disguised himself as the deceased Samuel, Tertullian quotes scripture to remind his audience that Satan not only can disguise himself as an "angel of light" but also will "show himself to be even God" in a way that could "deceive the very elect."[75] Tertullian acknowledges that demons can change forms, but he implies that demons prefer to disguise themselves as gods.

Since demons can manifest themselves in different forms, it would be necessary to identify demon dreams by other characteristics. For Tertullian, a second characteristic of demonic dreams is their deceptive intent. He insists that demon dreams should ultimately be seen "as vain, deceitful, vague, licentious, and impure," but he acknowledges that they may

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[72] Tertullian, *An*. 57.8-9; cf. 1 Kings 28.6.

[73] *Si et de nocturnis imaginibus opponitur saepe non frustra mortuos uisos*; Tertullian, *An*. 57.10. In this final case, Tertullian does not identify images of the dead that appear during sleep as demonic. Instead, he dismisses them as insignificant—no more meaningful than appearances of the living during sleep (*non magis mortuos uere patimur in somnis quam uiuos*; *An*. 57.10). It is not clear why Tertullian only dismisses this particular manifestation and not all demons dreams.

[74] *sicut et alibi deum*; Tertullian, *An*. 57.5; trans. Evans.

[75] Tertullian, *An*. 57.8; cf. 2 Cor 11:14; 2 Thess 2:4; Matt 24:24.

not appear that way at first.[76] He emphasizes their deceitful role by saying, "they deliberately set out to delude us with favors"—in other words, *beware of Greek gods bearing gifts*.[77] As we saw in the last chapter, pagan gods often performed healings, foretold the future, and manifested themselves for other purposes. Tertullian acknowledges that, at times, such dreams do appear "true and favorable to us" (*uera et gratiosa*), but he insists that this is part of the deceit.[78] The dream was simply another tactic employed by the Devil's demonic forces to lead people away from God. In the examples of demons disguised as the dead, Tertullian reiterates this characteristic. Demons pretend to be the souls of the dead, according to Tertullian, only to trick people into disregarding the Christian message about the dead. With these manifestations as souls of the dead, demons attempt "to disprove ... that all souls go down to Hades at their death, and to weaken faith in the judgement and resurrection."[79] For Tertullian, any dream or epiphany that could lead one away from Christianity or could persuade one to believe something contrary to the Christian message should be considered demonic.

The final attribute of these demon-dreams is their frequency. Indeed, in Tertullian's categorization of the four different sources of dreams, he lists the most common one first: "We declare that dreams are inspired mostly by demons."[80] For Tertullian, then, people

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[76] *quanto magis uana et frustratoria et turbida et ludibriosa et immunda. Nec mirum, si eorum sunt imagines quorum et res*; Tertullian, *An.* 47.1; Latin from Waszink.

[77] *etsi interdum uera et gratiosa, sed, de qua industria diximus, affectantia atque captantia*; Tertullian, *An.* 47.1; trans. Evans; Latin from Waszink. On *affectantia* as "deluding us with false appearances," see Waszink, *De Anima*, 503.

[78] Tertullian, *An.* 47.1; trans. Evans.

[79] *nihil magis curans quam hoc ipsum excludere quod praedicamus, ne facile credamus animas uniuersas ad inferos redigi, ut et iudicii et resurrectionis fidem turbent*; Tertullian, *An.* 57.5; trans. Evans; Latin from Waszink; adapted.

[80] *Definimus enim a daemoniis plurimum incuti somnia*; Tertullian, *An.* 47.1; my translation with reference to

frequently encountered demonic dreams; some of them were identifiable by the manifestation of a pagan god, others by their deceptive intent.

Given the prevalence of dreams of pagan gods discussed in the previous chapter, and given Tertullian's frequent references to Christians who participated in pagan life, there is little reason to doubt that some Christians had dreams of pagan gods. Tertullian certainly believes this to be the case, but he contextualizes the experience in the same terms he used when discussing idolatry: "The temptations of the Devil attack the saints; he never relaxes his vigor, trying to trap them while they are asleep, if he is unsuccessful while they are awake."[81] Yet Tertullian also expresses his confidence that Christians will see through this demonic charade. In fact, for Tertullian, the ability to avoid such a deception characterizes Christian identity. In his discussion of magic and the manifestations of demons as gods or as the souls of the dead, he explains, "Christians are *the only ones* to see through this fraud, since we have come to know the evil spirits, not, of course, by consorting with them, but by the knowledge that unmasks them."[82] Before considering the potential impact of this rhetoric, which sought to define certain dream-content as distinctly non-Christian, it is important to acknowledge its prevalence.

Apologists and the Dreams of the "Other"

Tertullian was not the first Christian, nor would he be the last, to address the problem of manifestations of non-Christian deities. Throughout the second and third centuries,

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German from Jan H. Waszink, *Terullian über die Seele* (Switzerland: Satz und Druck, 1980); Latin from Waszink.

[81] Tertullian, *An.* 47.2.

[82] Tertullian, *An.* 57.2; trans. Arbesmann, emphasis added. In *An.* 57, Tertullian discusses apparitions of the dead and of gods in the context of magic, exorcisms, and dreams. This, once again, attests to the fluidity that exists among these categories of manifestation; see the Introduction.

Christians writing from major cities across the empire addressed this problem—most often in apologies. These include the writings of Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras, Minucius Felix, and Origen.[83] Justin wrote his *First Apology* in Rome around 150 CE and addressed it to the emperor Antoninus Pius, his sons, and the Senate.[84] Justin's disciple, Tatian, wrote his *Address to the Greeks* within twenty years after Justin's (c. 150-170CE), probably before relocating from Rome to Mesopotamia.[85] Athenagoras wrote from Athens in 177CE and addressed his *Plea for Christians* to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus. Minucius Felix, writing in the early third century CE, produced a dialogue between his Christian friend Octavius and the pagan Caecilius situated in Rome.[86] Around 248CE in Caesarea Maritima, Origen wrote his *Against Celsus*, a rebuttal of Celsus's anti-Christian work, *On True Doctrine*.[87] Each of these authors—writing over a period of a hundred years not only from Carthage but also from Rome, Athens, and Caesarea—addresses the problem of pagan epiphanies.

A number of important studies on the apologists have examined the polemic against pagan gods within the theological context of early Christianity or within a broader Greco-Roman philosophical context.[88] Unfortunately, most of these studies do not discuss the role

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[83] Not all second- and third-century Christian apologists discuss pagan epiphanies; e.g, Theophilus, in *Autol.*, depicts the pagan gods as demons, but does not discuss epiphanies.

[84] Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 50-55.

[85] Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 112-123.

[86] Most accept that *Octavius* post-dates and is dependent on Tertullian's *Apol.*; see Franz Hasenhütl, *Die Heidenrede im "Octavius" des Minucius Felix als Brennpunkt antichristlicher Apologetik: Weltanschauliche und gesellschaftliche Widersprüche zwischen paganer Bildungsoberschicht und Christentum* (Theologie 89; Wien: LIT , 2008), 34-37.

[87] Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 133.

[88] Grant discusses demons in the theology of Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Tatian; Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 63, 109, 130 respectively. For demons in Tertullian's theology, see Lien-Yueh Wei, "Doctrinalising Dreams:

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that contemporary epiphanies and other dreams play within the apologists' polemic.[89] This

may seem surprising, especially when one such study begins with the important reminder that

the apologists "are deeply involved in the political and social struggles of their time and

cannot be understood apart from the precise circumstances in which they are writing."[90] Even

studies that focus on dreams in the Greco-Roman world or early Christian literature and

include examples from the apologists, often stop short of discussing dreams contemporary to

the apologists.[91] Instead, these studies focus on what apologists say about the past—

epiphanies from pagan myths and history—and show how the apologists presented

themselves as the philosophical equals, or superiors, of their pagan counterparts. The absence

of dreams from these academic studies is understandable when one considers their

methodological approach. Studies that focus predominantly on parallels between the

apologists and contemporary pagan philosophy necessarily exclude a discussion of

contemporary dreams. Pagan philosophers identified the gods of myth with evil demons in

order to absolve the gods of immoral actions; they did not typically associate the beneficial

contemporary epiphanies that lead to healings or prognostication with evil demons.[92] Since

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Patristic Views of the Nature of Dreams and their Relation to Early Christian Doctrines" (Diss., University of Edinburgh, 2011), 123-129. For an analysis of pagan philosophical parallels to this Christian polemic against pagan gods, see Lanzillotta, "Christian Apologists and Greek Gods," 442–464; Michael Fiedrowicz, *Apologie im frühen Christentum: Die Kontroverse um den christlichen Wahrheitsanspruch in den ersten Jahrhunderten* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000); Julien Ries, "Cultes païens et démons dans l'apologétique chrétienne de Justin à Augustin," in *Anges et démons. Actes du colloque de Liège et de Louvain-la- Neuve, 25-26 novembre 1987* (eds. Julien Ries and Henri Limet; Louvain-La-Neuve: Centre d'histoire des religions, 1989), 337-352.

[89] Lanzillotta, "Christian Apologists and Greek Gods," 442–464; Grant, *Greek Apologists*; Fiedrowicz, *Apologie im frühen Christentum*; Ries, "Cultes païens et démons dans l'apologétique chrétienne," 337-352.

[90] Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 10.

[91] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 137; William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 69; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 64; Wei, "Doctrinalising Dreams," 122.

[92] See above.

there are no direct parallels between Christians and pagans with regards to beneficial

contemporary dreams, scholars of early Christian apologies have said little about this issue.

These studies on the apologists' polemic against pagan gods have shown how

Christians adapted trends from contemporary pagan philosophy to identify the gods of myth

with evil demons by characterizing their actions as immoral. Most of the apologists

mentioned above employ this tactic, but they do not stop with epiphanies from the past. For

instance, Justin Martyr follows the philosophical trend of identifying "gods" who commit

immoral actions with evil demons: "...in ancient times, wicked demons, in apparitions

(ἐπιφανείας), committed adultery with women and seduced boys and made people see

horrifying things."[93] Yet Justin's concern about demon manifestations does not stop with

stories from ancient times. Justin warns his addressees that demons will try to prevent them

from understanding the Christian message and that they will do so through "manifestations in

dreams" (δι' ὀνείρων ἐπιφανείας).[94] Tatian likewise demonstrates that the Greek gods are

evil demons by describing familiar myths to prove their actions are immoral; among these, he

alludes to some epiphanies, such as Zeus's seduction of Leda and abduction of Ganymedes.[95]

Yet he also describes contemporary incubation epiphanies. Tatian argues that demons cause

illness and that health results only when demons leave. People mistakenly believe that gods

are healing them because demons, these "presumed gods" (οἱ νομιζόμενοι θεοί), produce "a

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[93] Justin, *1 Apol*. 5.2; Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Justin's *First Apology* come from Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, eds., *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Minns and Parvis note that "[t]he word ἐπιφανεία, here translated 'apparitions', was a standard term for manifestations of the gods in pagan religion;" Minns and Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr*, 91, n.1.

[94] Justin, *1 Apol*. 14.1. Justin may also imply that demons will deceive by changing their form in these manifestations. Justin next says that demons will try to trick the emperor διὰ μαγικῶν στροφῶν. Minns and Parvis suggest that διὰ μαγικῶν στροφῶν, "through magical changes," refers to "the demons assuming different shapes in their efforts to mislead;" Minns and Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr*, 111, n.6.

[95] Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 8-10.

sense of their presence through dreams" (δι᾽ ὀνείρων).[96] Athenagoras also describes the gods

as immoral, but his discussion of dreams appears in the context of contemporary pagan

devotion.[97] He insists that people continue to worship these false gods because evil demons

pour visions (φαντασίας) into the human soul, making them seem as if they came from idols

and statues (εἰδώλων καὶ ἀγαλμάτων).[98] Similarly, when Minucius Felix argues that past

epiphanies are not evidence for the legitimacy of paganism but demonic deceit, he includes

these examples: "Jupiter demanded the restoration of his games in a dream" (*ut Iuppiter

ludos repeteret ex somnio*) and "the Castors appeared with horses" (*cum equis Castores

viderentur*).[99] Just before this, however, he had argued that the contemporary practice of

incubation was a trick that involved demons "disturbing sleep" (*somnos inquietant*) and

"terrifying minds" (*terrent mentes*).[100] Finally, consider Origen. In his third volume against

Celsus, Origen moves systematically through a series of epiphanies that Celsus had

marshaled as evidence for the legitimacy of Greek and Roman religion.[101] In every instance

he calls into question the character or virtue of the so-called god in order to demonstrate that

the being was in fact demonic. From Herodotus's account of Aristeas to the manifestation of

Hadrian's Antinous, in each instance Origen argues that the epiphanies of supposed gods

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[96] Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 18.3; translation and Greek from Molly Whittaker, *Tatian: Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), adapted. Demons deceive through "false appearances" (φαντασιῶν ἐξηπατήκασιν); Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 14.1.

[97] On the immorality of the gods, see Athenagoras, *Leg.* 21.

[98] φαντασίας αὐτοῖς ὡς ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ ἀγαλμάτων ἐπιβατεύοντες αὐτῶν τοῖς νοήμασιν εἰσρεῖν παρέχουσιν; Athenagoras, *Leg.* 27.2. Greek from Miroslav Marcovich, *Athenagoras: Legatio pro Christianis*; Patristische Texte und Studien 31 (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1990).

[99] Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 27 (ANF); cf. Tertullian, *Apol* 22. On the literary relationship between Tertullian's Apology and Minucius Felix, see Hasenhütl, *Die Heidenrede im "Octavius,"* 34-37.

[100] Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 27; trans. Arbesmann; Latin from LCL.

[101] Origen, *Cels.* 3.22-43.

were the deceptions of evil demons.[102] Yet Origen also applies this same method to contemporary dreams. For instance, when addressing the miracles and epiphanies of Asclepius, Origen argues that Celsus's multitude of witnesses includes bad people: "Many who are not worthy even to live are said to have been healed."[103] He concludes that gods like Asclepius and Apollo cannot be considered true gods if they helped immoral people: "If it is shown to be self-evident that there is nothing divine about the healing of Asclepius and the divination of Apollo, how could anyone reasonably worship them as pure gods?"[104] In each of these apologies, from Justin to Origen, the authors move fluidly between accounts of ancient epiphanies and beliefs in contemporary manifestations. These apologists are not only concerned with presenting themselves and Christianity as philosophically sophisticated, they also evince a profound concern regarding evidence that could legitimize belief in pagan gods—namely, the past and contemporary manifestations of those gods.

These apologists did not agree on every issue. Some disagreed on the relationship between evil demons and pagan images. For instance, Justin suggests that the images of gods were originally derived from manifestations of demons: "those whom human beings formed and set up in temples and called gods [...] have the names and shapes of those wicked demons which have appeared" (φανέντων κακῶν δαιμόνων).[105] Other apologists, such as Tertullian and Athenagoras, believed that the images of gods were actually representations of the dead, deceased kings or heroes, and that demons appropriated their images and names so

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[102] Origen, *Cels*. 3.25-29.

[103] Origen, *Cels*. 3.25; unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Origin *Contra Celsum* come from Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 [1965]).

[104] Origen, *Cels*. 3.25.

[105] Justin, *1 Apol*. 9.1; Minns and Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr*, adapted.

that they might, as Tertullian says, "create faith in their own divinity" (*fidem divinitatis operatur*).[106] Apologists also did not agree on the mechanics of demon-dreams—how demons were manifest as gods to human beings. For Tertullian, people believe that they are seeing gods because the breath of demons (*adspiratio daemonum*) corrupts their minds.[107] For Tatian, the nature of the demonic body is "spirit" (πνευματική), so only those who have the Spirit of God (πνεῦμα θεοῦ) can easily see demons.[108] But sometimes, Tatian admits, demons show themselves to others—i.e., those with souls (ψυχαί), but not the Spirit of God—in order to deceive and elicit worship.[109] For Athenagoras, demons take advantage of the natural abilities of the human soul: "the irrational powers of the soul [αἱ τῆς ψυχῆς ἄλογοι], which produce fantasies [ἰνδαλματώδεις], bring forth all kinds of images [εἴδωλα]. Some they derive from matter. Others they form and project by themselves."[110] Demons take advantage of this unique capacity of human souls by "pour[ing] visions [φαντασίας] into them, making it seem as if these came from idols and statues."[111]

Despite these differences, much of the same polemic that Tertullian had used to define dreams of pagan gods as "other" also appears in the writings of Justin Martyr, Tatian,

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[106] Tertullian, *Apol*. 21.31; my translation. see also Athenagoras, *Leg*. 26, 28.

[107] Tertullian, *Apol*. 22.6.

[108] Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 15.3. Tatian distinguishes between the "spiritual" nature of demons and the Spirit of God by explaining that demons are "reflections of matter and evil;" *Or. Graec*. 15.4; trans. Whittaker.

[109] Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 16.2.

[110] Athenagoras, *Leg*. 27. πρῶτα μὲν αἱ τῆς ψυχῆς ἄλογοι καὶ ἰνδαλματώδεις περὶ τὰς δόξας κινήσεις ἄλλοτ' ἄλλα εἴδωλα τὰ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης ἕλκουσι, τὰ δὲ αὐταῖς ἀναπλάττουσιν καὶ κυοῦσιν. Greek from Marcovich. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Athenagoras *Legatio pro Christianis* come from Cyril Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[111] Athenagoras, *Leg*. 27; φαντασίας αὐτοῖς, ὡς ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ ἀγαλμάτων <ἐπιούσας>, ἐπιβατεύοντες αὐτῶν τοῖς νοήμασιν εἰσρεῖν παρέχουσιν; Greek from Marcovich. On Stoic influence, see Dragos-Andrei Giulea, "The Watchers' Whispers: Athenagoras's Legatio 25, 1-3 and the Book of the Watchers," *VC* 61 (2007): 278-279.

Athenagoras, Minucius Felix, and Origen. In the works of each of these authors, pagan gods

and their images are associated with evil demons.[112] Each of these authors associates demons

with dreams, and most provide specific examples of demon dreams from both ancient myths

and contemporary experience.[113] And all insist that demons use dreams and the images of

pagan gods to deceive people, to turn them towards idols and away from Christ.[114] Not one of

these authors debated the reality of pagan epiphanies. They could not deny that social fact.

Instead, they argued that behind these facts lurked demons.[115] Finally, most of these authors

suggest that Christian beliefs and practices provide an advantage over these evil demons who

feign divinity.[116] It is this final point that we must now address, before considering the effect

of such polemic on Christian dream practices.

Tertullian, in his treatise *On the Soul*, suggested that Christians might encounter

demons disguised as pagan gods in their dreams. In his *Apology*, however, Tertullian says

nothing to suggest that pagan gods or demons could have an influence on Christians. The

same is true of the other apologists. Whenever apologists discuss the relationship between

Christians and these false gods, it is always to demonstrate the power of Christians over the

demonic.[117] The only encounter between Christians and demons mentioned in Tertullian's

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[112] Justin, *1 Apol*. 5, 9, 25; Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 8, 14 ; Athenagoras, *Leg*. 26, 28; Minucius Felix, *Oct*. 27.1, 4, 6; Origen, *Cels*. 3, 8.43.

[113] Justin, *1 Apol*. 14; Tatian, *Or. Graec*., 18; Athenagoras, *Leg*. 27; Minucius Felix, *Oct*. 27.1; Origen, *Cels*. 8.62.

[114] Justin, *1 Apol*. 12, 58; Tatian, *Or. Graec*., 16; Athenagoras, *Leg*. 26-27; Minucius Felix, *Oct*. 27.1, 8; Origen, *Cels*. 3.37; 7.6-7, 35.

[115] Adele Monaci Castagno, *Il diavolo e i suoi angeli: testi e tradizioni (secoli I-III)* (Biblioteca Patristica 28; Fiesole: Nardini, 1996), 69.

[116] Justin, *1 Apol*. 14; Tatian, *Or. Graec*., 15; Athenagoras, *Leg*. 27; Minucius Felix, *Oct*. 27.7; Origen, *Cels* 3.37; 8.36, 58.

[117] Even though Tatian writes in the first-person plural when he speaks of the demonic tricks associated with

Apology is exorcism. Tertullian challenges his pagan reader to test his claims regarding the demonic nature of the so-called gods; he recommends bringing a "god" possessed person into the presence of a Christian. The result, he promises, is that the "god" will confess that he is actually a demon.[118] Minucius makes a similar promise. Pagan gods are identifiable as demons, he explains, because "when adjured by true God and one God, against their will, they quake with pitiable fear in those bodies, and either jump out at once, or vanish gradually, according to the strength of faith in the possessed or the gift of grace in the healer."[119] Minucius adds that demons "flee from Christians when near at hand."[120] It is not clear whether the description of demons "vanishing" is meant to describe a visual manifestation during the exorcism, but it is clear that demons avoid Christians. For Tatian, demons are seen by Christians and Christians better than anyone else are able to see demons due to their "spiritual" nature. Even here, however, Tatian's description of this uniquely Christian ability—an effect of the Spirit of God on the Christian—is a power *over* demons. Demons appear to pagans on their own terms and always with deceptive intent, but Christians can view demons as they are, perhaps even when they do not want to be seen.[121]

Some of the apologists described certain practices that would either defend human

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sickness (*Or. Graec.* 16), it is not clear whether he believes that demons attempt these tricks on Christians.

[118] Tertullian, *Apol.* 23.4-6.

[119] Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 27.7; trans. Arbesmann.

[120] *Sic Christianos de proximo fugitant*; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 27.5; trans. Glover and Rendall.

[121] It should be acknowledged here that Tatian's theory about the nature of the demonic and the spirit-filled Christian conflicts with the reality that he faces of gods—which he understands to be demons—appearing to pagans to command, heal, and help in other ways. So even though Tatian would like to insist that the Christian nature is higher than the demonic because of the Spirit and that this grants Christians a special power of viewing the demonic, he must also acknowledge that demons are seen by non-Christians as well. See Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 130-131; Emily J Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 136.

beings or place them in danger of demon deceit, including deceit through dreams. For Justin, demons are only able to "overpower those who do not struggle in every way after their own salvation."[122] Christians, Justin says, have done this: "we turned away from [the demonic gods]" towards the "only unbegotten God."[123] Tatian suggests that demons are able to deceive people whose thoughts, like those of demons themselves, are focused downward toward matter. "Should anyone wish to conquer [demons]," Tatian explains, "let him repudiate matter [...] armed with the breastplate of the celestial Spirit."[124] This is similar to Athenagoras's theory that the orientation of a person's soul determined the influence of demons. When a person's soul is oriented more towards the material world than heavenly things, Athenagoras suggests, the soul tends to produces images focused on idols.[125] Athenagoras's description of this downturned soul might also suggest how he thought one might avoid demonic deception:

> A tender and susceptible soul which is ignorant of sound teaching and has no experience in it, having neither contemplated the truth nor reflected upon the Father and Maker of the universe, is easily impressed with false notions of itself.[126]

To avoid demonic dreams filled with images of false gods—"the idols and statues"—people must turn their gaze toward heavenly things and gain sufficient experience with "sound teaching" (λόγων ἐρρωμένων), as well as spend time contemplating the truth and reflecting on God. Nothing said by Justin, Tatian, or Athenagoras necessarily excludes all Christians

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[122] Justin, *1 Apol.* 14.1; adapted.

[123] Justin, *1 Apol.* 14.1; adapted.

[124] Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 16.1-3 (ANF).

[125] Athenagoras, *Leg.* 27.1

[126] Athenagoras, *Leg.* 27.2.

from the experience of pagan gods or idols in dreams. Were any of these authors to meet a Christian who struggled with demon dreams, it is clear what their advice would be: struggle more for your salvation, focus more on heavenly things, spend more time contemplating Christian truth and worshipping the Christian God.

Many of these themes are reiterated in Origen's *Against Celsus*. The ideas that Christians have power over demons and that Christians are protected through devotional practices are both present. According to Origen, demons are hostile for two reasons. First, Christians do not offer sacrifices to them and demons "savagely attack the person who avoids worshipping them by burnt offering and blood."[127] Second, Christians expel demons from individuals and statues: "daemons are accustomed to taking vengeance on Christians [...] because they drive them <u>out of the statues</u> and human bodies and souls."[128] Yet the nature of this demonic vengeance against Christians does not seem to be the same as the deception that demons have perpetrated against others. The primary means of attacking Christians is through the mediation of other people whose souls "are filled by evil daemons."[129] Why are demons unable to attack Christians directly? Origen suggests that the Christian's devotion to God provides protection.

> Let not Celsus scare us, then, by threatening that we shall be hurt by daemons if we slight them. Even if daemons are slighted, they are able to do nothing to us who are devoted to the Person that is alone able to help all those who deserve it. He does no less than set His own angels over those whose lives are devoted to him, that the opposing angels [i.e., demons] and the so-called ruler of this world who governs them

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[127] Origen, *Cels*. 8.64.

[128] Origen, *Cels*. 8.43.

may be unable to do anything against those are dedicated to God.[130]

Christians who are devoted to God are protected by the angels of God against the "opposing angels" or demons.[131] That protection, however, is dependent on devotion. For Origen, the "power which prevents the attacks of demons against the righteous person" is a "consequence of the actual worship he offers to Him."[132] The opposite is also true for Origen: demons "have power over bad men on account of the wickedness of the latter."[133]

As with the other apologists, Origen does not discuss whether a Christian might encounter one of these demons who masquerade as gods—although, elsewhere, Origen cautions Christians against consulting pagan gods.[134] Yet his suggestion that sickness, bad luck, and even death should be preferred over appealing to Asclepius or Apollo, could be construed as polemic against Christians who practiced incubation. When Celsus argued that Asclepius manifests himself to people, he appealed to evidence from "a great multitude of men, both of Greeks and barbarians" who "confess that they have often seen and still do see [...] Asclepius himself healing men and doing good and predicting the future."[135] Celsus insisted that if Christians really wanted to see a god manifest, then they should visit Asclepian temples or the sacred sites of Trophonius, Amphiaraus, and Mopsus.[136] Origen

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[129] Origen, *Cels*. 8.43-44.

[130] Origen, *Cels*. 8.36.

[131] These angels of God can manifest themselves to Christians; see Origen, *Cels*. 8.34. More on this below.

[132] Origen, *Cels*. 8.58; trans. adapted.

[133] Origen, *Cels*. 8.34.

[134] Origen, *Hom*. *Isa*. 7.3.

[135] Origen, *Cels*. 3.24, see also 8.45.

[136] Origen, *Cels*. 7.35. On Trophonius, Amphiaraus, and Mopsus, see Pausanius, *Descr*. 1.34.2; 8.2.4; and Apuleius, *De deo Socr*. 15.153-154.

does not dispute this claim, but argues that Christians should not participate in such practices: "For our part, if our health and good luck in the affairs of this life are to come through worshipping daemons of this sort, we would prefer to be ill and to have bad luck in life."[137] If Christians had sought help from Asclepius or Apollo, Origen would not approve. If Christians had seen these "demons" manifest, Origen would likely suggest that they were not sufficiently devoted to God.

I had previously mentioned that some important studies on dreams in antiquity have acknowledged that manifestations of pagan gods were a genuine concern for the apologists, but did not address the issue of contemporary dreams.[138] I suggested that some omitted the subject because there was no polemical parallel among pagan philosophers. Still others did not fully address what apologists wrote about contemporary dreams because they concluded that demon dreams were not important to these early Christians. For instance, Amat, in her otherwise excellent analysis of Tertullian's polemic against manifestations of pagan gods, stops short of discussing the significance of contemporary demon dreams since, she concludes, for Tertullian "Le songe n'est pas encore le principal canal de la tentation."[139] Likewise, Wei acknowledges that "demonic dreams could effectively torment Christians and seriously undermine their faith," but he insists that the apologists were only interested in these dreams because of "their utility to facilitate the dissemination of the doctrine of demons."[140] For both Amat and Wei, the apologists are less concerned with the social

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[137] Origen, *Cels*. 8.62.

[138] Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 137; Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 69; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 64; Wei, "Doctrinalising Dreams," 122.

[139] Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 196.

[140] Wei, "Doctrinalising Dreams," 122.

significance of contemporary epiphanies than with developing a coherent demonology. Yet, as we have seen, Tertullian is deeply concerned with the relationship between Christians and any social or cultural practices associated with pagan gods, including practices involved with dreams of those gods—he was explicit in his statement, "the temptations of the Devil attack the saints [...] trying to trap them while they are asleep."[141] We have also seen that a number of apologists in the second and third centuries expressed concern about the proper interpretation not only of past epiphanies but also of contemporary manifestations of pagan gods. Their concern is understandable. Contemporary manifestations of pagan deities created a serious problem for early Christians.[142] The historical, mythological, and contemporary accounts of pagan gods appearing for the benefit of their adherents threatened the fundamental truth claims of Christianity; in particular, they threatened the claims that the Christian God was the only good god and was more powerful than all others. That is a difficult position to maintain when powerful, awe-inspiring manifestations of non-Christian gods from the past and present are regularly recalled in literature, inscriptions, sculpture, mosaics, theatrical presentations, special games, festivals, and perhaps even casual conversation.

Effects of the Polemic against Dreams of the "Other"

The potential effect of this polemic on Christian dreams was profound. It promoted demon dreams by associating demons with one of the most common dream images and simultaneously insisted that true Christians would not be visited by demons. Given the

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[141] Tertullian, *An.* 47.2.

[142] Castagno is one of the few scholars who has emphasized the serious social problems that pagan epiphanies created for early Christians and who sees the apologies as attempts to reconcile Christian identity with this problem. Unfortunately, her discussion is brief—part of an introduction to an anthology of early Christian

prevalence of dreams of pagan gods and given Tertullian's assertion that these represent the most frequent dream-type, there can be little doubt that some Christians experienced these dreams. If such dreaming Christians accepted the widespread apologetic polemic against pagan gods, a new problem could arise. Christians who had renounced the devil and his demons in baptism might now confront those same evil beings regularly in dreams. Apologists may have intended for their polemic to unmask the beneficial acts of pagan gods as the work of devious spirits with duplicitous intent. Yet, for Christians who accepted this polemic, the dreamscape could now become just as dangerous as the pagan landscape. While Christians could avoid the idols which decorated the landscape, those gods that marched upon an undefended dreamscape could not be avoided.[143] In addition, this polemic simultaneously insisted that demons could not approach true Christians. The appearance of a pagan god or demon in the Christian's dream would have compelled a negotiation of identity since its very presence threatened the Christian self. To understand how Christians negotiated these conflicting ideas, we now turn to contemporaneous Christian narratives about dreams of the "other."

Narrating the Dreams of the "Other"

Visible manifestations of non-Christian deities, or evil demons, are relatively rare in Christian narratives from the second and third centuries. There are two important accounts in the apocryphal Acts of Thomas. In the Acts of Peter, Simon Magus functions as a composite character that represents everything opposed to Christianity—including pagan gods /

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demonological texts. See Castagno, *Il diavolo e i suoi angeli*, 68-69.

[143] Some Christians may have attempted to defend themselves. Tertullian mentions that it was common practice to make the sign of the cross upon one's bed or body before sleep; see *Cor*. 3.4 and *Ux*. 2.5. Yet, in his discussion of other bodily practices, which he attributes to Plato or the Pythagoreans, he is not convinced that

demons—and might be read profitably in conjunction with Tertullian and the apologists considered above. Finally, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* narrates two dreams that include demonic figures. When we read these narratives in conjunction with the polemic against pagan dreams examined above, we find significant correspondence. For instance, in these narratives, demons are associated with pagan gods and their images as well as with beliefs and practices the author considers unchristian. In these narratives, demons manifest themselves in order to deceive, tempt, or attack non-Christians and weak Christians, but have no power against devoted Christians. As we saw above, the idea that true Christians should not experience demon dreams creates a problem for any self-identifying Christian who does encounter a demon in a dream. The final three accounts that I examine below reveal a new way that Christians might deal with this problem: they narrate demon dreams as divine dreams featuring demons.

Acts of Thomas

The early-third century Acts of Thomas tells the story of the apostle, Didymus Judas Thomas, and his missionary adventures en route to and in India.[144] During his adventures, Thomas encounters the same demon on two occasions: first, when a "very beautiful woman" begs Thomas to free her from a demon who has raped her for five years, and later when that same demon and "his son" are found possessing the wife and daughter of Siphor the captain of King Misdaeus. These narratives of demon manifestations include key themes identified in the apologies. In both accounts the women are not Christian when they are attacked by the

one might solicit or avoid particular dreams (*An*. 48).

[144] Bremmer and Klauck suggest a date between 220 and 240 CE; Jan N Bremmer, "The Acts of Thomas: Place, Date and Women," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (ed. Jan Bremmer; Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 74-78; Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction*

demon, but later become Christian. In these accounts demons take on different forms when they appear, but ultimately they are associated with idols and sacrificial worship.

The first encounter takes place as Thomas enters a city and immediately encounters a "very beautiful woman."[145] This is the story she shares with Thomas:

> And one day when I left the bath, it happened that I met a man who looked troubled and disturbed. And his voice and answer seemed to be very faint and thin. And coming up to me he said, "Let us unite in love and have intercourse with each other as a man with his wife." And I answered and said, "I had no intercourse with my betrothed, as I refused to be married—how should I give myself up to you, who wish to have intercourse with me in adultery?" And having said this I passed on. And to my maid I said, "Did you see the young man and his impudence, how shamelessly and boldly he talked to me?" And she said, "I saw an old man talking with you." When I had come to my house and dined, my mind suggested to me a certain suspicion, especially as he appeared to me in two forms. And with this in my thoughts, I fell asleep. In that night he came in to me and made me share in his foul intercourse. I saw him also when it was day, and fled from him. According to his wont, he came at night and abused me. And now as you see me, I have been tormented by him five years, and he has not departed from me.[146]

Five years before, a demon had appeared to her and propositioned her. She rejected his offer, but he attacked her that night while she slept. For five years this woman would run away from the demon during the day, and he would rape her at night. This story expresses the same

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(Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008 [org. 2005]), 146.

[145] Acts Thom. 42-46; see a similar account in Acts Andrew Pap. Copt. Utrecht 1.

fear that Tertullian had acknowledged—that the devil, if unsuccessful in the daytime, would attack at night.[147] Notice also that the demon is depicted both as sexually obsessed with a woman and as polymorphic.

Most commentaries on the Acts of Thomas do not address this demon's sexual obsession.[148] An important exception is István Czachesz who, in his study on demons in Acts of Thomas, finds parallels to this account primarily in early Jewish and Christian texts.[149] He includes Tobit 3, 6, 8, which tells the story of a demon who had killed each husband of a woman named Sarah; Acts 16:16-19, about a possessed slave girl who could foretell the future; and Mark 5: 21-43, which recounts the raising of Jairus's daughter. The only pagan account that he includes is the story of Apollonius of Tyana raising a girl who had died just before her wedding.[150] In none of these accounts, however, does a demon attack a girl sexually. In two of the accounts, Mark and *Life of Apollonius*, there are no demons at all. That is not to say that this passage from Acts of Thomas is unparalleled. Two key elements of the story, polymorphy and rape, were associated with myths about deities and their direct encounters with humans, as we saw in the previous chapter. We might think of Zeus/Jupiter and his sexual obsession with Io.[151] Here, however, the author of Acts of Thomas presents

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[146] Acts Thom. 43.

[147] See above.

[148] For instance, Bornkamm focuses on Thomas's theological conversation with demon; see Günther Bornkamm, *Mythos und Legende in den apokryphen Thomas-Akten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933), 38-45.

[149] István Czachesz, "The Bride of the Demon: Narrative Strategies of Self-Definition in the Acts of Thomas," in *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (ed. Jan Bremmer; Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 36–52.

[150] Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.45.

[151] As discussed previously, Plutarch absolved the higher gods and insisted that only evil daemons acted on this kind of sexual obsession; see *Def. orac.* 417d-e; and Brenk, "Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," 2119.

the actions of pagan gods and daemons as the work of an evil demon—a demon that only a Christian like Thomas could expel.

This demon is not described as appearing in the form of a Greek or Roman god, even though it clearly had the ability to change its form. This demon could appear during the day in the form of a young man or an old man—or as both simultaneously. The demon could also appear to the woman at night while she was asleep. Even though this seems to describe a "dream," in the modern Western sense of the word, the demon's actions are described in physical terms—"made me share in his foul intercourse."[152] Finally, when Thomas summons the demon in order to send him away, the demon appears before him in such a way that no one but Thomas and the woman can see him: "And when the apostle had spoken the enemy stood before him, no one seeing him except the apostle and the woman."[153] When the demon finally disappears "fire and smoke were seen" by everyone present.[154] This demon was polymorphic, but not explicitly a Greek or Roman god. Although this demon's association with idolatry is not part of the first story, that association is made clear when the demon is featured in the story of Siphor's wife and daughter.

Thomas encounters the same demon when he heals the wife and daughter of Siphor, King Misdaeus's captain.[155] The story of this encounter with the demon shares some similarities with the previous account. The demon first appears in human form, women reject the demon and attempt to flee, but ultimately the demon wins—at least until Thomas arrives.

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[152] Acts Thom. 43.

[153] Acts Thom. 44.

[154] Acts Thom. 46.

[155] "The apostle, however, recognized that this was the same demon that had been driven out from that woman" (Acts Thom. 75).

This time, however, it is not one but two demons that appear: the demon from the previous account, who now attacks Siphor's wife, and that demon's "son," a boy-demon, who attacks Siphor's daughter. These demons are first described by Siphor's slaves as "a man and a boy" whose bodies could become intangible: "We wounded them with swords, but the swords fell to the ground."[156] They are described in more detail by Siphor's wife: "I saw a black man before me, his head shaking a little, and a boy like him, standing by his side. And I said to my daughter, 'Look at these two ugly men, whose teeth are like milk and whose lips are like soot.'"[157] Demons were often described as shadowy beings and when they assumed a more physical and anthropomorphic form they were often described as black.[158]

Unlike the previous account, this demonic attack is not described in explicitly sexual terms—although the demons do "strip them naked" (64) and "threw them on their beds" (73)—but it is described as physical attack that can occur whether the demons themselves are visible or invisible. Siphor's wife describes seeing them on the roadside, running from them, and being overtaken by them: "I saw them also, coming towards us, and we ran away from them. ... And the men [i.e., the demons] beat us and threw us down."[159] The slaves also describe seeing them on the roadside, but in the slaves' account the demons seem to vanish and simultaneously overtake the women when attacked: "And we wounded them with swords, but the swords fell to the ground and the women also fell, gnashing their teeth and

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[156] Acts Thom. 63.

[157] Acts Thom. 64.

[158] Peter Frost, "Attitudes toward Blacks in the Early Christian Era," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (1991): 1-11; David Brakke, "Ethiopian Demons: Male Sexuality, the Black-Skinned Other, and the Monastic Self," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 501-535; for a more comprehensive treatment, see Frank M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); and Frank M. Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

knocking their heads against the ground."[160] Siphor's description to Thomas seems to

confirm the demons' power to be present but unseen: "And as she told me this the demons

came near again and threw them down. ... For wherever they are the demons throw them

down and strip them naked."[161] This language of demon-possession has parallels in the early

Gospels and Acts, but those early accounts lack comparable descriptions of visible and

tangible manifestations that precede the possession.[162]

The association of these demons with idolatry becomes clear after Thomas commands

them to leave Siphor's wife and daughter. At Thomas's command, "Leave them and stand

aside!" the women fall down dead and one of the now visible demons addresses Thomas.[163]

The demon insists that they are only doing the work assigned to them by the Devil, just as

Thomas does the work assigned to him by God.[164] As the demon continues to compare

himself to Thomas, he acknowledges the association of demons with sacrificial worship:

"And as you enjoy your prayer and good works and spiritual hymns, so I enjoy murders and

adulteries and the sacrifices offered with wine upon the altars."[165] He again acknowledges

their affiliation with Greco-Roman cult after Thomas commands them to never again possess

a human:

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[159] Acts Thom. 64.

[160] Acts Thom. 63.

[161] Acts Thom. 64.

[162] E.g., Mark 1:23-28; 5:1-20; 9:14-29 and parallels.

[163] It is not clear who besides Thomas can see the demon. Its visibility to Thomas is only confirmed at the end of the encounter when "suddenly the demons became invisible" (Acts Thom. 77). Thomas's command, "Go out in the presence of all the people here" (Acts Thom. 74), could imply that the demons became visible to everyone, but more likely identifies the audience as witness to his act of divine power.

[164] Acts Thom. 46.

[165] Acts Thom. 76.

"You have given us a hard order. But what will you do to those now hidden from

you? For the makers of idols rejoice in them more than you, and the multitude

worships them and does their will, bringing sacrifices to them and offering wine and

water libations as food and presenting gifts." And the apostle said, "They shall now

be destroyed with their deeds." And suddenly the demons became invisible.[166]

The demons begrudgingly accept their individual defeat, but claim that Thomas can not stop

others like them. These other demons are hidden from Thomas, but they are hidden in plain

sight. They are the polytheistic gods of the Greco-Roman—and Indian—world! Those who

make idols rejoice in them, the multitude worships them, and they do what these demons

command. The demonic commands most disconcerting for the author of Acts of Thomas are

the same commands feared by Tertullian and the apologists: "bringing sacrifices to them and

offering wine and water libations as food and presenting gifts." Although the Acts of Thomas

does not include an account of demons manifesting themselves in the form of statues or the

dead, as Tertullian and the apologists had feared, the two accounts of demonic manifestations

culminate with an emphasis on the role of demons in pagan worship.

Acts of Peter

The central narrative in the early-third century Acts of Peter is a story about Peter's

confrontation with Simon Magus, the anti-apostle, who had convinced many in Rome to

worship him.[167] In the Acts of Peter there is only one account of a visible demon, and it

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[166] Acts Thom. 77.

[167] Baldwin suggests late-third century, after 250 CE; Matthew C Baldwin, *Whose Acts of Peter? : text and historical context of the Actus Vercellenses* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). Most say 250CE is latest; see Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts*, 84; Jan N Bremmer, "Aspects of the Acts of Peter: Women, Magic, Place and Date," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism* (ed. Jan N Bremmer; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 1-20.

occurs in a symbolic dream.[168] On one occasion, Simon Magus is said to deceive people by causing spirits (πνεύματα) to appear, but these apparitions are not described in detail, they do not act on their own, and are never said to be demons.[169] They are mentioned only as part of a list of tricks that Simon uses in his deceptions; others include: "he seemingly cured the lame and blind for a time, and many dead persons, too, he made alive and made them move about."[170] Although there are no explicit demon attacks in the Acts of Peter, the text still provides an informative parallel to the apologists' polemic against demon dreams. It does so through the character of Simon Magus.

The relative absence of demons in the Acts of Peter can be explained by the presence of Simon Magus.[171] In the Acts of Peter, Simon Magus functions as a composite character, and one element of that composite is the demonic.[172] As Robert Stoops has explained, "The main concern of the Acts of Peter is the restoration and maintenance of faith in the face of competition from other cults. Simon is a composite figure representing a number of challenges to the faith of believers."[173] In particular, the Acts of Peter identifies Simon Magus with Judaism, magic, and demons—he is called a "Jew," a "magician," the

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[168] Marcellus's dream from Acts Pet. 22 will be discussed below. There are also accounts of possession, for example in Acts Pet. 11 when Peter commands a demon to leave a young man and to reveal itself. But it is only revealed by the young man's actions, not though an epiphany.

[169] Acts Pet. 31(Gr. 2); Greek and Latin from Léon Vouaux, *Les actes de Pierre: introduction, textes, traduction et commentaire* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1922), 404.

[170] Acts Pet. 31(Gr. 2)

[171] Besides Simon Magus and the demon that represents his power (Acts Pet. 22; discussed below), only one demon is mentioned. That demon is not seen, but it is exorcized and knocks over statue in Acts Pet. 11.

[172] Simon Magus also functions as a composite character in the Pseudo-Clementines; see Dominique Côté, "La fonction littéraire de Simon le Magicien dans les Pseudo-Clémentines," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 57 (2001): 513-523.

[173] Robert Franklin Stoops, "Peter, Acts of," *ABD* 5:267-268; here, 267.

"messenger of Satan," and a "deceitful demon."[174] The Acts of Peter also implies that Simon should be identified as a demon when it suggests that exorcism is necessary to cleanse a house from Simon's presence. Lapham has noted how any remaining trace of Simon is "exorcized in the name of Jesus Christ" after Simon leaves a house, and he concludes that the Acts of Peter "represents Simon as the personification of evil."[175] Although Simon is never explicitly identified as a "demon," a demon is identified as the "whole power of Simon and of his god."[176] The Acts of Peter also presents Simon Magus as a deceitful manifestation of a pagan god.

When Simon Magus first appears in the Acts of Peter, he presents himself as though he were the manifestation a pagan god, and his followers respond in pagan fashion by dedicating a statue of him. Simon's arrival at Rome is introduced through a discussion among a group of Christians:

"For yesterday [Simon Magus] was invited with great acclamation to do so, being told, 'You are God in Italy, you are the saviour of the Romans; hasten to Rome as quickly as possible.' And Simon addressed the people and said with a shrill voice, 'On the following day about the seventh hour you shall see me fly over the gate of the city in the same form in which I now speak to you.' Wherefore, brethren, if you agree, let us go and diligently await the end of the matter." And they all went out and

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[174] "Jew" (Acts Pet. 6), "magician" and "magic" (Acts Pet. 5-6, 8, 16-17, 23, 28, 30-31), "messenger of Satan" (Acts Pet. 17-18), and "deceitful demon" (Acts Pet. 17). See Gerard Luttikhuizen, "Simon Magus as a Narrative Figure in the Acts of Peter," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; Louvain: Peeters, 1998), 39-51.

[175] Acts Pet. 19. Fred Lapham, *Peter: The Myth, the Man, and the Writings: A Study of Early Petrine Text and Tradition* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 50 and 51, n.66.

[176] Acts Pet. 22.

came to the gate. About the seventh hour there suddenly appeared afar off a dust-cloud in the sky, looking like smoke shining with a glare of fire. And when it reached the gate it suddenly disappeared. Then he appeared standing in the midst of the people. They all worshipped him and knew that it was he whom they had seen the day before.[177]

By the time that Peter arrives in Rome, all but seven Christians had become followers of Simon Magus.[178] One of those followers, Marcellus, repents and confesses to Peter, "For by his persuasion it came about that I erected a statue to him with the following inscription: 'To Simon, the young god.'"[179] Although traditions about a statue of Simon Magus are known from other sources, within the context of this narrative the statue functions as the proper pagan response to such an epiphany.[180] Simon was heralded as a god, manifested himself as though he were a god, and a statue was erected to honor that manifestation.

One could argue that this is not a real epiphany because Simon is not a real god.[181] Indeed, Acts of Peter makes it clear through Simon's defeat that he is only human. Nevertheless, Simon is called "god" and his epiphany is not dismissed as a human trick, it is implied to be demonic—the text repeats twice that Simon accomplished his deceit through the "power of Satan."[182] So this account can be beneficially compared with other Christian

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[177] Acts Pet. 4.

[178] Acts Pet. 4.

[179] Acts Pet. 10.

[180] The statue of Simon Magus is also mentioned by Justin Martyr in his *1 Apol*. 1.26.3. For a discussion of the historical context, see Tamás Adamik, "The Image of Simon Magus in the Christian Tradition," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; Louvain: Peeters, 1998), 58.

[181] For other examples of pseudo-epiphanies, see *Alexander Romance* 1.1-7; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.65-80. See discussion in Chapter 1.

[182] Acts Pet. 5-6; cf. Acts Pet. 17-18.

narratives and discourse about manifestations of pagan gods or demons. Notice how this account presents the same issues raised by Tertullian and some of the other Christian apologists. One of their concerns was that demons could employ epiphanies and other dreams as a tactic to lure any who were not sufficiently devoted to Christ into forms of pagan worship. In the Acts of Peter, Simon not only fooled pagans, but also most of the Christian community. By the time Peter arrived, Christians had abandoned Christ to worship Simon and even dedicated a statue to him. They were deceived through an epiphany. The Acts of Peter agrees with the apologists that manifestations of non-Christian gods threatened Christian identity.

Before we leave the Acts of Peter, we must consider one more manifestation of a demon. It is found in the account of Marcellus's dream. I have postponed addressing this account because it diverges from the pattern of demon epiphanies and other dreams discussed so far. In the polemic of the apologists and in the narratives from the Acts of Thomas and the account of Simon Magus in the Acts of Peter, manifestations of pagan gods or demons are a threat. They deceive, tempt, and attack. The dream of Marcellus differs from this pattern because it depicts a demon as powerless.

It was the night before Peter was to face off with Simon Magus in the forum that Marcellus experienced this dream.

> And Marcellus slept for a little while, and on waking said to Peter, 'O Peter, apostle
> of Christ, let us boldly carry out our resolution. In my sleep I saw you sitting in an
> elevated place and before you a great multitude and a very ugly woman in appearance
> an Ethiopian, not an Egyptian, but very black, clad in filthy rags, who danced with an
> iron chain about the neck and a chain on her hands and feet. When you saw her you

said to me with a loud voice, "Marcellus, this dancer is the whole power of Simon and of his god; behead her." And I said to you, "Brother Peter, I am a senator of a noble family and I have never stained my hands; I have not even killed a sparrow." Upon hearing this you cried even more loudly, "Come, our true sword, Jesus Christ, and not only cut off the head of this demon, but break all her limbs in the presence of all these whom I have tested in your service." And at once a man who looked like you, Peter, came with a sword in his hand and cut her into pieces. And I looked at both of you, at you and at him who cut up that demon, and to my astonishment you were both alike. Now I am awake I communicate to you these signs of Christ.' Upon hearing this, Peter was the more encouraged because Marcellus had seen these things, for the Lord always takes care of his own. Rejoicing and strengthened by these words, he rose to go to the forum.[183]

I will return to this account in the next chapter to discuss Christ's manifestation in the form of Peter. Here I want to focus only on the role of the demonic figure that is identified as "the whole power of Simon and of his god." The demon's association with Simon could imply that, like Simon, this demon represents a variety of threats to Christian identity—e.g., the allure of magic or pagan idolatry. Concern about such demonic threats was expressed in the apologists' polemic against demon dreams; they warned that through healing or some other ostensibly benevolent act, demons tricked people into practicing idolatry. Yet, here, in the Acts of Peter, the demon does not deceive. Notice also that this demon is described as both very ugly and black, similar to the description of the demons in Acts of Thomas.[184] In Acts of

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[183] Acts Pet. 22.

[184] See above. In Acts of Peter, the demon is also described as dancing. For dancing as a characteristic of the demonic, see Ruth Webb, *Demons and Dancers: Performance in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard

Thomas, the demons posed a physical threat to people, but here, in Acts of Peter, the female demon is no threat at all. She does not deceive or attack. Instead, she appears in chains, bound and powerless from the time she arrives to the moment she is cut into pieces by Christ's sword. This is a different kind of demon dream.

There is one more difference in this account that may explain why the demon appears weak: the character of the person to whom the demon appears is different. In the Acts of Thomas, those who were attacked by demons were not Christian. Earlier in the Acts of Peter, the Christians who had been deceived by the epiphany of Simon Magus were portrayed as weak. The author explains that they had no leaders to strengthen them in the faith; Paul had left and so had Timothy and Barnabas. The author also emphasizes that those threatened most by the epiphany of Simon Magus were the recent converts, "the neophytes."[185] At that point in the narrative, this group of weak Christians included Marcellus who had given in to Simon's trickery. By the time that Marcellus experiences this dream, however, he is no longer weak. He had repented of his unfaithfulness, renewed his commitment to Christ, exorcized any trace of Simon from his house, and become a devoted follower of Peter.[186] It was Marcellus the neophyte who saw the false epiphany and strayed from Christianity. It is Marcellus the faithful Christian who sees the demon chained and defeated by Christ.

Justin, Athenagoras, and Origen had suggested that devotion to Christ and study of Christian truth was key to avoiding demonic deception in dreams. Tertullian had implied that the true Christian should see through demonic deceit, recognize the demons as such, and reject them. The apocryphal acts give this perspective narrative form. Polymorphic demons

University Press, 2008).

[185] Acts Pet. 2; trans. Elliott.

sexually defile, attack, make people sick, and convince them to offer sacrifices to honor

pagan gods. Non-Christians and neophytes are attacked and tricked by demons, but faithful

Christians who see demons, recognize them as demons, and witness their defeat.[187] The

narratives reviewed so far are the only extant accounts of demon manifestations from the

earliest apocryphal acts. Before further analysis, it will be helpful to review another example

of a faithful Christian encountering demons in dreams.

Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas

The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, written in Carthage during the early-third

century, includes two dreams that have more in common with the dream of Marcellus than

the other accounts from the apocryphal acts.[188] Vibia Perpetua is described by the anonymous

self-declared editor of her writings as "a newly married woman of good family and

upbringing" who was "twenty-two years old and had an infant son at the breast."[189] She is

also described as a "young catechumen"—she is baptized only after she is arrested for

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[186] Acts Pet. 10-14.

[187] Tatian suggested that Christians were best able to see demons. Other apologists implied that demons would not approach Christians. This discrepancy will be discussed below.

[188] For the *status quaestionis* on the date of *Perpetua*, see Thomas J. Heffernan, "Philology and Authorship in the Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis," *Traditio* 50 (1995): 60-78.

[189] *Pass. Perp.* 2; unless otherwise indicated, all Latin text and translations of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* come from, Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972); with consideration of text and translation by Joseph Farrell and Craig Williams in Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano, eds., *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Since the text presents Perpetua as the narrator, I will often refer to her as though she authored the text. I acknowledge, however, that the issues surrounding her authorship are complex; see Heffernan, "Philology and Authorship," 60-78. Although it will be useful to distinguish between the author of the dream and the ancient editor who wrote the narrative of Perpetua's death, for the purpose of my argument it matters little whether a historical Perpetua recorded the dream or a contemporary Christian created the account. For a similar approach to these issues, see Kate Cooper, "A Father, a Daughter and a Procurator: Authority and Resistance in the Prison Memoir of Perpetua of Carthage," *Gender & History* 23 (2011): 685-686.

proclaiming herself a Christian.[190] The author of Acts of Peter would have called her a "neophyte." Despite being young in the faith, her writings present her as devout and even as "greatly privileged" by the Lord.[191] She is imprisoned for proclaiming herself a Christian. She does not recant when her father tries to persuade her.[192] She does not recant when she sees her mother and brother pained at her suffering.[193] She does not recant despite the physical suffering she was enduring in prison: darkness, crowds, heat, and hunger.[194] She was not a weak Christian. Based on this alone, one might expect that Perpetua's dreams would be more comparable to the dream of the later repentant Marcellus than the Marcellus who followed Simon Magus. And, indeed, they are.

Two of her dreams feature figures that could be interpreted as demonic: in the first, a dragon, and later, an Egyptian. The first dream comes to Perpetua as the result of prayer. Like the dream of Marcellus, the experience is portrayed as a true dream granted by the Christian God. This is not a demonic dream, but a divine dream that features a demonic figure. At the instigation of her brother, Perpetua prays to know whether she will be condemned or freed. The answer is a dream that begins with two key images: a ladder and a dragon.

> I saw a ladder of tremendous height made of bronze, reaching all the way to the
> heavens, but it was so narrow that only one person could climb up at a time. To the
> sides of the ladder were attached all sorts of metal weapons: there were swords,

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[190] *Pass. Perp.* 2-3.

[191] *Pass. Perp.* 4.

[192] *Pass. Perp.* 3, 5.

[193] *Pass. Perp.* 3.

[194] *Pass. Perp.* 3.

spears, hooks, daggers, and spikes; so that if anyone tried to climb up carelessly or

without paying attention, he would be mangled and his flesh would adhere to the

weapons. At the foot of the ladder lay a dragon of enormous size, and it would attack

those who tried to climb up and try to terrify them from doing so. And Saturus was

the first to go up, he who was later to give himself up of his own accord. He had been

the builder of our strength, although he was not present when we were arrested. And

he arrived at the top of the staircase and he looked back and said to me: "Perpetua, I

am waiting for you. But take care; do not let the dragon bite you." "He will not harm

me," I said, "in the name of Christ Jesus." Slowly, as though he were afraid of me, the

dragon stuck his head out from underneath the ladder. Then, using it as my first step,

I trod on his head and went up.[195]

The dream continues with Perpetua entering a large garden and encountering a tall shepherd.

Here, I will focus only on the images of the ladder and dragon that begin her vision. The

remainder of the vision will be discussed in the next chapter.

Perpetua never explicitly identifies the meaning of the images in her vision, but her

modern commentators have. Most commonly the ladder has been identified with the Old

Testament account of Jacob's ladder that reached the heavens, on which angels ascended and

descended.[196] Perpetua's enormous dragon typically has been associated with the enormous

"red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns" that appears in heaven in Revelation 12.[197] Yet

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[195] *Pass. Perp.* 4.3-7.

[196] E.g., see Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 219; Alvyn Pettersen, "Perpetua: Prisoner of Conscience," *VC* 41 (1987): 147; Thomas J. Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173. Cf. Gen. 28:12.

[197] Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 176; Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 98; Robeck agrees, but also acknowledges other influences; see, Cecil M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian, and*

neither of those biblical accounts presents a perfect parallel.[198] Jacob's ladder allows only angels to ascend and descend. The dragon of Revelation is red, multi-headed, and does not defend a ladder. Since Perpetua is a Christian, her dream is frequently interpreted by commentators in light of these Jewish and Christian images. Yet scholars have also identified parallels outside of Jewish and Christian texts. Bremmer has suggested that Perpetua's ladder may be the steps leading to the tribunal of a Roman judge.[199] Although this interpretation may read too much into the text, it is important to heed Bremmer's advice that "[a]ny in-terpretation... should connect the dreams to the material and mental world of Perpetua."[200] This includes non-Christian culture. Outside of Christianity, the ladder and the serpent are images frequently depicted in Egyptian and Mithraic art.[201] In broader Greek and Roman culture, dragons and serpents can represent gods—e.g., Zeus and Asclepius—or can be monsters slain by the gods—e.g., the dragon Python defeated by Apollo.[202] Certainly both Christian and non-Christian cultural contexts would have influenced Perpetua and her early Christian editor.

Cyprian (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 23-24.

[198] Robeck notes that the differences "are far more numerous and no less significant than the similarities;" Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 27. Salibury says cannot be limited to canon; Joyce E. Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 100-101.

[199] Jan N. Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary: Authenticity, Family and Visions," in *Märtyrer und Märtyrakten* (ed. Walter Ameling; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 99-100.

[200] Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 97.

[201] Johannes Quasten, "A Coptic Counterpart to a Vision in the Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas," *Byzantion* 15 (1941): 2-4; Jacqueline Amat, "Images du Martyre dans les Passions Africaines du IIIe Siècle," in *L'imaginaire Religieux Gréco-Romain* (ed. Joël Thomas; Perpignan: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 1994), 277; Amat agrees, but also connects it with Gen 28:12; Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 69-70. See also Origen, *Cels.* 6.22. Small bronze ladders and ladder-amulets have also been found in Roman tombs; see A.B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge 1914-40), 125.

[202] For a detailed study on the function of dragons and serpents in the Greco-Roman world, see Daniel Ogden, *Drakōn: Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Caution must be taken in interpreting Perpetua's dream. Since Perpetua had turned to God for information about her future, it makes sense to interpret the dream allegorically. But Perpetua herself does not provide any interpretations of her dream-images. The only interpretation that Perpetua provides is this: "I at once told [the dream] to my brother, and we realized that we would have to suffer, and that from now on we would no longer have any hope in this life."[203] Any attempt to interpret Perpetua's dream must begin with Perpetua's own interpretation. Based on this statement—that suffering is indicative of this life and that hope is only to be found in the next life—we can draw some tentative conclusions about the imagery in her dream. The threat of the ladder and the dragon in the first part of the vision stand in opposition to the peace of the garden and the shepherd in the second part. So it is safe to assume that the ladder and the dragon reflect the suffering Perpetua will face in this life, while her escape into the garden indicates that hope is only available in the hereafter. Unfortunately, Perpetua provides no information beyond this brief interpretation.

Even though Perpetua does not explicitly identify the dragon as demonic, that seems the most obvious interpretation. Since the garden is portrayed as good, the dragon's attempts to impede ascent into the garden—"it would attack those who tried to climb up and try to terrify them from doing so" and Saturus warns, "do not let the dragon bite you"—suggest that the dragon is evil. Since the dragon represents suffering in this life, we can learn more about the dragon from Perpetua's account of her trials. If the dragon represents Perpetua's trials, then it represents her father's attempts to persuade her to renounce Christianity—what Perpetua called the "arguments of the Devil" (*argumentis diaboli*).[204] It would also represent

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[203] *Pass. Perp.* 4.10.

[204] *Pass. Perp.* 3.3.

her father's plea and the governor's command to "offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors."[205] It would also represent the robes of the priestesses of Ceres, the pagan god, that Perpetua refuses to wear at her martyrdom.[206] In other words, the dragon would represent the temptations to turn from Christ to the idolatry that Tertullian and the apologists had associated with demon dreams. Yet this dream is not presented as demonic in origin or purpose.

This dream fits the same pattern that we saw in Marcellus's dream in the Acts of Peter. The demon does not trick or attack Perpetua. Even though the demon, or dragon, might be threatening by nature, it does not frighten Perpetua. Her commitment to Christ and her use of Christ's name gives her power over the dragon. In fact, as soon as Perpetua says, "He will not harm me ... in the name of Christ Jesus," it is the dragon who becomes afraid of her. The dragon does not bite her. Instead, it extends its head from under the ladder and does not react as Perpetua steps on it. This dream is not narrated as a demonic epiphany, it is a divine dream that featured a demon.

This pattern seen in Perpetua's first dream and in the dream of Marcellus repeats itself in Perpetua's final dream. Perpetua records her final dream on the day before she will face death by wild beasts.[207] Her dream begins with her in prison, just as she is in waking life. Pomponius the deacon arrives and leads Perpetua to the amphitheater. He leaves her in the center of the arena where an enormous crowd looks on. Perpetua is surprised when no wild beast are let loose. She describes what happens next as follows.

Then out came an Egyptian against me, of vicious appearance, together with his

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[205] *fac sacrum pro salute imperatorum* (*Pass. Perp.* 6.4; cf. 6.2).

[206] *Pass. Perp.* 18.4.

seconds, to fight with me. There also came up to me some handsome young men to be my seconds and assistants. My clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man. My seconds began to rub me down with oil (as they are wont to do before a contest). Then I saw the Egyptian on the other side rolling in the dust. Next there came forth a man of marvellous stature, such that he rose above the top of the amphitheatre. He was clad in a beltless purple tunic with two stripes (one on either side) running down the middle of his chest. He wore sandals that were wondrously made of gold and silver, and he carried a wand like an athletic trainer [*lanista*] and a green branch on which there were golden apples. And he asked for silence and said: "If this Egyptian defeats her he will slay her with the sword. But if she defeats him, she will receive this branch." Then he withdrew. We drew close to one another and began to let our fists fly. My opponent tried to get hold of my feet, but I kept striking him in the face with the heels of my feet. Then I was raised up into the air and I began to pummel him without as it were touching the ground. Then when I noticed there was a lull, I put my two hands together linking the fingers of one hand with those of the other and thus I got hold of his head. He fell flat on his face and I stepped on his head. The crowd began to shout and my assistants started to sing psalms. Then I walked up to the trainer [*lanista*] and took the branch. He kissed me and said to me: "Peace be with you, my daughter!" I began to walk in triumph towards the Gate of Life. Then I awoke.[208]

Just as scholars identified Christian images in Perpetua's first dream, scholars have also

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[207] *Pass*. *Perp*. 10.1.

[208] *Pass*. *Perp*. 10.6-14; Latin added.

argued for a variety of Christian images in this one. Some have associated the golden apples with the fruit of the tree of life, the oil rub with a baptismal anointing, and the Egyptian with the condemnation of Egypt in accounts of Israel's exodus.[209] Yet, each of these dream-images also has parallels in Perpetua's predominantly pagan Carthage. For instance, the golden apples have been interpreted as the erotic fruit of Aphrodite or as the golden apples of Hesperides that Hercules won after defeating a dragon.[210] Again, it is important to keep in mind that Perpetua does not identify most of the images in her dream. The most persuasive analyses, therefore, are those that remain open to the potential of both pagan and Christian influences and that rely on Perpetua's own interpretation. Louis Robert has convincingly argued that, when taken together, all the images of this dream reflect the Pythian games, which were held in Carthage in 203CE.[211] From the description of the announcer's purple tunic to the reward of golden apples, Perpetua's dream places her in the middle of a wrestling match or a *pancratium* at the Pythian games. Since the Pythian games celebrated Apollo's defeat of the dragon, Python, these images might also suggest a connection to her first vision.

Indeed, this vision is thematically reminiscent of her earlier vision of the ladder and the dragon. In both visions Perpetua is led by another Christian whom she admires: in the first vision it is Saturus, now it is Pomponius the deacon. In both visions she is rewarded for her triumph by a divine figure: in the first vision a tall shepherd, now an enormous athletic-

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[209] See Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 164; Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 80-83.

[210] On Hesperides, see E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [org. 1965]), 52; on Aphrodite, see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 184.

[211] Louis Robert, "Une vision de Perpétue martyre à Carthage en 203," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 126 (1982): 228-276. Robert does not allow for any allusions to Gladitorial games since they were not part of the Pythian games, but Bremmer convincingly demonstrates how Perpetua's dream blends gladiatorial combat with this Pythian games scene; see Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 117.

trainer.[212] In both visions she faces a challenge in the form of a demonic figure, overcomes him, and steps on his head: in the first vision it was a dragon, now it is an Egyptian. Although Perpetua does not provide a detailed allegorical interpretation of either vision, her response to this final dream more clearly identifies the antagonist as the devil: "I realized that it was not with wild animals that I would fight but with the Devil (*contra diabolum esse pugnaturam*), but I knew that I would win the victory."[213] Since she only fought (*mittere pugnos*) with the Egyptian and since the Egyptian replaced the wild animals, it is clear that she identifies the Egyptian with the Devil. The representation of a demonic figure by an Egyptian man also fits the pattern seen above: Marcellus's demon in Acts of Peter was an Ethiopian woman and the two demons in Acts of Thomas appeared as black men.[214]

Even though this vision is thematically similar to Perpetua's first one, the demon-figures in each vision behave differently. The dragon never had the chance to threaten Perpetua, she subdued it with a single command in Christ's name. The Egyptian, however, fights with Perpetua. Although a dragon may be a more menacing dream-image than an Egyptian man, the Egyptian's actions are far more threatening than dragon's. Perpetua's account suggests that the Egyptian's attack was fierce and that he would have slain Perpetua with a sword had he won. Comparing the Egyptian to other demons based on his actions alone, he seems more like the demons who assault pagan women in Acts of Thomas than the impotent demon-figure who appears in a Christian's dream in the Acts of Peter. Taking the full dream-account into consideration, however, I would argue that Perpetua's confrontation with the Egyptian actually fits the pattern of Marcellus's dream in Acts of Peter and

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[212] These images will be discussed in the following chapter.

[213] *Pass. Perp.* 10.14

Perpetua's encounter with the dragon. Although the Egyptian displays more power in this dream than the demon-figures in those other Christian dreams, this dream compensates for that difference.

The threat posed by the appearance of the Egyptian is countered by Perpetua's transformation. Immediately after her male opponent appears, Perpetua is transformed into his physical equal: "My clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man (*masculus*)."[215] Most scholars have interpreted this gender transformation by appealing to other Christian texts that describe the spiritual progress of women in terms of masculinization.[216] Cobb, for instance, argues that this passage demonstrates how "Perpetua's final vision is the culmination of her ascent to masculine Christianity."[217] It cannot be denied that characteristics of maleness feature prominently in early Jewish and Christian martyrdom texts, and that Perpetua is often depicted in masculine terms.[218] Yet it also cannot be denied that Perpetua's gender transformation in this dream is only temporary. No sooner does Perpetua defeat the Egyptian than the giant athletic-trainer addresses her as "daughter"

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[214] See above.

[215] *Pass. Perp.* 10.7.

[216] Some have focused on parallels in so-called Gnostic texts such as the *Gospel of Mary* or the *Gospel of Thomas* 114; see Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 262. Others have shown how the masculinization Perpetua in this passage and others fits within a broader Christian trends, especially within martyrdom accounts; see Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 109-111; Helen Rhee, *Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the Second and Third Centuries* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 154-156; L. Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), passim. For summary of both perspectives, see Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 64-65.

[217] Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, 107.

[218] Anders Klostergaard Petersen, "Gender-Bending in Early Jewish and Christian Martyr Texts," in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom* (eds. Jacob Engberg, Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen, and Anders Klostergaard Petersen; Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 251-256. For other passages that characterize Perpetua as male, see Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, 94-111.

(*filia*)—Perpetua has transitioned back into a woman.[219] Perpetua is only explicitly identified as a man long enough to defeat the Egyptian man. While Perpetua's characterization as a man may indeed play a larger role over the course of the narrative, within the immediate context of this dream it serves a single purpose. The young, recently pregnant mother had no chance of surviving a fight against this Egyptian. Perpetua is transformed in order to be capable of defeating her opponent. The ostensible threat of the Egyptian man is mitigated by Perpetua's transformation into a man.[220] In the end, the demon-figure is defeated and Perpetua is victorious. In contrast with violence suffered through the demonic attacks in Acts of Thomas, in Perpetua's encounter with the Egyptian, only the Egyptian is harmed. Just like the demon-figures in the dream of Marcellus and in Perpetua's first dream, this "Egyptian" demon ultimately posed no real threat. This dream is not depicted as a demon's deceptive manifestation or even as a demonic attack. Rather, it is a divine dream that features a demon.

From Demon Dreams to Divine Dreams

The apologists had suggested that one could identify demon dreams by their pagan content and purpose. Dreams with content or purposes opposed to Christianity, especially those featuring non-Christian divinities or encouraging sacrifices, were declared demonic. It was expected that non-Christians and weak Christians would experience these dreams and be deceived or harmed by demons. Strong Christians should not experience such dreams; if they did encounter a demon—for instance, during an exorcism—they were expected to overcome. In the narratives of demon dreams from the apocryphal acts and martyrdom accounts, we saw

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[219] *Pass. Perp.* 10.13.

[220] The threat of the Egyptian is also countered by Perpetua's divine support in the form of Pomponius. In this vision, just before he disappeared, Pomponius promised Perpetua that he would fight with her (*conlaboro tecum*); see Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 118. I will discuss Pomponius as a divine figure in the next

a shift occur. Although some narratives supported the apologetic framework, others allowed for pagan content and even demons to be part of a divine Christian dream. For instance, there was nothing explicitly Christian about Perpetua's dream encounter with the Egyptian, except for her interpretation of it—that she would defeat the Devil. Perpetua's narrative framed pagan content and even a demon figure within a divine Christian dream.

Most of the apologists reviewed above did not include any narratives of Christian dreams, so it is impossible to know whether they would have allowed that pagan content might appear in dreams sent from the Christian God. The exception is Tertullian. In four of Tertullian's works, he describes or narrates the dreams of contemporary Christians. Despite Tertullian's claim in his treatise, *On the Soul*, that most dreams are from demons—i.e., that the majority of dreams are associated with pagan images and practices—he does not apply this category to any of the contemporary Christians' dreams that he narrates. Tertullian identifies each of these four dreams as belonging to his less common dream-type: the divine dream. Most of these dreams would not sound unusual to pagan ears. The content of Tertullian's dreams is similar to common pagan dreams. But in every instance, Tertullian interprets the dream's purpose or "intent" as divine. In what follows, I will introduce three of these dreams and their literary context.[221] In each instance, I will identify their similarities to non-Christian dreams, then demonstrate how Tertullian interprets these diverse pagan dream-types as the same kind of Christian dream.

Since the dreams I will be discussing are from Tertullian's works, I will frequently refer to Tertullian as though he were the agent—i.e., I will write as though Tertullian himself

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chapter.

[221] The fourth dream (Tertullian, *An*. 9.4) is not addressed here because Tertullian's description of its content—a spirit touched by the dreamer—is too vague to analyze. The passage does, however, provide insight into

was the originator of these dream accounts and their interpretations. It is, of course, impossible to know how closely Tertullian's descriptions of these dreams correspond to the original dream-accounts as they were told to Tertullian. Nevertheless, I will show how Tertullian's descriptions of these dreams reflect broader Christian trends.

Tertullian's On Idolatry

In the treatise, *On Idolatry*, Tertullian argues that idolatry extends beyond the worship of idols through sacrifice—that any participation in practices associated with idols equally qualifies as idolatry. For instance, even decorating the entrance of one's house is idolatrous, since there are Roman gods associated with doors and thresholds.[222] To support this particular argument, Tertullian shares the following dream: "I know a brother who, because his slaves had wreathed his door after a sudden proclamation of public rejoicings, was heavily punished in a dream that same night."[223] Tertullian's point in sharing this dream is to demonstrate that God is concerned about idolatrous practice to such a degree that he even chastises a master for the idolatry of his servants.[224] Tertullian tells us nothing about the dream's content. Waszink and Van Winden have speculated that "heavily punished" (*castigatum grauiter*) "may refer to a flagellation (as seems also to be the case in the dream of St. Jerome)."[225] But there is little in Tertullian's treatise that would support this reading. It

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Christian practices surrounding epiphanies. For discussion, see Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 101-104.

[222] Tertullian, *Idol*. 7.5.

[223] *Scio fratrem per uisionem eadem nocte castigatum grauiter, quod ianuam eius subito adnuntiatis gaudiis publicis serui coronassent*; Tertullian, *Idol*. 15.7; trans. J.H. Waszink and J.C.M Van Winden, *Tertullianus: De Idoloatria* (Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1987; Latin from CSEL.

[224] Tertullian, *Idol*. 15.8.

[225] Waszink and Winden, *Tertullianus, De Idololatria*, 244; cf. Jerome, *Epist*. 22.30; *Ruf*. 1.30. Amat implies that the chastisement might have been physical when she writes, "Le songeur et Tertullien lui-même n'ont retenu que la réprimande, qui ne fut sans doute qu'orale;" Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 99. Eusebius reports a

is best to acknowledge, with Amat, "Nous ignorons de quelle apparition le songe s'est accompagné."[226] Amat also points out that there is nothing explicitly Christian about this type of dream: "Le songe qui représente le remords subconscient par des visions de châtiments est une constante de la thématique gréco-latine."[227] Whatever the Christian brother saw or experienced that night (*per uisionem eadem nocte*), Tertullian did not bother to share. Tertullian is only clear about two characteristics of this dream: first, that the dream came from God and second, that its purpose or intent was divine. Since this dream was understood as pointing the dreamer toward the Christian God and away from idolatry, Tertullian categorizes it as a divine dream. It was the perceived intent of the dream, rather than its content, that made it divine and Christian instead of demonic and pagan.

Tertullian's On Shows

Tertullian's treatise *On Shows* is similar to his work on idolatry. His primary argument is that idolatry extends beyond practices of worship and includes any practice associated with idols: in this case, any show in the theater or the arena. Regarding the theater, he argues that the whole enterprise is inspired by demons, dedicated to demons, and is therefore the domain of demons—and all of these "demons" are believed by pagans to be gods.[228] As evidence that the theater is demonic, Tertullian provides a "well-known" example of a woman who had attended a tragedy and then experienced a dream: "Another case, too, is

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dream of Natalius (*Hist*. *eccl*. 5.28.12) that shares some similarities with Jerome's, but little with Tertullian's example. See also Apoc. Paul 2.

[226] Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 99. Amat also questions whether "s'il y a eu réellement vision" by which she means a divine dream.

[227] Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 100.

[228] See esp. Tertullian, *Spect*. 10, 26.

well known, in which a woman had been hearing a tragedian, and on the very night she saw

in her sleep a stage-curtain (*linteum*)—the actor's name being mentioned at the same time

with strong disapproval—and five days after that woman was no more."[229]

With this example, Tertullian has provided some details about the content of the

dream.[230] Since this woman's dream included a stage curtain and the actor's name, it seems

that she was dreaming about the tragedy she had watched earlier that day. The fact that she

died five days after the dream suggests that the dream was a prediction of her death. The idea

that death could be foretold through dreams was not unique to Christians. In the last chapter

we saw how Socrates's death was foretold in a dream, and additional examples from

Tertullian's time could be amassed from histories and biographies written by Plutarch,

Suetonius, and others.[231] The idea that death could be foretold through a dream featuring

images from a tragic play also was not unique to Christians. Artemidorus, the second-century

interpreter and chronicler of dreams, suggests that dreaming of a tragedy can have tragic

consequences: "[to dream that you] act in a tragedy or hold tragic performances or possess

tragic stories or hear tragedies or speak in iambs furnishes outcomes that correspond to the

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[229] *constat et alii linteum in somnis ostensum eius diei nocte, qua tragoedum audierat, cum exprobratione nominato tragoedo nec ultra quintum diem eam mulierem in saeculo fuisse* (Tertullian, *Spect*. 26.3 [ANF]; Latin from LCL).

[230] This woman's dream seems to combine elements from allegorical and epiphanic dreams: an object is seen, but a voice also addresses her. Dream interpreters and philosophers liked to divide dreams into different categories: for instance, into the symbolic and the non-symbolic (or direct). But dreams rarely adhere to such simple categorization. See Vincent Crapanzano, "The Betwixt and Between of the Dream," in *Hundert Jahre "Die Traumdeutung:" kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven in der Traumforschung* (ed. Burkhard Schnepel; Studien zur Kulturkunde Köln: Koppe, 2001), 232-259.

[231] Amat notes that this dream "demeure bien proche des rêves païens: il ressemble fort aux présages de mort évoqués par Suétone ou les auteurs de l'Histoire Auguste;" Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 101. For thorough review of all dreams foretelling the deaths of Roman emperors, see Gregor Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2000), 417-496.

content of that tragedy."[232] The woman in Tertullian's example could have interpreted the content of her dream allegorically, realized that it foretold her death, and acted to avoid or prepare for that fate.[233]

For Tertullian, tragic theater—the content of this woman's dream—is both pagan and demonic.[234] Tertullian could easily have narrated this dream as demonic but he does not. Notice that Tertullian also does not provide an allegorical interpretation of this dream. What did the curtain signify? What was its relation to the actor's name? It seems that questions about the dream's images were irrelevant for Tertullian. Tertullian is interested only in the dream's purpose, which he narrates as a divine rebuke—he emphasizes how the actor's name was said "with strong disapproval" (*cum exprobratione*).[235] Tertullian takes what appears to be an allegorical dream foretelling death and turns it into a dream of divine chastisement. He takes a common pagan dream and turns it into a Christian dream.[236]

Tertullian's On the Veiling of Virgins

Tertullian's treatise *On the Veiling of Virgins* is different from the previous two dream accounts in that it does not focus on the problems of idolatrous practice. It does, however, focus on an issue equally concerned with individual and community boundaries.[237]

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[232] Artemidorus Daldianus, *Oneir*. 1.56. The linen cloth alone could have signified impending death; see *Oneir*. 1.14; 2.3.

[233] On responses to foreknowledge of death, see Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visione*, 423.

[234] Tertullian, *Spect*. 7, 10, 26.

[235] Tertullian, *Spect*. 26.3.

[236] Again, I write as though Tertullian himself was the originator of these dreams and their interpretations, but it is impossible to know how closely Tertullian's descriptions of these dreams might correspond with the original dream-accounts. Ultimately, it does not matter whether it is Tertullian or another Christian who has adapted common Greco-Roman dream-narratives because they demonstrate a larger trend. See Introduction Chapter.

[237] Given Tertullian's preeminent concern over the boundaries between Christianity and paganism, we should

Tertullian is concerned that some women in his community are not properly covering their bodies—that their veils are too short. Near the end of his treatise, Tertullian shares the the following dream:

> To *us* the Lord has, even by revelations, measured the space for the veil to extend over. For a certain sister of ours was thus addressed by an angel in a dream, slapping her neck, as if in applause: "What an elegant neck and deservedly naked! It would be better for you to be uncovered from your head all the way down to your genitals, otherwise this freedom of your neck does not benefit you." How severe a chastisement...[238]

Scholars who address the content and interpretation of this dream are divided over the role of the angel. "Angels" in Tertullian can be good or bad, heavenly messengers or evil demons.[239] Here, the angel's actions and remarks appear seductive, which has suggested to some that this angel is evil.[240] Yet Tertullian interprets the dream as a "chastisement" and a

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not be surprised to discover an equal anxiety over the dress of women. One might recall Mary Douglas's observation that concern over the pollution of the individual's body reflects anxiety over the porous nature of the community at large; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 1966), 141-167. Certainly the association between an individual's body and society was also prevalent in the political thought of Tertullian's time; see Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 38-55.

[238] *nobis dominus etiam revelationibus velaminis spatia metatus est. Nam cuidam sorori nostrae angelus in somnis cervices, quasi applauderet, verberans: 'Elegantes,' inquit, 'cervices et merito nudae! Bonum est, usque ad lumbos a capite <re>veleris, ne et tibi ista cervicum libertas non prosit.' Et utique quod uni dixeris, omnibus dixeris. Quantam autem castigationem merebuntur etiam illae.* Tertullian, *Virg.* 17.6–7; translation mine with consideration of ANF; Latin from Eva Schulz-Flügel and Paul Mattei, *Tertullien: Le Voile des vierges*; Sources Chrétiennes, no 242 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1997).

[239] See Martin, "When Did Angels Become Demons?" 676.

[240] E.g., Carly Daniel-Hughes, "Wear the Armor of Your Shame!: Debating Veiling and the Salvation of the Flesh in Tertullian of Carthage," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 39 (2010): 192; see also Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels: Women's Heads in Early Christianity," in *Off with Her Head: the Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture* (eds. H. Eilberg-Schwartz and W. Doniger; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 148. Robeck hints that angel might be tempted by the woman's naked neck and that it could cause his downfall Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 138.

"revelation" from the Lord, which has suggested to others that this angel is good.[241] If the angel is good, his seductive remarks must be read as sarcastic. The latter interpretation has been more common, but it is not entirely satisfactory. It does not do justice to the dream's context within a treatise that elsewhere includes explicitly seductive angels. It also does not do justice to the dream's context outside of the treatise—those who read the angel's sarcasm as reflecting Tertullian's own do not take seriously Tertullian's claim that the dream is not his own.

To understand the tension between the content of this dream and its interpretation, it will be helpful to begin by analyzing the content alone. If Tertullian had not framed this dream as a revelation from the Lord, the content could only be described as the seduction or sexual assault of a woman by an otherworldly being. This content of this dream parallels any number of Greek myths remembered in the literature and art of Tertullian's day—if we focus only on Zeus, we might think of his sexual advances on Io, Leto, Callista, Europa, Semele.[242] But these are literary myths and legends from the past. That an average individual in Tertullian's time might encounter otherworldly beings in erotic dreams was seen already in the previous chapter. Artemidorus's catalogue of allegorical dream interpretations included sex epiphanies. For instance, Artemidorus explains, "To be penetrated by a god signifies death for a sick person... but for others, if they delight in the intercourse, it signifies benefits from their superiors, but if they do not delight in it, terrors and disturbances."[243] The idea that

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[241] E.g., Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 67; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 138, n.139. The tension between the content of this dream and its interpretation can be seen in Amat's explanation. Amat refers to this dream as "a nightmare" (un cauchemar) and considers the possibility of an allusion to stories about "la chute des anges, tentés par les filles des hommes." Yet, ultimately, she concludes that this angel "joue surtout son rôle de messager divin" and his mordant style "est bien celui de Tertullien." See Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 100.

[242] Tertullian himself provides examples of otherworldly beings soliciting sex from women; cf. *Virg*. 7.2.

[243] Artemidorus, *Oneir*. 1.80; trans. Daniel E. Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus' Oneirocritica: Text, Translation,*

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otherworldly beings would physically assault women's bodies in dreams is also attested in

traditions about Pan and Incubus.[244] Based Tertullian's categorization of dreams and his

polemic against demon dreams, such sexual epiphanies of pagan gods would be identified as

demonic.

Yet there is no reason to look outside of Tertullian's own works to understand the

content of this dream. The dream shares similarities with the Legend of the Watchers—the

story of heavenly beings that become infatuated with mortal women—which Tertullian

discusses earlier in this same treatise.[245] Beginning with Paul's comment that women should

be veiled "because of the angels," Tertullian argues that the face of unveiled women "has

cast scandals from here to heaven" and is "responsible for the angels being banished."[246] In

Tertullian's interpretation of this legend, unveiled women caused angels to experience sexual

desire, fall from heaven, and engage in sexual intercourse with mortal women.[247] These are

not good angels. Based solely on Tertullian's definition of demon dreams, one could safely

conclude that he would describe these angels as demonic. Yet this conclusion is further

supported in Tertullian's other writings, where he explicitly identifies the same lecherous

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and Commentary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); altered. Artemidorus continues by describing the allegorical meaning of sexual relations with specific gods, but the experience that Tertullian relates does not seem allegorical.

[244] Although writing significantly later than Tertullian, Augustine provides a good summary of this problem: "It is widely reported that Silvani and Pans, commonly called *incubi*, have often behaved improperly towards women, lusting after them and achieving intercourse with them. These reports are confirmed by many people, either from their own experience or from the accounts of the experience of others, whose reliability there is no occasion to doubt" (Augustine, *Civ*. 15.23). Augustine continues: "[T]here is the story that certain demons, from the Gauls call Dusii, constantly and successfully attempt this indecency. This is asserted by so many witnesses of such a character that it would seem an impertinence to deny it" (*Civ*. 15.23); trans. Henry Bettenson, *St Augustine: Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (London: Penguin Books, 1972 [org. 1967]).

[245] See Tertullian, *Virg*. 7-8. Tertullian seems most familiar with the version from Enoch 6-36; see *Cult. fem*. 2-3. Enoch 6-36 is based in part on the story from Gen 6:1-4.

[246] Tertullian, *Virg*.7.3; trans. Dunn, *Tertullian*, 108; see also 1 Cor 11:10.

[247] Tertullian, *Virg*. 7; *Cult. fem*. 2-4.

angels as demons—those "angels [of the devil] who in baptism we renounce."[248]

Based on parallels to pagan accounts of divine and demonic sexual assault and parallels to the Legend of the Watchers, we have every reason to suppose that the content of this woman's dream would fit Tertullian's category of the demon dream.[249] Instead, he categorizes it as a dream of divine chastisement. Although the angelic applause and salacious remarks certainly suggest seduction, Tertullian describes the entire account as a severe "chastisement" (*castigationem*) and he introduces the dream as a "revelation" from the Lord. What might otherwise have been interpreted as a pagan or demonic dream becomes, in this interpretation, a divine chastisement mediated through a concerned Christian angel. How is this possible? For Tertullian, the intent of the dream was more important than its content. If the dream encouraged a woman to wear a veil of the proper length, then it must be divine!

Tertullian's Interpretation of Dreams

In each of these three cases—whether he is dealing with the hanging of a wreath, attending the theater, or the length of the veil—Tertullian interprets the dream as a rebuke of un-Christian behavior: the dreams are all revelations of divine chastisement. That Tertullian applies this particular dream-type to his narrations of contemporary Christians' dreams should not come as a surprise. Recall how Tertullian distinguished divine dreams from the demonic in his treatise, *On the Soul*: whereas demonic dreams might lead someone away from the Christian God, divine dreams turned someone towards God.[250] Tertullian implies that Christians should interpret their dreams not by the images that appeared, but according

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[248] Tertullian, *Cult. fem.* 2.4; cf. *Idol.* 6.2.

[249] There are also instances where he uses the term "angel" for "demon": e.g, Tertullian, *Idol.* 4.2; 6.2; 9.1-2; *Cult. fem.* 1.2; *Virg.* 7; *Or.* 22; *Apol.* 22; cf. Martin, "When Did Angels Become Demons?" 676.

to what those images encouraged them to do—not by the dream's content but by its perceived intent. What Tertullian implies in his classification of dreams and in his narrations of contemporary dreams, he says explicitly near the end of his treatise, *On the Soul*. In the context of discussing manifestations of the souls of the dead as demonic tricks, Tertullian affirms: "The truth of dreams is declared from their purpose, not from their content" (*Fides somniorum de effectu, non de conspectu renuntiatur*).[251] If the perceived intent of the dream supported Christian behavior instead of pagan behavior, then it was divine—regardless of its content.

There is nothing in the content of Tertullian's dreams that would have foreclosed on a pagan interpretation. There is nothing in these dreams that would have seemed strange to a pagan audience. Like the dreams of Marcellus and Perpetua, Tertullian's dream-narratives include content that elsewhere he had identified as "other" or demonic. Yet, unlike Marcellus and Perpetua, Tertullian's dreamers were "weak Christians"—Christians whom he associated with idolatry or immoral dress. Based on the polemic of Christian apologists, including Tertullian, such Christians were expected to experience demon dreams. But, in every case, Tertullian describes their dreams as divine. The widespread Christian polemic against common dreams of pagan gods had the potential to transform any Christian's dream into a demonic encounter. Yet all of the extant Christian dream-narratives from this period tend to interpret pagan images and even explicitly demonic figures as belonging to a category of divine dreams.

Tertullian's interpretive method exemplifies one Christian solution to the problem

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[250] Tertullian, *An*. 47.1.

[251] Tertullian, *An*. 57.10; Latin from Waszink.

caused by dreams of the "other." Tertullian's emphasis on interpreting dreams according to their purpose instead of their images was an interpretive method that could free Christians to find the divine in any dream. Content that might otherwise be identified as explicitly "other" and demonic might now be imbued with divine, Christian meaning. It was this sort of interpretation that opened the doors to the possibility of discovering explicitly Christian dream images. The creation of uniquely Christian dream-images, especially images of Christ, is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE:

MANIFESTATIONS OF CHRIST IN SECOND- AND THIRD-CENTURY CHRISTIAN DISCOURSE

Traditionally it has been assumed that Christians in the second and third centuries did not experience epiphanies of Jesus in the same way that pagans experienced epiphanies of Dionysus, Asclepius, and other gods or daemons. Major studies on dreams in Greco-Roman antiquity tend to dismiss the significance—or even the possibility—of epiphanies in pre-Constantinian Christianity.[1] Second- and third-century Christian dreams are often characterized as aniconic, then contrasted with the visual experiences of their contemporaries. For instance, Robin Lane Fox has suggested, "Christian dreaming had a quality of its own. Unlike a pagan's, it lacked the ubiquitous aid of art."[2] Although it is true that pagan art was ubiquitous in this period, it does not follow that only pagans were

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[1] Harris's review of Christian dreams focuses on accounts beginning in the fourth century—he covers second and third century Christian dreams in less than two pages. Regarding epiphanies in early Christianity, he explains: "Modalities changed: neither god the father nor, more surprisingly perhaps, Jesus appeared very often;" see William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 70. LeGoff likewise identifies the fourth century as the time when Christians began to deal with dreams; Jacques Le Goff, "Christianity and Dreams (Second to Seventh Century)," in *The Medieval Imagination* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 193; cf. Jacques Le Goff, "Le christianisme et les rêves (IIe-VIIe siècles)," in *I sogni nel medioevo* (ed. T. Gregory; Rome: 1985), 171-218. Miller quotes Lane Fox on the importance of art within the pagan dream experience but does not consider its potential influence on Christians; Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 28-29; cf. Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987). She also acknowledges the pervasiveness of epiphanies in the Greco-Roman world during the second and third centuries, but says little about their potential role among early Christians; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 51. In her brief comments on Christian epiphany-dreams, she suggests that they functioned primarily as an internal therapist—"tropes for an interior dialogue in which heartfelt anxieties are explored;" Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 63.

[2] Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 392.

influenced by pagan art. In some instances, assumptions about early Christian aniconism have deterred the study of pre-Constantinian Christian epiphanies. Consider Stroumsa's explanation for the ostensible absence of epiphanies in early Christian texts: "Early Christian attitudes reflected an ethos vastly different from the traditional ethos of the Hellenistic world. Up to the fourth century, Christianity remained essentially an aniconic religion, which did not favor visions of the Deity."[3] It is true that the explicit relationships between Christian art and epiphany are only explored in Christian texts after Constantine.[4] Nevertheless, Christian art and, I would argue, epiphanies did not come into being *ex nihilo* in the fourth century. Recent studies of art in early Christianity have demonstrated that early Christians were not entirely aniconic. Rather, the second and third centuries of Christian history were a period of selective adoption of popular images and innovation in Christian art.[5] In this chapter, I argue that Christian discourse on epiphanies followed similar trends—adopting and innovating within the cultural traditions of the Greco-Roman world. After reviewing evidence for the development of early Christian art, the remainder of the chapter will focus on a series of images that Christians associated with the manifestation of Christ. These include Christ in the form of a young man, a shepherd, an apostle, and the cross.[6]

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[3] Guy G. Stroumsa, "Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse," in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (eds. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 193.

[4] See Robin M Jensen, "Early Christian Art and Divine Epiphany," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 28 (2012): 125-144.

[5] See below.

[6] I have selected these images because of their prominence in either narratives or art during the second and third centuries. The discussion of the cross in epiphanies is an exception. I include the cross, despite its relative absence in narratives and art from the second an third century, because of its prominence in both beginning in the third century. This necessarily excludes some intriguing manifestations, such as the appearance of Christ in the form of a woman to the Montanist prophetess, Quintilla; see Ephiphanius, *Pan*. 49.1.

Early Christian Art and the Images of Christ

The relative absence of distinctive "Christian" images in the early period of Christian history may be attributed in part to aniconic tendencies inherited from Judaism and to Christians' animosity toward Greco-Roman religious practices. Early explanations of this phenomenon, however, do not capture the complexity of early Christian relationships with art. As Jensen explains, the rise of Christian art was once portrayed as a smooth trajectory that began with early "iconophobia" then grew "increasingly decadent or Hellenized ... as the church became assimilated to culture."[7] Jensen's summary of this model is apt: early Christians were cast as "proto-Protestants."[8] Of course, such a model was only maintained by excluding certain evidence as "popular" or "heretical." The very evidence once used to argue for "iconophobia"—passages from Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria— actually reveals a more complicated Christian relationship with art.[9]

In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus claims that the Alexandrian "heretic," Carpocrates and his followers venerated an image of Jesus:

> They also possess images, some of them painted, and others formed from different
>
> kinds of material; while they maintain that a likeness of Christ was made by Pilate at
>
> that time when Jesus lived among them. They crown these images, and set them up

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[7] Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 14.

[8] Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 14.

[9] The following overview is based on the work of Robin M. Jensen, Paul Corby Finney, as well as David R. Cartlidge and J.K. Elliott. See Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*; Robin Margaret Jensen, *Face to Face: Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005); Robin M. Jensen, "Theophany and the Invisible God in Early Christian Theology and Art," in *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson* (eds. Andrew B. McGowan, Brian E. Daley S.J., and Timothy J. Gaden; Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 271-296; Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012); Jensen, "Art and Divine Epiphany," 125-144; Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); David R. Cartlidge and J.K. Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha* (London: Routledge, 2001).

along with the images of the philosophers of the world that is to say, with the images of Pythagoras, and Plato, and Aristotle, and the rest. They have also other modes of honouring these images, after the same manner of the Gentiles.[10]

Even though Irenaeus connects the possession of Jesus's image to heretics, which could imply disapproval of such images, his emphasis in this passage falls on the practices associated with the images. As Jensen argues, "What [Irenaeus] apparently objects to is the inclusion of Jesus with the other philosophers, and the crowning and honoring of their images."[11] He objects to Christians participating in practices associated with paganism, rather than the possession of unique Christian images. Even if Irenaeus disapproved of the image itself, this passage shows that other Christians did not. If this passage can be trusted, then Carpocratian Christians openly displayed an image of Christ.[12]

Another passage used to argue that early Christians were aniconic demonstrates that some Christians used a eucharistic chalice that included an image of a shepherd. In his treatise, *On Modesty*, Tertullian says:

> [T]hat shepherd, which you have carved on your chalice, even this one dishonouring the Christian sacrament, as both a symbol of drunkenness and a sanctuary for that whoredom, which may follow after drunkenness, and out of which you readily are drinking nothing other than the sheep of the second penitence.[13]

Tertullian employs strong language as he writes against the use of this chalice. Yet

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[10] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.25.6 (ANF).

[11] Jensen, *Face to Face*, 9.

[12] By the beginning of the fourth century, Eusebius describes statues and portraits long believed to be representations of Christ and apostles such as Peter and Paul; cf. Eusebius, *Hist eccl.* 7.18.4. See Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, 48.

[13] Tertullian, *Pud.* 10.11-13 (ANF); adapted.

Tertullian's anger is not directed at the image itself, but at the "Shepherd."[14] This treatise is Tertullian's reaction to a bishop's edict that proclaimed greater leniency for penitent fornicators and adulterers, based in part on the concept of second penitence found in the *Shepherd of Hermas*.[15] Although Tertullian had previously appealed to the Shepherd of Hermas in a positive way in *On Prayer*, now he asserts that it is "apocryphal and forged."[16] Tertullian writes against the leniency of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, not against Christian images. In fact, in this same treatise, he affirms that sheep and shepherd are good Christian symbols: "[T]he sheep is a special Christian symbol and the herd of this shepherd is the people of the church and the good shepherd is Christ."[17] It is likely that a similar understanding of the shepherd as symbol for Christ led to the use of a shepherd-chalice within this church.[18]

Finally, Clement of Alexandria (c. 160-215 CE) appears aniconic when he cites both Pythagoras and Moses in order to demonstrate the danger of images:

And again, *"Don't wear a ring, nor engrave on it the images of the gods,"* enjoins Pythagoras; as Moses ages before enacted expressly, that neither a graven, nor molten, nor moulded, nor painted likeness should be made; so that we may not cleave to things of sense, but pass to intellectual objects: for familiarity with the sight disparages the reverence of what is divine; and to worship that which is immaterial by

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[14] See Jensen, *Face to Face*, 8; Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, 55.

[15] Tertullian, *Pud.* 10.11-13. See Herm. *Vis.* 2.2.4-5; cf. Herm. *Mand.* 4.3.1-7; Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary* (Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 28-30.

[16] Tertullian, *Pud.* 10.11 (ANF). On Tertullian's positive use of *Shepherd*, see *Or.* 16.

[17] Tertullian, *Pud.* 7.4 (ANF).

[18] For further discussion of the shepherd image, see below.

matter, is to dishonour it by sense.[19]

Clement makes it clear in this passage that one should focus attention on the heavenly instead of the earthly. We saw similar advice in the last chapter: apologists suggested that demon dreams might be avoided by focusing on the celestial instead of the mundane. This does not demonstrate, however, that Clement objected to all images.[20] In fact, in his *Instructor*, Clement distinguishes between images of pagan gods and the images that one might associate with Christian themes.

> And let our seals be either a dove, or a fish, or a ship scudding before the wind, or a musical lyre, which Polycrates used, or a ship's anchor, which Seleucus got engraved as a device; and if there be one fishing, he will remember the apostle, and the children drawn out of the water. For we are not to delineate the faces of idols, we who are prohibited to cleave to them; nor a sword, nor a bow, following as we do, peace; nor drinking-cups, being temperate.[21]

Here, Clement suggests that the earthly might remind one of the heavenly—common pagan images can bear Christian meanings.[22]

Rather than demonstrating that early Christians were aniconic, these passages from Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria show Christians working to define how images might properly be used and what might constitute a "Christian" image. This literary evidence for the development of Christian art is paralleled by material evidence. The earliest Christian art included common pagan decorative images such as doves, fish, and anchors, as

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[19] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 5.5; cf. 6.16.12 (ANF); emphasis added.

[20] Jensen, *Face to Face*, 10-11; Finney, *Invisible God*, 111-115.

[21] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.11 (ANF).

[22] Finney, *Invisible God*, 111-115.

well as common pagan figural art such as a shepherd carrying a lamb (*kriophoros*), a person with arms outstretched in prayer (orant), or a philosopher teaching his disciples.[23] This trend, adopting common pagan images, presents a challenge for the historian of early Christian art. As Robin Jensen explains:

> Most of these motifs… have direct Greco-Roman artistic parallels, or even prototypes, so that classifying them as Christian is sometimes problematic and even controversial. Such categorization often depends on the subjects' proximity to or juxtaposition with other figures found in the more clearly Christian category of biblical themes.[24]

Although some early Christians might have regularly employed such Greco-Roman art and interpreted its images as Christian, it is difficult know. Since the earliest "Christian" art shared common pagan forms, art historians can only identify it as "Christian" when it adapts and combines these images in distinctively "Christian" ways. For instance, it is difficult to know how early Roman Christians began to use lamps that featured an image of a shepherd. By the end of the second century, however, one shepherd lamp (Wulff 1224) included additional images that suggest that its owner was most certainly Christian—the central and largest image on this lamp, a shepherd surrounded by his flock, is accompanied by smaller images that depict Jonah exiting a big fish, Jonah reclining under a plant, and Noah with a bird on the ark.[25] By the early third century, there is evidence of Christian art in catacombs and churches depicting familiar stories from scripture. Some of the most well-known

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[23] Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 17. On Christian's selective adaptation of pagan images, see also Finney, *Invisible God*, 108-115.

[24] Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 17.

[25] See Finney, *Invisible God*, 116-131.

examples of this practice come from the early-third century church in Dura-Europos, Syria.[26]

Images discovered on the walls of this church's baptistry depict familiar biblical narratives—

Jesus and Peter walking on the water; Jesus healing the paralyzed man; a woman at a well;

David facing Goliath; and Adam and Eve standing by a tree.[27] In addition to these

distinctively Christian images, one also finds common pagan motifs. The most prominent

image on the west wall above the baptismal font is a young shepherd carrying a lamb,

surrounded by a flock of sheep. As we saw in the passages from Tertullian and Clement of

Alexandria, so too on lamps and in this church, Christians borrowed popular pagan images

that could function as reminders of Christian stories, teachings, or important figures like

Christ. It is my contention that these developments in early Christian art, which show

adaptation and innovation within Greco-Roman cultural practices, parallel developments in

early Christian discourse on epiphanies.

The Polymorphy of Christ

Second- and third-century Christian literature that includes epiphanies of Christ

typically describes his appearance as bright, tall, and handsome, or as resembling a boy, a

young man, an old man, a shepherd, an apostle, or some other figure.[28] Due to Christ's

multiformity, accounts of these manifestations are most commonly discussed under the rubric

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[26] Dura Church painting preserved by Sassanian destruction in 256CE; see Carl H. Kraeling, *The Excavations at Dura Europos, Final Report VIII, Part II: The Christian Building* (New Haven, CT: Dura Europos Publications; New York: J.J. Augustin, 1967), 34.

[27] Kraeling, *Dura Europos, Final Report VIII/2*, 50-71. For a recent, insightful commentary on the context of these images, see Michael Peppard, *The World's Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[28] These various manifestations will be discussed throughout the chapter.

of "polymorphy."[29] In the first chapter, we saw examples of divine beings who assumed different forms within Jewish and other Greco-Roman texts. At the end of that chapter we reviewed some of the common functions of polymorphy in literature and religious practice.[30] In particular, we saw that polymorphy could function <u>theologically</u> to demonstrate that a figure was divine, <u>anthropologically</u> by reflecting the character or capacity of human beings who experienced the divine, and <u>soteriologically</u> since gods would appear in disguise to test or aid their adherents. Studies of polymorphy in early Christian literature have focused foremost on the theological function and secondarily on the anthropological.

Some early Christian authors employed polymorphy to affirm Christ's divinity or to make particular claims about the relationship between his divinity and humanity. There can be little doubt that representations of Christ as luminescent, extraordinarily tall, and as beautiful functioned as theological affirmations. These characteristics were commonly attributed to gods in both ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman epiphany narratives.[31] We

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[29] The scope of the term, "polymorphy," has been debated among scholars of early Christianity. I use the term to describe a particular characteristic of the gods: the divine ability to undergo metamorphosis at will and to appear successively or simultaneously in multiple forms. This definition is based on that of Junod, further refined by Foster and also Klauck; see Eric Junod, "Polymorphie du Dieu Sauveur," in *Gnosticisme et Monde Hellénistique* (ed. J. Ries; Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1982), 38-46; Paul Foster, "Polymorphic Christology: Its Origins and Development in Early Christianity," *Journal of Theological Studies* 58 (2007): 66-99; Hans-Josef Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten: Die Polymorphie des Erlösers in apokryphen Texten," in *Die apokryphe Bibel: Ein anderer Zugang zum frühen Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 303-374. Other definitions have been too narrow—e.g., Pieter J. Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," in *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 97-118—or too broad—e.g., Hugues Garcia, "La polymorphie du Christ: Remarques sur quelques définitions et sur de multiples enjeux," *Apocrypha* 10 (1999): 16-55; see critique in Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 308-311. Debates on the origins of Christian polymorphy have attributed it variously to Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Gnostic / Egyptian Religion; e.g., see respectively Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Polymorphie divine et transformations d'un mythologème: l'»Apocryphon de Jean« et ses sources," *VC* 35 (1981): 412-434; J.E. Ménard, "Transfiguration et polymorphie chez Origène," in *Épektasis; mélanges patristiques offerts au cardinal Jean Daniélou* (eds. Jacques Fontaine and Charles Kannengiesser; Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 367; Garcia, "La polymorphy du Christ," 47.

[30] See Chapter 1.

[31] H.S. Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See when he Saw a God? Some Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," in *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions* (ed. Dirk van der Plas; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 43-46; Georgia Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies: Contextualising and Conceptualising Epiphanic Narratives in Greek Literature and Culture (7th BC-2nd AD), Vol. 1" (Diss., University of Exeter, 2006), 19-31; A.L.

have already seen examples from Christian literature as well. For instance, Perpetua saw a gladiator-trainer (*lanista*) who appeared taller than a stadium.[32] To describe Christ as especially luminescent, extraordinarily tall, or beautiful was to represent Christ as divine. Such representations could have significant Christological consequences.

Most scholars who have studied second- and third-century accounts that describe Christ's appearance have focused on the Christological significance. Acts of John 87-93 is often cited as exemplifying this Christological function of polymorphy and therefore as a key to understanding polymorphic manifestations in other early Christian texts. For instance, in one of the first studies focused exclusively on polymorphy, Junod introduces the Acts of John as "assurément un texte clef pour l'étude de la Polymorphie."[33] In one of the most recent studies, Klauck leads with this same passage from the Acts of John, and then introduces other accounts with the statement: "...haben die übrigen Apostelakten keine großen Überraschungen mehr zu bieten."[34] This passage from Acts of John has had an unbalanced effect on studies of polymorphy. Most other narratives of Christ's manifestations differ significantly from this account and do not make explicit Christological claims.[35] Due to its tremendous influence in the history of scholarship, however, it is necessary to consider the Christological function of polymorphy before proceeding to other accounts.

There can be little doubt that the account in Acts of John 87-93 employs polymorphy to make certain theological claims. Acts of John 87-93 begins *in medias res* with a crowd

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Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia:1956).

[32] *Pass. Perp.* 10.6-14; see Chapter 2.

[33] Junod, "Polymorphie du Dieu Sauveur," 44.

[34] Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 325.

[35] See below.

confused by a fellow Christian's claim to have seen Christ appear both in the form of the

apostle John and as a young man.[36] These manifestations will be discussed below. Here, I

will focus on the narrative that follows. In response to the crowd's confusion, John explains

the Lord's polymorphy by rehearsing memories of his own encounters with Jesus during his

ministry. John explains how, when the disciples were first called by Jesus, James saw the

Lord as a child, but John saw him as a man "fair and comely and of a cheerful

countenance."[37] On another occasion, John saw Jesus as "bald-headed but with a thick and

flowing beard," but James saw him as "a youth whose beard was just starting."[38] For John,

sometimes Jesus appeared short, other times his stature seemed enormous. Sometimes he was

soft and smooth to the touch, other times, "hard, like stone."[39] Sometimes Jesus's body

seemed to be solid and made of matter, other times his "substance was immaterial and

bodiless."[40] John describes how quickly the Lord's appearance could change when he

narrates his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. John saw Jesus "as naked and not at

all like a man; his feet were whiter than snow, so that the ground there was lit up by his feet,

and his head reached to heaven." But as soon as John reacted with fear, Jesus "turned and

appeared as a man of small stature."[41] In these descriptions of Christ's appearance, his form

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[36] For a discussion on the place of Acts John 87-93 in organization of Acts of John, see below n. 178.

[37] Acts John 88; unless otherwise noted, all translations of Acts of the Apostles come from J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation,* Revised ed. Edited by J.K. Elliott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). I adopt the Christological titles preferred within each text and alternate between the names and titles 'Jesus,' 'Christ,' and 'Lord' accordingly.

[38] Acts John 89.

[39] Acts John 89; cf. 93.

[40] Acts John 93.

[41] Acts John 90.

constantly shifts.[42] Most scholars agree that this demonstration of polymorphy conveys a

docetic understanding of Christ's nature—Jesus only appeared to be human.[43] But authors

that promote docetism are not the only Christians that depict Jesus as polymorphic; a

polymorphous Jesus also appears in some proto-Orthodox texts.[44] The success of the Acts of

John in conveying docetism, therefore, is dependent in part on how it employs polymorphy

within the narrative. The use of polymorphy in the Acts of John contrasts with its narrative

function in other Greco-Roman literature. As we have seen within the broader context of

Greco-Roman literature, when gods assume different forms for different purposes, their

forms are usually suited to their purposes. By contrast, the forms Christ assumes in the Acts

of John seem random and entirely detached from their context. John never explains why

Christ was manifest in any of the particular forms narrated. John is not interested in

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[42] Although this narrative focuses on manifestations of the "mortal" Jesus, these were introduced to explain post-mortal manifestations of Jesus; see Acts John 87.

[43] See David R. Cartlidge, "Transfigurations of Metamorphosis Traditions in the Acts of John, Thomas, and Peter," *Semeia* 38 (1986): 55, 65; Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 89; Garcia, "La polymorphy du Christ," 47, 50-47, 52; Junod, "Polymorphie du Dieu Sauveur," 42-44, 46; Eric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis: Textus Alii, Commentarius, Indices*, Vol. 2 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 469-493; Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," 108; Pieter Johannes Lalleman, *The Acts of John: A Two-Stage Initiation into Johannine Gnosticism* (Gnosticism Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles 4; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 204-210; and Stroumsa, "Polymorphie divine et transformations d'un mythologèm," 413, 426-413, 427. More recently, however, it has been suggested that the author's point is simply that Christ's true form is beyond human description or that the polymorphy of Christ suggests a rejection of all forms; for the former argument, see Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 311-325, here 324; for the latter, see Zlatko Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 34.

[44] For recent arguments on the role of polymorphy within early "proto-Orthodox" Christian texts, see Cartlidge, "Transfigurations of Metamorphosis," 53-66; Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 66-99; Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 303-374; and, on Origen, John A. McGuckin, "The Changing Forms of Jesus," in *Origeniana Quarta: Die Referate des 4. Internationalen Origeneskongresses (Innsbruck, 2.-6. September 1985)* (ed. Lothar Lies; Innsbruck; Wien: Tyrolia, 1987), 215-22. The tendency to ascribe to polymorphy a docetic Christology and gnostic background is due in part to early Christian heresiologists. For instance, Irenaeus, in his multi-volume treatise *Against Heresies*, describes as heresy Basilides's belief that Jesus "transfigured himself as he pleased" (*Haer.* 1.24.4 [ANF]). According to Irenaeus, Basilides had taught that Jesus, on his way to the cross, assumed the form of Simon of Cyrene, simultaneously making Simon appear as Jesus, and thereby escaped crucifixion (*Haer.* 1.24.3-7). In this case, polymorphy functions as Irenaeus's prime example of a heretical belief; see Garcia, "La polymorphy du Christ," 25; see also *Haer.* 1.23.1, 3.

explaining individual forms but in amassing a wide array of examples that demonstrate the diveristy of forms Christ could assume. The particular forms are insignificant. And that seems to be the author's point.

Other early Christian authors employed polymorphy in order to make anthropological or soteriological claims by suggesting that Christ adapted his form according to the capacity of human beings.[45] The text cited most frequently for this use of polymorphy is from Origen's *Against Celsus*.[46] Celsus had contested Jesus's resurrection, insisting that Jesus would have appeared to his accusers had he actually been raised from the dead. Origen's response was based on an anthropological function of polymorphy. Although Origen affirmed that Jesus's body "was transfigured when he wished and before whom he wished," he also insisted that Jesus appeared in glory only to those prepared to experience that glory.

> Moreover, that his appearance was not just the same to those who saw him, but varied according to their individual capacity, will be clear to people who carefully consider why, when about to be transfigured on the high mountain, he did not take all the apostles, but only Peter, James, and John. For they alone had the capacity to see his glory at that time.[47]

Jesus did not appear to his accusers after his resurrection because they were incapable of

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[45] In the examples that follow, Origen explains that the reason for Jesus's various transformations was tied to his disciples' capacity to see. Although Origen focuses on the disciples' capacity, he still affirms that Jesus altered his own physical appearance: "It is not remarkable that matter, which is by nature subject to change, alteration, and transformation into anything which the Creator desires, and is capable of possessing any quality which the Artificer wishes" (Origen, *Cels.* 6.77; cf. 2.64). Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Origen *Contra Celsum* come from Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 [org. 1965]).

[46] The passage from Origen, *Cels* 2.64 appears in Ménard, "Transfiguration et polymorphie chez Origène," 367-372; and McGuckin, "Changing Forms of Jesus," 215-22; as well as in Cartlidge, "Transfigurations of Metamorphosis," 65; Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," 98; Garcia, "La polymorphy du Christ," 27; Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 97; and Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 367.

[47] Origen, *Cels.* 2.64.

enduring his glory: "It was out of consideration for them that he did not appear to all after rising from the dead."[48] Origen develops this idea further when he responds to Celsus's argument that Jesus was not divine because he was not beautiful.[49] Drawing again upon the example of Jesus's transfiguration, Origen argues that Jesus's "body differed in accordance with the capacity of those who saw it, and on this account appeared in such form as was beneficial for the needs of each individual's vision."[50] For those apostles who followed Jesus to the top of the mountain and witnessed his transfiguration, Jesus was glorious and beautiful: "The three apostles who went up with Jesus and saw the exquisite beauty fell on their faces." For Origen, it is only those unprepared to witness Jesus's glory who see him as uncomely: "To those who are still down below and are not yet prepared to ascend, the Logos 'has not form nor beauty.'"[51] In his *Commentary on Matthew*, Origen makes a similar point: Jesus appeared "in the form of God" to those on the Mount of Transfiguration, but to those below he appeared in "the form of a servant."[52]

Origen used polymorphy to explain why Jesus did not appear to certain people after his resurrection.[53] The Acts of Peter uses polymorphy in a similar way to explain how Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection. In Acts of Peter 20, the apostle arrived at Marcellus's house-church in time to hear the account of Jesus's transfiguration being read

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[48] Origen, *Cels.* 2.64.

[49] Celsus can argue that Jesus was not a god because he was not beautiful due to the popular notion that gods were identifiable by their extraordinary beauty; see section on "Cultural Discourse" in Chapter One.

[50] Origen, *Cels.* 6.77.

[51] Origen, *Cels.* 6.77.

[52] Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 12.36-37 (ANF).

[53] Origen entertains the possibility that the post-resurrection Christ could disguise his glory as he had done in some of his pre-mortal manifestations to the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, but he does not describe the appearance of those forms; e.g., *Cels* 2.66.

from a Gospel. He then offered his own explanation of the account in order to demonstrate how the Lord accommodates every individual: "For each of us saw him as his capacity permitted."[54] Peter explains how he saw the Lord "in a form which [he] could not comprehend" and concludes by describing the Lord through antitheses similar to those we saw above in the Acts of John: "This Great and Small One, this Beautiful and Ugly One, this Young Man and Old Man."[55] Then, in Acts of Peter 21, a group of blind widows, who were part of the congregation that had just listened to Peter, ask the apostle to bless them with sight. After Peter prays for them, a bright light fills the room, enters their eyes, and heals them. When Peter asks the widows to describe their experience, they tell how the Lord appeared in the forms that Peter had previously described: "They said, 'We saw an old man whose appearance we cannot describe to you.' Some, however, said, 'We saw a young man.' Others said, 'We saw a boy tenderly touching our eyes; thus our eyes were opened.'"[56] Peter then associates the widows' experience with what he "told [them] briefly before" about the Mount of Transfiguration: "Therefore, brethren, as I told you briefly before, God is greater than our thoughts, as we have learned from the old widows, how they saw the Lord in different forms."[57] The widows' experience of the Lord in different forms, including forms previously described by Peter, demonstrates what Peter had taught them in the previous

[54] Acts Pet. 20.

[55] Acts Pet. 20; cf. Acts John 87-93. On the literary relationship between Acts of John and Acts of Peter, see Léon Vouaux, *Les actes de Pierre: introduction, textes, traduction et commentaire* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1922), 70, 443, 459; Pieter J. Lalleman, "The Relationship between the Acts of John and the Acts of Peter," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 161-177; Dennis R. MacDonald, "The Acts of Peter and The Acts of John: Which Came First?," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1993 Seminar Papers* (ed. E.H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1993), 623-626.

[56] Acts Pet. 21.

[57] Acts Pet. 21.

pericope: that, because of God's greatness, people see God "as their capacity permits."[58]

Despite the similarities between this account in Acts of Peter and that in Acts of John, most

scholars agree that Acts of Peter does not convey a docetic Christology.[59] Rather, it is argued

that the Acts of Peter gives narrative form to the idea found in Origen, that God

accommodates human beings by appearing in forms they are capable of discerning.[60] The

emphasis on human capacity in Peter's memory of the transfiguration suggests that this

reading has merit. This does not, however, fully explain why the Lord is manifest in the

particular forms of a young man, an old man, and a boy.[61]

      These accounts from Acts of John, Origen, and Acts of Peter, have formed the basis

of nearly all studies of Christ's manifestations in second- and third-century Christian texts.[62]

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[58] Paraphrase of Acts Pet. 20.

[59] See Cartlidge, "Transfigurations of Metamorphosis," 63; Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 93; Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 333; Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," 111; Robert F. Stoops, "Christ as Patron in the Acts of Peter," *Semeia* 56 (1991): 149; Vouaux, *Les actes de Pierre*, 340-355, here 340-341. Stoops, in his earlier work, interpreted this polymorphy as divine transcendence closely aligned with docetism; Robert Franklin Stoops, "Miracle Stories and Vision Reports in the 'Acts of Peter'" (Diss., Harvard University, 1983), 138, 146. Junod reads Acts of Peter making the same claim as Acts of John that "le Seigneur démontre son éternité, son absence de forme définie, son immatérialité;" see Junod, "Polymorphie du Dieu Sauveur," 44.

[60] Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 329; Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," 111; Vouaux, *Les actes de Pierre*, 340-355; cf. 322, n.4.

[61] These different forms of Christ could indicate the different capacities of the widows, but all of the widows are portrayed as equally prepared—all demonstrate faith in their request and all experience the same healing power of the light that fills the room. Some scholars have speculated that Christ's different ages convey the inclusiveness of his salvific power. As evidence, they point to Irenaeus's argument that Jesus was crucified as an old man having experienced every human age in order to save humans of every age (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.22.4); Cartlidge, "Transfigurations of Metamorphosis," 63; Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 93; Stoops, "Christ as Patron in the Acts of Peter," 149. Irenaeus, however, is not describing polymorphy, but natural aging. Others have interpreted the contrasting ages to signify that the Lord is not subject to time; e.g., Junod, "Polymorphie du Dieu Sauveur," 43-44. Yet this explanation is not found in any of these early Christian texts. Stroumsa suggests that Christ's manifestations at different ages is gnostic speculation rooted in "traditions ésotériques juives sur la figure de l'Amant dans Cantique 5 et de l'Ancien des Jours dans Daniel 7;" Stroumsa, "Polymorphie divine et transformations d'un mythologèm," 426-427. For a detailed study on the different functions of age in early Christian texts, including Christ's polymorphic manifestations, see Karen L. King, "'In your midst as a child'— 'In the form of an old man:' Images of Aging and Immortality in Ancient Christianity," in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices In Early Christianity* (eds. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland; Ekstasis Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 59-82.

[62] The idea that the appearance of divine beings could be contingent upon a person's intellectual or spiritual

Yet these accounts represent less than half of the total accounts of Christophanies. While it must be acknowledged that particular theological or epistemological beliefs could influence whether and how one might expect to see Christ, there are other equally important factors that have not been part of the conversation.[63] So far, these examples of polymorphy do not demonstrate whether particular forms of Christ were preferred in early Christian discourse on epiphanies. These examples do, however, suggest that some Christians were open to the possibility that Christ could be manifest in many different forms.

Christ in the Form of a Young Man

In the earliest apocryphal Acts, benevolent divine beings appear most frequently in the form of a young man. Most scholars agree that the young man in these epiphanies is a manifestation of Christ, but they disagree on the significance of that particular form. Erik Peterson interprets the manifestation of Christ in the form of a young man as alluding to a prelapsarian Adam.[64] Eric Junod suggests that these manifestations are related to the polymorphic manifestations of Christ at different ages.[65] Similarly, François Bovon believes

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capabilities was not unique to Origen and Acts of Peter. A similar description of Jesus's polymorphy appears in the Valentinian Gospel of Philip (Gos. Phil. NHC II 57.28-58.10). For studies on the similarities between Origen's use of polymorphy and that found texts identified as "gnostic," see Garcia, "La polymorphy du Christ," 16-55; McGuckin, "Changing Forms of Jesus," 215-22; Zlatko Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 34-36. For more on polymorphy functioning to make anthropological or epistemological claims, see the discussions of Greco-Roman polymorphy and the Jewish philosophy of Philo in Chapter One. On polymorphy in earlier platonic thought, see Plato, *Resp.* 380c-e; Arestophenes, *Nub.* 323ff; Philo, *Mut.* 18-24; *QG* 4.2, 4-5, 8. For Origen's connection to Philo on this issue, see *Cels.* 2.66; McGuckin, "Changing Forms of Jesus," 219; Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," 102; Scott D. Mackie, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: The Logos, the Powers, or the Existent One?" *Studia Philonica* 21 (2009): 25-48.

[63] See below.

[64] Erik Peterson, "Einige Bemerkungen zum Hamburger Papyrus-Fragment der Acta Pauli," in *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis: Studien und Untersuchungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1959), 191-192, 206-207; cf. Junod, "Polymorphie du Dieu Sauveur," 45.

[65] "Quant à la seconde forme, jeune homme ou enfant, elle est sans doute une séquelle de l'apparition polymorphe sous des âges différents." See Junod, "Polymorphie du Dieu Sauveur," 45.

that it has Christological significance.[66] Jean-Marc Prieur cites both Peterson and Junod, then

concludes: "L'apparition sous les traits d'un jeune homme est plus difficile à interpréter."[67] A

similar debate has developed around the image of Christ as a young man in early Christian

art.[68]

The solution may be that the manifestation of Christ as a young man does not have

any special symbolism or Christological significance. "Young man" is a common form

assumed by divine beings throughout Greco-Roman literature, including Jewish and

Christian literature. Apollo, Hermes, Dionysus, Asclepius, and the Dioskouri often appear as

young men.[69] During the Hellenistic period, Jewish authors adopted this motif to describe the

manifestations of angels.[70] In Tobit, the author identifies Raphael as an angel for his readers,

but the character Tobias sees him as a young man: "He went out and found the angel Raphael

standing in front of him; but he did not perceive that he was an angel of God. Tobias said to

him, 'Where do you come from, young man (νεανίσκος)?'"[71] In 2 Maccabees, two "young

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[66] François Bovon, "The Child and the Beast: Fighting Violence in Ancient Christianity," *HTR* 92 (1999): 387-391.

[67] Jean-Marc Prieur, *Acta Andreae* (Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum 5 & 6; Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), 363, n.4; in comparison with the manifestation of Christ in the form of an apostle.

[68] For a history of the debate, see Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, 55-60.

[69] It is worth noting that all of these gods are children or grandchildren of Zeus, who typically appears as an older, bearded man. E.g., for Apollo as a young man, see *Hymn Apoll.* 449; for Hermes, see Homer, *Il.* 24.137; for Dionysus, see *Hymn Dion.* 1.3; for Asclepius, see Orphic Hymns 47 (Edelstein #601); and for the Dioscuri, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.13.1-4.

[70] Michael Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinischer Zeit* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 34; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 307-308, n.81; Tobias Nicklas, "Angels in Early Christian Narratives on the Resurrection of Jesus: Canonical and Apocryphal Texts," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings — Origins, Development and Reception* (eds. Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schöpflin; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007 Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 294-296, 305, 308.

[71] Tob. 5:4-5 (NRSV); cf. 5:7, 10. The angel is only identified as a "young man" in Recension S, which may represent the earliest attainable text; see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (CEJL; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 4-6. Nicklas, "Angels in Early Christian Narratives on the Resurrection," 294.

men" (νεανίαι) thwart Heliodorus's attempt to collect money for the Seleucid Kingdom from the treasury of the Jerusalem Temple: "Two young men also appeared to him, remarkably strong, gloriously beautiful and splendidly dressed, who stood on either side of him and flogged him continuously, inflicting many blows on him."[72] Although they are not identified by the term "angel," the narrative leaves little doubt that they should be recognized as such. In addition to describing the young men's physical appearance as "glorious," their manifestation is identified as part of a "magnificent epiphany" (ἐπιφάνεια μεγάλη), and later Heliodorus is said to have been "flogged by heaven."[73] In Josephus's retelling of biblical narratives, "angels" from the Biblical Hebrew or the Septuagint's Greek become "young men."[74] The two angels who visit Lot in Sodom, Josephus describes as "young men" with "beautiful faces."[75] An angel that appeared to Samson's mother to announce the birth of her son, Josephus describes as a beautiful and tall "young man."[76] This pattern of describing angels as "young men" continued in the writings of early Christians. In the Gospel of Mark, women at Jesus's empty tomb encounter "a young man (νεανίσκος), dressed in a white robe."[77] In the Gospel of Peter, the two "men" who descend from heaven and cause the stone

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[72] 2 Macc. 3:26 (NRSV); cf. 3 Macc 6:18.

[73] 2 Macc. 3:24, 34 (NRSV). In 2 Macc 3:33, "the same young men appeared again to Heliodorus" (οἱ αὐτοὶ νεανίαι πάλιν ἐφάνησαν τῷ Ἡλιοδώρῳ) in a fashion that fits angelic manifestations; see Nicklas, "Angels in Early Christian Narratives on the Resurrection," 294.

[74] See Josephus, *Ant.* 5.213 and the two examples that follow. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* come from Ralph Marcus, Josephus. *Jewish Antiquities,* Volume IV: Books 9-11; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

[75] Josephus, *Ant.* 1.196, 200; cf. Gen 19.

[76] Josephus, *Ant.* 5.277; cf. Judg 13.

[77] Mark 16.5 (NRSV). Cf. Gos. Pet 13.55.

to roll away from the tomb, are called "young men" when they enter the tomb.[78] In the

Shepherd of Hermas, the "young men" who appear periodically throughout the visions are

identified as angels: "And I responded to her, 'Lady, this is a great and amazing thing. But

the six young men (νεανίσκοι) who are building, Lady—who are they?' 'These are the holy

angels of God.'"[79] Certainly if Greek and Roman gods as well as Jewish and Christian angels

could appear in the form of a young man without any special symbolic meaning or

theological significance, then Christ could as well.

The fact that Christ shares this epiphanic form with both angels and Greco-Roman

gods presents a problem. If a Christian were to dream of a young man, how would she know

whether it was an angel or Christ? The ambiguity of such manifestations is often reflected in

the accounts from the apocryphal Acts. Rarely does the text make it explicit that it is Christ

who has appeared in the form of a young man. The identity of the young man is ambiguous

when he is manifest in order to offer protection, to help Christians escape custody and

journey to a place where they might meet with an apostle, or to perform a healing.[80] When a

young man appears during a baptism, however, he is more clearly identified with Christ. In

what follows, I begin with the ambiguous manifestations of a young man in the Acts of John,

Acts of Thomas, Acts of Andrew, and the Acts of Paul.

In the Acts of John, a "beautiful young man" appears to protect the dead body of the

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[78] Gos. Pet. 9.37.

[79] Also called νεανίαι. See Herm. Vis. 3.4; unless otherwise noted, all translations of *Shepherd of Hermas* come from Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol 2; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). See also Herm. Vis. 1.4; 1.4.1; 2.4.1; 3.1.6ff; 3.1.6-8; 3.2.5; 3.4.1; 3.10.1,7. Herm. Sim. 6.1.5; 6.2.1. Mach, *Engelglaubens*, 307-308, n.81.

[80] See below. One possible exception is Acts John 87, but there Christ is said to have appeared simultaneously in the form of a young man and in the form of an apostle. For more on Christ in the form of an apostle, see below.

faithful Christian Drusiana from being violated by the pagan Callimachus.[81] Since Drusiana refused the sexual advances of Callimachus when she was alive, Callimachus is determined to satisfy his lust through necrophilia. Callimachus finds his way into Drusiana's tomb, removes her burial-clothes, sets them aside, and then turns back to discover a "beautiful young man (νεανίσκος εὔμορφος) covering her with his cloak [and] [r]ays of light fell from his face upon hers."[82] When John and his disciples arrive at the tomb the following morning, they encounter the same "beautiful young man" (εὔμορφος νεανίσκος) whom John addresses as "noble" or "handsome" (ὁ καλός).

> When we came to the place, the doors opened at the master's behest, and at the tomb of Drusiana we saw a beautiful young man (εὔμορφος νεανίσκος) smiling. When John saw him, he exclaimed and said, 'Do you come before us here also, noble one (ὁ καλός)? And why?' And he heard a voice (φωνῆς) saying to him, 'For the sake of Drusiana, whom you are to raise up. I found her almost defiled […]' And when the noble one (ὁ καλός) had thus spoken to John he ascended to heaven before the eyes of all.[83]

This "young man" is a divine being. The text makes this clear with the description of his physical beauty and the light that emanates from him, as well as through the narration of his sudden appearance and ascent into heaven. Yet it is not clear that this divine "young man" was Christ. In fact, Callimachus, after his conversion, identifies the "young man" as an angel:

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[81] Acts John 73, 76. Acts John 87 may also refer to this episode; see Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 25-68. For a discussion on the place of Acts John 87 in organization of Acts of John, see below n. 178.

[82] Acts John 76; adapted. All Greek text is from Eric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis: Praefatio, Textus*, Vol. 1 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 1; Turnhout: Brepols, 1983).

[83] Acts John 73; adapted and ellipsis added.

"I know that it was an angel of God (θεοῦ ἄγγελος)."[84] Considering how many angels appear as young men in other Jewish and Christian texts, it would be reasonable to agree with Callimachus. John's assessment of the situation, however, implies that the "young man" could have been Christ himself. After John learned what had taken place, he gave thanks by addressing Christ, "O Lord Jesus Christ," and attributing to him the actions of the young man: "You have kept the grave from shame."[85] The ambiguity caused by these dual identifications, young man as angel or as Christ, has led to some debate among scholars. Most, however, interpret the young man as Christ based on parallels in the other apocryphal Acts.[86]

In the other apocryphal Acts there are also manifestations of a divine young man. Although none of them is explicitly identified as an angel, as occurs in the Acts of John, there is still some ambiguity surrounding their identification with Christ. In three of the apocryphal Acts, a young man is manifest to help Christians escape custody and journey to a place where they might meet with an apostle, and in one of them a young man also performs healings. In the Acts of Thomas, Mnesara is led to Thomas's prison by a young man whom only she can see.[87] When she reaches Thomas, the young man disappears and Mnesara fears that she will have to travel alone. So Thomas consoles her by saying, "Jesus shall lead

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[84] Acts John 76. Some who interpret the young man as Christ, argue that Callimachus was wrong; e.g., Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis 2*, 545-546. Others argue that Callimachus perceived the epiphany in a different way than John; e.g., Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 167.

[85] Acts John 77.

[86] For the young man as a manifestation of Christ, see Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis 2*, 545-546; Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis 1*, 274, n.1; and Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 165-167. In addition to the argument from parallels, Lalleman also argues that the "voice" (φωνῆς; Acts John 73) that answered John when he addressed the young man points to his identification with Christ—in Acts John the voice is always the voice of Christ; see Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 166. For the debate over this young man as Christ or angel, see Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 166, n.65.

[87] Acts Thom. 154.

you."[88] Afterward, no one appears to lead her. This promise, therefore, could imply that the

young man who had led her previously was Jesus, but this is not clear.[89] In the Acts of

Andrew, Maximilla and Iphidama pray, "Lord, be with us," as they travel to see Andrew in

prison. At the prison gates, they meet "a beautiful young boy" (παιδαρίσκον εὔμορφον) who

welcomes them: "Both of you go in to your Lord's apostle."[90] Since they had asked for the

Lord to be with them, the young boy could be the Lord. Yet the boy also speaks of the Lord

in the third person—he tells the women, "Go in to your Lord's apostle"—so his identification

with the Lord is ambiguous.[91] Similarly, in the Acts of Paul, a divine "young man" heals

Hieronymos's ear by calling out, "Through the will of Christ Jesus heal his ear!"[92]

Hieronymos had been wounded by a stray arrow when he sent wild animals and archers

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[88] Acts Thom. 155. When Mnesara sees Thomas, she identifies him as the one who gave her the young man: "You are he whom I saw in the night as he gave me this young man to bring me to the prison;" and "The young man is not here, whom you gave me" (Acts Thom. 155). This alludes to a motif that is prominent in the Acts of Thomas, in which Christ appears in the form of Thomas. This motif will be discussed in detail below. Klijn argues that Acts Thom. 155 presents Thomas as omnipresent; see Albertus Frederik Johannes Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 239. Yet the text makes it clear that Mnesara's statement was incorrect; it was not Thomas who appeared to her, but Jesus in the form of Thomas.

[89] Based on parallels, Klijn argues that the young man is Christ Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 238; cf. Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," 109.

[90] Acts Andr. 32. The youth then runs to Andrew and says "Look, Andrew, these women have come to you rejoicing in your Lord" (Acts Andr. 32).

[91] Prieur argues that the young boy is Jesus based on parallels in the other apocryphal Acts; see Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 360-362.

[92] Acts Paul 9.28; trans. Richard I Pervo, *The Acts of Paul: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014). N.B. Acts Paul 9 in recent editions, such as Pervo's translation and commentary, is Acts Paul 7 in older editions, such as J.K. Elliott, "The Acts of Paul," in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (ed. J.K. Elliott; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 351-388. Some have suggested that Acts Paul 9 is a later addition to Acts of Paul that is dependent on Acts Thom. 118-122; see Rodolphe Kasser and Philippe Luisier, "Le Papyrus Bodmer XLI en édition princeps: l'épisode d'Éphèse des *Acta Pauli* en copte et en traduction," *Le Muséon* 117 (2004): 281-384. Yet no definitive conclusion has been reached; see Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 234-236. If Acts Paul 9 was written after the third century, my arguments can be maintained based on the other accounts examined in this section.

against Paul, "the beast fighter," in the arena.[93] But then he had a change of heart and prayed to the God of Paul: "Hieronymos, brought to his senses by a night of agony, cried out: 'God who came to the help of the beast fighter, save me through the youth who appeared in the closed bedroom via a vision.'"[94] Since the youth heals Hieronymos by calling upon the power of Jesus—"Through the will of Christ Jesus heal his ear!"—it is not clear that the youth is Jesus.[95] Yet this youth could be the same young man who had previously freed Paul from prison and who was more clearly identified with Jesus. The day before Paul was to fight beasts in the arena, "He cried out, 'My God, Christ Jesus [...] grant that these shackles may be shattered and fall from my hands.'"[96] After Paul had prayed for Jesus to remove his shackles, "a very attractive youth came in, released Paul's shackles, and promptly left, smiling."[97] The young man could be Jesus himself answering Paul's plea. In fact, the association of this young man with Christ is confirmed in the baptism account that follows. Before proceeding, however, I want to point out that all of the accounts considered so far leave the identity of the divine youth ambiguous—he could be an angel acting on Christ's behalf or he could be Christ himself.

Most modern commentators interpret every manifestation of a divine young man in the apocryphal Acts as Christ, but at least one ancient reader was less certain. The early-fifth century Evodius of Uzala offered this summary of the account from Acts of Andrew: "There

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[93] Acts Paul 9.25.

[94] Acts Paul 9.27; trans. Pervo.

[95] Acts Paul 9.28; trans. Pervo. Klauck is uncertain; see Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 327. Pervo says that this youth "is, in fact, the god of the beastfighter; see Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 250. In the Coptic, Hieronymos sees an angel that night (Acts Paul [Coptic] 9.27); see Kasser and Luisier, "Bodmer XLI," 342-343. Pervo argues that the "angel" is a later addition; see Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 250.

[96] Acts Paul 9.19; trans. Pervo; ellipsis mine.

it is also written that when Maximilla and Iphidamia went away together to hear the apostle Andrew, a handsome little boy, whom Lucius would have us understand either as God or at least as an angel, handed them over to the apostle Andrew."[98] Since the texts are ambiguous and ancient readers expressed uncertainty about the identification of a young man in an epiphany, we should not as modern interpreters assume that every manifestation is Christ.

If these apocryphal Acts reflected or inspired ancient Christian dreams, then we might assume that the manifestation of a young man would not alone be sufficient to convince a Christian that she or he had seen Christ.[99] Indeed, the same ambiguity seen in these apocryphal Acts, can also be seen in an epiphany recounted in Cyprian's treatise, *Mortality*. Writing from Carthage around the middle of the third century CE, Cyprian shares the account of an epiphany experienced by one of his contemporaries, a Christian priest:

> [W]hen one of our colleagues and fellow priests, exhausted by illness and alarmed in the face of approaching death, prayed for a respite for himself, there stood beside him, as he prayed and was now almost dying, a young man venerable in honor and majesty, noble in stature, shining in aspect, and upon whom as he stood before it the human sight could scarcely look with the eyes of the flesh, except that on the point of departing from the world it could already regard such a one.[100]

Cyprian continues by recounting the message delivered by this young man, but provides no

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[97] Acts Paul 9.19; trans. Pervo.

[98] Evodius of Uzala, *De fide contra Manichaeos* 38 (CSEL 25/2; Vienna: Tempsky, 1892) 968.24-969.6; trans. Jean-Marc Prieur, "The Acts of Andrew," in *New Testament Apocrypha, Volume II: Writings Relating to the Apostles; Apocalypses and Related Subjects* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Cambridge; Louisville: J. Clarke & Co; Westminster / John Knox Press, 1992), 103. See also Bovon, "Child and the Beast," 387.

[99] It is also important to recall that a "young man" could be a demon in disguise as we saw in the last chapter; see Acts Thom. 63-64 and discussion in Chapter 2.

[100] Cyprian, *Mort*. 19 (Deferrari, FC).

additional details that might help to identify him.[101] The description of the young man's appearance, his extraordinary height and luminescence, makes it clear that he is a divine being. Yet Cyprian provides no specific identification. The particular identity of this divine being is left ambiguous. Although the manifestation of a divine being as a "young man" is often left ambiguous, within at least one particular context a glorious young man is more readily identified as Christ.

Christ in the Form of a Young Man at Baptism

It is primarily in the context of baptism that the manifestation of a young man is explicitly identified with Christ. This trend appears in the Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, and Acts of Thomas. Of the accounts reviewed above, it was the final example from the Acts of Paul that most clearly identified the young man with Christ. In that example, Paul prays for Christ to remove his shackles and a young man removes his shackles.[102] No one refers to this young man as an angel and the young man does not speak of Christ in the third person; so there is nothing in that account that would raise questions about identifying the youth as Christ. The reason for the less ambiguous identification of the young man in this account is likely related to its larger context: Paul asks for help to leave the prison in order to baptize Artemilla. As soon as Paul and Artemilla leave the prison, the same young man appears again in order to guide them to a location he (i.e., the young man) chooses for the baptism.[103]

A yout[h physically resembling] Paul preceded them to the [seashore], illuminating

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[101] The message is one of rebuke that share some similarity with Tertullian's dreams of divine chastisement; cf. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, p. 244, n.73.

[102] Acts Paul 9.19.

[103] It is clear that this is the same "very attractive youth" who had previously helped Paul because he is described doing the same thing "again" in Acts Paul 9.21; see Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 238.

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(the path) not with a lamp but by the brightness of his body. At that point the

illuminator came to a stop. After praying, Paul laid a hand upon Artemilla, descended

into the water in the name of Christ Jesus. The water glowed, which so terrified

Artemilla that she nearly fainted. Anxious, Paul prayed, "You who illuminate and

reveal, help, lest the gentiles say that the prisoner Paul escaped after killing

Artemilla." Just as the youth smiled again, the matron revived and set out for

home.[104]

Here, the identification of this youth with Christ is reinforced. The youth now appears similar

to Paul—a manifestation only performed by Christ in the apocryphal Acts (discussed

below)—and when Paul and Artemilla descend into the water "in the name of Christ Jesus,"

the water becomes as luminescent as the young man.[105] Then, when Artemilla faints, Paul

appeals to the young man for help, addressing him as "You who illuminate and reveal."[106]

Such epithets might also imply that this young man is Christ. This text never names the youth

as Christ, but there is much to suggest the identification and little to cause doubt.[107] In

addition, there are two comparable accounts in the Acts of Peter and the Acts of Thomas

where the young man who appears at baptism is explicitly identified as Christ.

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[104] Acts Paul 9.20-21; trans. Pervo, adapted (N.B. I have only removed the parenthetical explanations Pervo added to the text).

[105] On Christ in the form of the Apostles, see below. The lacuna between "youth" and "Paul" makes this interpretation of the youth, as possessing characteristics of Paul, tentative; see Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 238.

[106] Acts Paul 9.21; trans. Pervo.

[107] For more arguments on this young man as Christ, see Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 237-239, 242; Erik Peterson, "Einige Bemerkungen zum Hamburger Papyrus-Fragment der Acta Pauli," *VC* 3 (1949): 149-150; Gérard Poupon, "L'accusation de magie dans les actes apocryphes," in *Les Actes Apocryphes des Apôtres: Christianisme et Monde Païen* (eds. François Bovon, Michel Van Esbroeck, Richard Goulet, Eric Junod, Jean-Daniel Kaestli, Françoise Morard, Gérard Poupon, Jean-Marc Prieur, and Yves Tissot; Genève: Labor et fides, 1981), 89-90. Klauck says the young man could be Christ or an angel; see Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 327.

In Acts of Peter 5, Peter is sailing for Rome on a ship captained by a pagan named Theon. During the journey, Theon is converted to Christianity—due in part to a heavenly voice that speaks to him in his sleep and in part to the teachings of Peter. When the winds calm and the ship comes to a stop, Theon requests that Peter baptize him. Then, immediately after the baptism, there is an epiphany of a young man.

> Peter let himself down by a rope and baptized Theon in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. He came up out of the water rejoicing with great joy. Peter also had become more cheerful because God had deemed Theon worthy of his name. And it happened that in the same place where Theon was baptized, a young man, radiant in splendour, appeared and said to them, "Peace be with you." And both Peter and Theon immediately went up and entered the cabin; and Peter took bread and gave thanks to the Lord, who had deemed him worthy of his holy service, and because a young man had appeared to them saying, "Peace be with you." Peter said, "Most excellent and the only Holy One, for you appeared to us, O God Jesus Christ."[108]

When the radiant young man first appears, he is not identified. After Peter and Theon enter the cabin, however, his identity is revealed. Peter blesses the bread saying, "For you appeared to us, O God Jesus Christ." The author makes it abundantly clear that Peter is referring to the manifestation of the young man. Even though the epiphany has just occurred, the author reminds his readers that Peter is giving thanks "because a young man had appeared to them." His manifestation "in the same place where Theon was baptized" seems to function as a sign of acceptance—as Vouaux writes, "Le Christ ratifie cet acte, en se montrant sous la forme

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[108] Acts Pet. 5.

d'un jeune homme, et leur souhaitant la paix."[109] Regardless of the purpose, it is

unmistakeable in this account that Christ has appeared in the form of a young man.

In Acts of Thomas 27, a divine young man also appears after baptism and is clearly

identified with Christ.[110] King Gundaphorus and his brother Gad desire to become Christians,

so they ask the apostle, Judas Thomas, to baptize them. The account of their baptism includes

two epiphanies and suggests that baptism was necessary for seeing the Lord.

> And when they had entered into the bath-house, Judas [Thomas] went in before them.
> And our Lord appeared to them, and said to them: "Peace be with you, my brothers".
> And they heard the voice only, but the form they did not see, whose it was, for till
> now they had not been baptized.[111]

Even though the author says that the "Lord appeared," he insists that the initiates only hear

the voice and do not see the Lord's "form." At Theon's baptism in the Acts of Peter, a young

man appears and says, "Peace be with you."[112] Here, the same words are heard, but no young

man is seen—at least, not yet. The author implies that they will see his form after they have

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[109] Vouaux, *Les actes de Pierre*, 5. Vouaux's commentary on this passages focuses primarily on the symbolism of light and not on the significance of Christ in the form of a young man. See also Stoops, "Miracle Stories and Vision Reports,"267-268; Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 91.

[110] The Greek and Syriac manuscripts of the Acts differ on the nature of the ritual but agree on the manifestation of Christ as a young man. Here the Syriac is closer to the original. The Greek does not include baptism, but instead has Thomas perform two different anointings—a practice not found in any other ancient Christian text; see Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 13-14. The double anointing is likely a corruption of the text resulting from a conflict between Eastern and Western baptism practices. In the East, anointing was performed before the baptism, but in the West, after. See Yves Tissot, "Les Actes de Thomas, Exemple de Recueil Composite," in *Les Actes Apocryphes des Apôtres: Christianisme et Monde Païen* (eds. François Bovon, Michel Van Esbroeck, Richard Goulet, Eric Junod, Jean-Daniel Kaestli, Françoise Morard, Gérard Poupon, Jean-Marc Prieur, and Yves Tissot; Genève: Labor et fides, 1981), 223–232; Paul-Hubert Poirier et Yves Tissot, "Actes de Thomas" in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens, vol. I* (La Pléiade, Gallimard, 1997), 1351-1352, n.27.1; Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 12-14, 75-78; Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008 [org. 2005]), 141-144.

[111] Acts Thom. 27; trans. Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 76-77.

[112] Acts Pet. 5.

been baptized. And, indeed, they do. After Thomas performs the baptism, which includes a

prayer inviting the divine to "come" and "communicate with the minds of these young men,"

the narrative continues:

> And when they had come up out of the water, a youth appeared to them, and he was
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> holding a lighted taper; and the light of the lamps became pale through its light. And
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> when they had gone forth, he became invisible to them; and the Apostle said: "We
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> were not even able to bear your light, because it is too great for our vision."[113]

The author's explanation that Gundaphorus and Gad could only see the form of the Lord

after their baptism and Thomas's prayer inviting the divine to be present creates the

expectation that the Lord will appear. Then, a young man appears. Clearly this is an epiphany

of the Lord in the form of a young man. The Greek version makes the identity of the youth

even clearer. It describes the youth's light as so bright that Thomas exclaims: "Your light is

too great for us, Lord." This young man is the Lord.[114]

It is clear in the apocryphal Acts that the manifestation of a young man in the context

of baptism should be identified as Christ. Although there are no second- or third-century

Christian texts outside of the apocryphal Acts that describe the manifestation of Christ as a

young man at baptism, there is reason to believe that some Christians expected such an

encounter. In addition to the apocryphal Acts, early Christian art associated with baptism and

second-century theological discussions on baptism could have fostered such expectations.

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[113] Acts Thom. 27; trans. Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 76-77. Based on parallels to Acts Thom. 50, Susan Myers
argues that the primary addressee in Acts Thom. 27 is the feminine "Spirit;" see Susan E. Myers, *Spirit
Epicleses in the Acts of Thomas* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2, 281; Tübingen:
Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 149-152. Yet both Acts Thom. 27 and 50 begin by addressing Jesus. Myers
acknowledges that these passages combine prayers to both Jesus and the Spirit; see Myers, *Spirit Epicleses in
the Acts of Thomas*, 147.

[114] Klijn agrees based on parallels in other apocryphal Acts, but offers no commentary on the form of Christ's
manifestation; see Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 83-84.

Art influenced epiphanies. As we saw in the first chapter, pagan art could aid the dreamer in recognizing a god and art could inspire or even become an epiphany of a god. If early Christian art ever functioned similarly, then baptismal art depicting Jesus as a young man would be significant.[115] The earliest Christian art depicting Jesus's baptism portrays him as a youth.[116] Even in the fourth century, when representations of Jesus as a bearded figure surpassed in popularity the image of Jesus as a young man, many representations of his baptism continued to depict him as a young man.[117] Although such art was intended to convey a familiar story from the Gospels, it diverged from those Gospels in its representation of Jesus. As Robin Jensen has noted, "This presentation is striking, especially since the biblical stories of Jesus's baptism presume that he is an adult, about to embark on his public ministry."[118] Jensen suggests that this portrayal of the young Jesus functioned symbolically: since Jesus's baptism was "the prototype for all subsequent Christian baptisms […] depicting the recipient as a child is not a departure from narrative tradition but rather shows the newly baptized as having regained a childlike innocence through the remission of sins."[119] Whatever the artists' reasons for representing the baptism of Jesus in this way, such

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[115] By "baptismal art," I refer to both early Christian art depicting baptism and art on the walls of early Christian baptistries.

[116] See Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 14-16, 158-160; Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, 55-60.

[117] Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 14-16, 158-160; Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, 55-60.

[118] Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 159-160; Luke 3:23 says that Jesus was about thirty years old, but the other Gospels are not explicit about his age.

[119] Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 15-16; cf. Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, 60. Yet it is possible that there was no special symbolic significance. As we have seen in the apocryphal Acts, as well as in other early Jewish and Christian literature, the manifestation of a young man was a common form for divine beings in epiphanies. What's more, Jesus is frequently depicted as a beardless young man in other contexts within early Christian art.

depictions create a visual link between the ritual of baptism and the image of Jesus as a young man. The association of baptism with this image of Jesus as a young man could provide converts with the visual memory necessary to see Jesus manifest as a young man at their own baptisms.

In some locations, memory would have been unnecessary. For instance, in the early third-century church at Dura-Europos, images of Jesus as a beardless young man decorate the walls of the baptistry.[120] On the north wall is a beardless Jesus healing a paralyzed man and a similar representation of Jesus walking on water. On the south wall is Goliath facing the young David, who might also have been seen as an image of Christ. Perhaps most significant, however, is the image located on the west wall above the baptismal font. In the bottom left corner of this large fresco is a minuscule image of Adam and Eve plucking fruit from a tree. Yet this image is dominated by the much larger, central depiction of a young shepherd carrying a lamb, surrounded by a flock of sheep—an image we have already seen associated with Jesus.[121] At this church in Dura-Europos, when someone was prepared to become part of the flock of God, he or she would enter the waters of baptism. Then, the first thing that the baptisand would see upon emerging from the water was this young shepherd guiding his sheep, Christ in the form of a young man.[122] By the third century, some Christians had access to these visual aids, that could prompt or inform Christian epiphanies.

The association of baptism with epiphanies is attested outside of the apocryphal Acts

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[120] Kraeling, *Dura Europos, Final Report VIII/2*, 50-71.

[121] For the image of the young shepherd as Jesus, see Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 37-41; Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, 53-57. See also Peppard's insightful discussion on the shepherd from Ps 23 (LXX 22) as an image of Christ in early Christian discourse on baptism; Peppard, *World's Oldest Church*, 99-107.

[122] For Christ as shepherd in early Christian epiphanies, see below.

and third-century Christian art. In the early Gospel accounts of Jesus's baptism, after he emerges from the water, he experiences the heavens open, hears a heavenly voice, and the Spirit descends in the form of a dove.[123] According to some later versions of Matthew's account, this epiphany at Jesus's baptism also includes a manifestation of light. In two Old Latin manuscripts, Matthew 3:15 is followed, as Everett Ferguson notes, "[by this] reading with some variation: 'When he was baptized, such a bright light shone round about the water that all who approached were fearful.'"[124] Light became a significant theme associated with Christian baptism beginning in the second century.[125] Early Christian discussions about the importance of baptism often associate the ritual with light, illumination, and vision of God.[126] For instance, Clement of Alexandria says in his treatise, *Instructor*, "This work [i.e., baptism] is variously called grace, and illumination, and perfection, and washing: washing, by which we cleanse way our sins; grace, by which the penalties accruing to transgressions are remitted; and illumination, by which that holy light of salvation is beheld, that is, by which we see God clearly."[127] Jan Bremmer has argued that Christian authors appropriated this language of illumination from mystery religions.[128] Indeed, within the broader Greco-Roman

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[123] Matt. 3:16-17 // Mark 1:10-11 // Luke 3:21-22; cf. John 1.32-33.

[124] Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 110; citing MSS Vercellensis (fourth century) and Sangermanensis (eighth century). See also Gos. Eb. 1-3; *Pan.* 30.13.6, 4-5, 7-8; for commentary, see Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 104.

[125] Justin, *1 Apol.* 61.12; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.26.1–2, Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 12.120.1. On the manifestation of light at Jesus's baptism see, Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 110-111; Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 91-135; Jan N. Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014).

[126] Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 311-313.

[127] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6 (ANF). Although Clement of Alexandria's language of "seeing God" may not refer to an visible manifestation of a divine being in anthropomorphic form, other authors spoke more explicitly about angelic manifestations at baptisms; see Origen, *Hom. Jos.* 9.4; Tertullian, *Bapt.* 5.6-6.1.

[128] In particular, Bremmer shows how authors such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria borrowed the

culture, the closest parallel to this type of epiphany—a manifestation associated with ritual

practices—is the manifestation of a god associated with initiation into mystery religions.[129]

For instance, at the climax of the Eleusinian Mysteries, a large fire was revealed to the

initiands as they stood inside a dark hall.[130] This light functioned, Bremmer explains, "to

denote the highest insight or the seeing of God."[131] Since Christian authors applied this

language to the ritual of baptism, some Christians could have expected that baptism would

likewise open the eyes of initiands to a vision of Christ. Again, there is no second- or third-

century Christian text outside of the apocryphal Acts that describes a Christian convert

experiencing an epiphany of Christ at baptism.[132] Nevertheless, early Christian art and

Christian discussions on the topic of baptism together with the narrative traditions of

baptism-epiphanies provided cultural resources that could allow for such an experience.

Christ in the Form of a Shepherd

The shepherd was one of the most common Christ-figures to appear in early Christian

art. Already we have encountered the image of the shepherd on the eucharistic chalice in

Tertullian's *On Modesty*, on the lamp of a late second-century Christian in Rome, and on the

wall above the baptismal font in the church at Dura-Europos.[133] Despite the ubiquity of the

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notion of illumination; Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 150-151.

[129] See chapter one. For other pagan parallels to Christian baptism discourse, including discourse on epiphanies, see Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 25-37.

[130] See Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 11-16, 150-151.

[131] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 150-151.

[132] The absence of evidence in other Christian texts could be attributed either to the influence of mystery religions that expected initiates to remain silent about their experiences or to the concern of some Christians to distinguish Christian ritual from pagan. Tertullian, for instance, is aware of the pagan parallels, which he calls demonic imitations; see *Bapt*. 5.1.

[133] Finney, *Invisible God*, 116-131.

shepherd image as a symbol or form for Christ in early Christian art and literature, there are only two second- and third-century Christian texts that describe the manifestation of a divine being in the form of a shepherd. In the early second-century *Shepherd of Hermas,* angels appear in the form of shepherds and in the early third-century *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, an unidentified shepherd who appears in a dream may be a manifestation of Christ. One possible explanation for the paucity of shepherd-epiphanies in early Christian literature might be ascribed to the origin of this "Christian" image. Christians adopted the image from pagan art because of its associations with Christian and Jewish textual traditions.[134] Yet the image of the young shepherd was also a common representation of the pagan god, Hermes.[135] Unlike the ambiguous manifestation of a "young man," the manifestation of a young shepherd was more recognizable and more identifiable with a particular pagan god. Both the *Shepherd of Hermas* and *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* describe the manifestation of a shepherd in a way that suggests that Christians likely struggled with its pagan significance.

In the early second-century *Shepherd of Hermas*, a shepherd-figure first appears to Hermas at the beginning of his fifth vision.[136] Hermas describes the epiphany as follows:

> After I prayed in my house, sitting on my bed, there entered a man glorious in
> appearance (ἔνδοξος τῇ ὄψει), dressed in shepherd's clothing (σχήματι ποιμενικῷ)—
> wrapped with a white goat skin around his waist, with a bag on his shoulder and a

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[134] For God, angels, and Jesus as shepherds, see Ps. 23:1; Isa 40:10-11; Jer 31:10; Ezek 34:6-31; Sir 18:13b; 1 En. 89.59-67 (seventy angels as shepherds); Matt 26:31-33; John 10:11, 14; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4.

[135] Occasionally Apollo, Orpheus, and others were depicted this form as well; see Nikolaus Himmelmann, *Über Hirten-Genre in der antiken Kunst* (Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 65; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1980), 109-156.

[136] On the origin of this shepherd-figure, Carolyn Osiek explains, "The ubiquity of shepherd figures in Greco-Roman and early Christian art and imagination makes it difficult to establish parallels;" Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 16. Yet she demonstrates that it is not dependent on the collection of Hellenistic Egyptian mystical tracts, Poimandres; Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 25-26.

staff in his hand. He greeted me, and I greeted him in return. He immediately sat next to me and said, "I have been sent from the most reverend angel to live with you for the rest of your life."[137]

Despite the shepherd's insistence that he had "been sent from the most reverend angel," Hermas does not recognize him. Hermas believes that this shepherd has "come to put [him] to the test (ἐκπειράζων)," so he responds, "Who are you? For I know the one to whom I have been entrusted."[138] Hermas uses the verb ἐκπειράζω to describe what he initially expected of this shepherd-figure. Since Hermas's epiphanic encounters are primarily with benevolent angels, the word ἐκπειράζω is often translated here as "test." For instance, Osiek explains that "the shepherd-angel is there to try or test his faith and endurance (not tempt him to do evil)."[139] Yet this interpretation might not fully capture Hermas's concern. Based on the prominent role of the shepherd-figure in art and literature as a form assumed by pagan gods—and based on the early Christian reactions to epiphanic images of pagan gods, which were reviewed in the previous chapter—it is more likely that Hermas is expressing a fear of demonic temptation. In fact, in the only other instances where the verb ἐκπειράζω appears in *Shepherd of Hermas*, it describes the temptations of the devil.[140] Hermas responds as one might expect a Christian to respond to a possible demonic epiphany: he asks that the being identify himself and he affirms that his own allegiance lies with "the one to whom [he has] been entrusted." In addition, Hermas accepts this being who has appeared in shepherd-form (σχήματι ποιμενικῷ) only after that being changes his form: "While he was speaking his

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[137] Herm. Vis. 25.1-2; trans. Ehrman.

[138] Herm. Vis. 25.3; trans. Ehrman.

[139] Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 100.

[140] See Herm. Vis. 31.6; 48.4.

appearance changed (ἠλλοιώθη ἡ ἰδέα αὐτοῦ), and I recognized him, that he was in fact the one to whom I had been entrusted."[141] Although this polymorphic shepherd and the other shepherds in this text are eventually accepted by Hermas as divine figures, his initial reaction suggests that some Christians may have been uneasy with this image.[142] Peter Lampe has made a similar argument about this initial manifestation of the shepherd:

> [T]he literary dialogue anticipates the possible reaction of the reader. It anticipates the alarm about pagan motifs being used in a Christian context. Is this 'shepherd' an ambassador of evil? No, he is not! The text calms the disturbed reader and apparently the author himself when he integrates pagan elements into his Christianity."[143]

The manifestations of angels as shepherds in this text suggests that already in the early second century some Christians were open to the possibility that benevolent divine beings could appear in that form. At the same time, this text expresses an ambivalence about this image of the shepherd that may be best explained by its popularity as a form for pagan gods.

In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, the shepherd-figure appears in the second half of Perpetua's first dream. This dream begins with the images of a ladder and a dragon which were discussed in the previous chapter. After she steps on the dragon's head and ascends the ladder, a new scene unfolds:

> Then I saw an immense garden, and in it a grey-haired (*canum*) man sat in shepherd's garb (*in habitu pastoris*); tall (*grandem*) he was, and milking sheep. And standing around him were many thousands of people clad in white garments. He raised his

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[141] Herm. Vis. 25.4; trans. Ehrman.

[142] For other angelic shepherds in this text, see Herm. Vis. 61:5-6; 62:1, 5-6; 63:2.

[143] Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (trans. M.D. Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003 [org. 1989]), 228.

head, looked at me, and said: "I am glad you have come, my child."[144]

As we have seen with Perpetua's interpretation of this and other dreams, she does not explicitly identify the significance of any particular dream-image. Rather Perpetua interprets each dream in its entirety. She interprets this dream to mean that she would suffer in this life and have hope only in the next.[145] If the treacherous ladder and the threatening dragon signified her suffering, then the serenity of the garden with its welcoming shepherd likely represents the hoped-for afterlife. Most modern commentators have interpreted the shepherd to be Christ.[146] This seems reasonable since the shepherd is described as tall (*grandem*)—a characteristic common to deities—and presented as the central, authoritative figure in this paradisiacal scene.

Commentators have been quick to point out that shepherd imagery was popular in both Christianity and paganism in Perpetua's time.[147] Perpetua could even have seen the image of the shepherd in her local church—as discussed previously, Tertullian relates that some Christians in Carthage celebrated the eucharist with a chalice featuring the image of a

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[144] *Pass. Perp.* 4.8-9; adapted. Unless otherwise noted, all text and tranlsations of *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* come from Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

[145] *Pass. Perp.* 4.10; adapted.

[146] Jacqueline Amat, *Songes et Visions: L'au-delà dans la littérature latine tardive* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), 119-121; Cecil M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian, and Cyprian* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 30-41; Jan N. Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary: Authenticity, Family and Visions," in *Märtyrer und Märtyrakten* (ed. Walter Ameling; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 102-105; Dörnberg, Burkhard von, *Traum und Traumdeutung in der Alten Kirche: die westliche Tradition bis Augustin* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 90-92; Thomas J. Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 180-181. For Dodds, the shepherd is a heavenly figure, but not explicitly Christ; see E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [org. 1965]), 51.

[147] E.g., Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 119-121; Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 33-34; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 156-157; Dörnberg, Burkhard von, *Traum und Traumdeutung in der Alten Kirche*, 90-92.

shepherd.[148] Ultimately, however, scholars must admit that Perpetua's shepherd is different

from the images popular among Christians and pagans of her day. As Amat explains,

"Cependant, l'imagination onirique de Perpétue modifie quelque peu les représentations

iconographiques. Le Pasteur est ... représenté avec des cheveux blancs, et, semble-t-il, 'âgé',

alors que l'image traditionnelle est celle d'un homme jeune."[149] To make sense of this shift

from the common image of a young shepherd to that of an old, white-haired shepherd,

scholars have proposed various solutions. For instance, Robeck and Heffernan each have

argued for influence from Jewish and Christian texts that depict God or Christ as white-

haired.[150] There is, however, no precedent for the manifestation of an old shepherd. Bremmer

suggests that the image of the old shepherd is derived from "a topos in visions" where the

messenger "is regularly described as an old man or old woman."[151] Yet, as we have seen,

early Jewish and Christian texts prefer to represent such a messenger as a "young man."

Miller acknowledges the problem—i.e., she admits that the common young shepherd image

is "hardly a match for the figure who appears in the dream"—then, admittedly reading

against the grain, she suggests that the ladder, dragon, and shepherd all function similarly as

phallic, patriarchal symbols.[152] Rather than see the shepherd as an equivalent for Perpetua's

father, Dörnberg follows Amat and sees the old shepherd functioning as a heavenly father

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[148] Tertullian, *Pud*. 10.11-13.

[149] Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 121; see also Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 156-157.

[150] E.g., Daniel 7:9-10 or Revelation 1:10-18. See Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 30-32; Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 180.

[151] Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 103.

[152] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 156-157, 165-167, 176.

that contrasts with her "diabolical" earthly father.[153] This lack of consensus and diversity of interpretation attest to the uniqueness of this image. Whatever the reason for this unique appearance of an old shepherd, I would suggest that its uniqueness alone is significant. If this is the only second- or third-century account of a manifestation of Christ in the form of a shepherd, it is significant that this shepherd appears nothing like the young shepherd, the popular form of some pagan gods. Like the Shepherd of Hermas, this account from Perpetua suggests the possibility that Christ could appear in shepherd-form while simultaneous expressing ambivalence about its potential pagan associations.

Christ in the Form of Christian Leaders

From manifestations of young men and shepherds adapted from common pagan images, we now turn to a more distinctly "Christian" dream-image—Christ in the form of his apostles. In Acts of Peter 22, the Lord appears in the form of Peter in order to behead a demon in a symbolic dream. In Acts of Paul and Thecla 3.21, the Lord appears in the form of Paul seated among the crowd as Thecla faces the possibility of death by fire.[154] In the Acts of Thomas, Jesus appears in the form of Thomas multiple times: first in the bridal chamber of a newly married couple to teach them the benefits of abstinence.[155] He appears in the form of Thomas to two people before each one is raised from the dead.[156] Finally, he assumes the

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[153] Dörnberg, Burkhard von, *Traum und Traumdeutung in der Alten Kirche*, 90-92.

[154] Another potential manifestation of the Lord in the form of Paul (Acts Paul 9.20) will not be discussed here; the lacunose condition of that passage in the manuscript makes the reading, "in the form of Paul," tentative; see Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 238. See my discussion of the passage in the previous section on the manifestation of young man at baptism.

[155] Acts Thom. 11-15.

[156] To a young man in Acts Thom. 34 and a young woman in Acts Thom. 57. The manifestation to the young man appears only in the Greek version; see Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 100.

form of Thomas in order to guide two women to the prison where Thomas is being held.[157]

Similar accounts are found in the Acts of John and Acts of Andrew. In Acts of John 87,

Christ appears in the form of John to a woman about to be raised from the dead, and in Acts

of Andrew 47 he takes on the form of Andrew in order to guide women to the prison where

Andrew is being held.

Some scholars interpret these accounts by focusing predominantly on the

Christological implications of the Lord appearing in multiple forms.[158] Yet only two of the

eight manifestations just described are employed explicitly for Christological purposes. In

Acts of Thomas 151–152 and Acts of John 87, the manifestations of the Lord prompt

expositions on the Lord's polymorphic nature. Yet, even in these two accounts, Christology

does not fully explain why Christ is manifest in the particular form of his apostle since both

accounts rely on other depictions of Christ's many forms to demonstrate his polymorphy.[159]

Furthermore, Christology does not help to explain any of the other manifestations of Christ

as apostle in Acts of Thomas, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Peter, or Acts of Paul and Thecla.

Other scholars have suggested that accounts describing the manifestations of Jesus in

the form of his apostles reinforce a common theme in the apocryphal Acts—the elevation of

the apostles. For instance, François Bovon and Jean-Marc Prieur have each demonstrated

how the apocryphal Acts heighten the role of the apostles to a Christ-like status—the apostle

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[157] Acts Thom. 151-152; see also Acts Thom. 155 where it is implied that Jesus appeared in the forms of Thomas and a young man.

[158] Most categorize these accounts with other manifestations—such as Christ's appearances in the form of a young man or an old man—then debate what type of Christology these manifestations taken together might represent. See my discussion of early Christian polymorphy at the beginning of this chapter.

[159] Christ is manifest in the form of a young man in Acts Thom. 27, 155 and Acts John 73, 76, 87; see also Acts John 88-89 for other forms of Christ.

becomes revealer, savior, and mediator.[160] This elevation of the early apostles during the

second and third centuries corresponds to the elevation of hierarchical leadership within

proto-Orthodox Christianity during the same period. This trend does not, however, fully

explain why Christ would take on the physical appearance of his apostles. These accounts are

unique when compared with the usual narratological functions of polymorphy in similar

accounts from ancient Greco-Roman literature. After demonstrating that these accounts are

unique, I will argue that they reflect instead a common understanding of the relationship

between priests and their patron gods.[161]

The manifestation of Christ in the form of an apostle is unique because of its

specificity—e.g., in contrast to the ambiguous manifestation as a "young man." Considered

within a broader Greco-Roman literary context, the uniqueness of these manifestations

becomes readily apparent. Throughout the Homeric epics and hymns, as well as in the later

Greek and Latin literature patterned after them, gods take on multiple forms as the narratives

demand.[162] Sometimes gods assume the form of a particular named character who was

already introduced in the narrative and who plays a distinct role apart from the god who

assumed her or his form; on other occasions gods take on the appearance of an otherwise

unknown and unnamed character who is not central to the narrative. Consider the

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[160] See François Bovon, "La vie des apôtres: traditions bibliques et narration apocryphes," in *Les Actes Apocryphes des Apôtres: Christianisme et Monde Païen* (eds. François Bovon, Michel Van Esbroeck, Richard Goulet, Eric Junod, Jean-Daniel Kaestli, Françoise Morard, Gérard Poupon, Jean-Marc Prieur, and Yves Tissot; Genève: Labor et fides, 1981), 141–158; Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 363. Earlier scholars read the apocryphal Acts as gnostic and the apostles as "redeemed redeemers;" e.g., Günther Bornkamm, *Mythos und Legende in den apokryphen Thomas-Akten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933), 15; Carl Luitpold Sturhahn, *Die Christologie der ältesten apokryphen Apostelakten: Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte des altkirchlichen Dogmas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), 91.

[161] This claim will be developed further below.

[162] On the literary functions of polymorphy in Greek and Latin literature, see Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 19-31; and Christian Zgoll, *Phänomenologie der Metamorphose: Verwandlungen und Verwandtes in der augusteischen Dichtung* (Classica Monacensia 28; Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2004), 157-216.

manifestations of Athena in Homer's *Odyssey*. She appropriates the form of important, named characters such as Mentes, Mentor, Telemachus, and Dymas, as well as forms described in vague terms like a young girl, a herald, one member of a crowd, and a young shepherd.[163] In later Greek and Latin literature, closer in time to the apocryphal Acts, gods use disguises less frequently. Works like Vergil's *Aeneid* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses* still include gods in disguise, but histories, biographies, novels, and plays more commonly described the gods as similar to their statues.[164]

The variety of forms that Christ assumes in the apocryphal Acts is more similar to the variety seen in the epiphanies of the early Homeric epics and hymns than in those of later Greek and Latin literature. Yet the apocryphal Acts diverge from Homeric texts and later literature in a significant way. In the apocryphal Acts, the only named character whose form Christ assumes is the particular apostle who is the protagonist of the story. He never appears in the form of another named character from the narrative world. All other manifestations of Christ are depicted in vague terms—for instance, when he appears in the form of a young man—or they do not describe his form at all.[165]

Narratives of Christ's appearance in the form of his apostle also contrast with this

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[163] In the *Odyssey*, Athena appears most frequently in the form of Mentor (2.268; 2.401; 22.206; 24.547). She also appears as Mentes (1.105), Telemachus (2.383), Dymas (6.22), as a young girl carrying a pitcher (7.20), as a herald from Alcinous (8.8), as one of the crowd (8.194), and as a young shepherd (13.222). See Rose, H.J. "Divine Disguisings." Harvard Theological Review 49 (1956): 63-72; Dietrich, B.C. "Divine epiphanies in Homer." Numen 30 (1983): 53-79; Turkeltaub, Daniel Wallace, "The Gods' radiance manifest: an examination of the narrative pattern underlying the Homeric divine epiphany scenes." (PhD. Diss., Cornell University, 2003).

[164] See Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 153; Versnel, "Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," 46-47; Harris, *Dreams and Experience*, 38-38.

[165] For Christophanies in which Christ's form is not described, see: Acts Andr. 40; Acts John 97-98; Acts Paul 10; Acts Pet. 1, 5, 16, 35; Acts Thom. 1, 2, 29. For Christ in the form of a boy, a young man, or an old man, see: Acts Andr. 32; Acts John 73, 76, 87; Acts Paul 7; Acts Pet. 5, 21; Acts Thom. 27, 154-155. For examples of Jesus's polymorphy during his earthly ministry, see Acts John 88-93 and Acts Pet. 20.

broader Greco-Roman literature in that manifestations of gods in the form of protagonists are rare. In fact, it is rare for a god to appear in the form of any major character who is independently active within the narrative world. When such manifestations do occur they function logically within the narrative to further the plot.[166] The *Odyssey* provides one of the few examples of a god assuming the form of named characters who also act independently. Mentor and Telemachus each exist and act independently within the narrative world at the time that Athena appropriates their forms.[167] In both situations, her disguise functions logically within the development of the narrative. Since Mentor was Telemachus's guardian and the trusted adviser of Odysseus, who better to help Telemachus escape the suitors and begin his journey to find his father?[168] Since Telemachus would need a ship and crew for his journey, who better to acquire a ship and crew than Telemachus himself—or Athena in the form of Telemachus?[169] It is not difficult to imagine how two of the same character operating within the same narrative world might lead to a delightful comedy of errors. Indeed, another work that features gods assuming the forms of major characters is a Roman comedy. In Plautus's *Amphitryon*, Jupiter and Mercury take on the forms of a Theban general, Amphitryon, and his slave, Sosia. Jupiter uses the disguise to seduce Amphitryon's wife, Alcmena, while her husband and his slave are away at war. Comedy ensues when the real Amphitryon and Sosia return home. As was the case with Athena in the *Odyssey*, the disguises assumed by the gods in this comedy function logically to further the plot. No one

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[166] See Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 27-28.

[167] Mentor appears first in Homer, *Od.* 2.236, and Athena assumes the form of Mentor beginning in 2.268; the disguise works until the real Mentor is seen (4.698-701). Telemachus is active throughout, and Athena assumes the form of Telemachus beginning in 2.383.

[168] Homer, *Od.* 2.268

[169] Homer, *Od.* 2.383

could more easily seduce Alcmena than her own husband, Amphitryon, so Jupiter assumes Amphitryon's form. No one could better aid Amphitryon than his slave, Sosia, so Mercury assumes Sosia's form.

Contrast these examples with an account from the Acts of Andrew. Maximilla and Iphidama pray that the Lord will help them to escape their husbands so that they might visit Andrew in prison. First, they are aided by a "beautiful young boy."[170] Then, in Acts of Andrew 47, the Lord appears in the form of Andrew: "Maximilla, led by the Lord disguised as Andrew, went to the prison again with Iphidama. A great crowd of the brethren was inside when she found him (i.e., Andrew) speaking."[171] Prieur suggests that, in the Acts of Andrew, the Lord's disguises allow him to intervene directly in order to overcome the obstacles faced by Christians: "Les cas de Polymorphie se produisent dans des situations où l'assistance divine est particulièrement requise: les réunions pleines de danger des frères à la prison. Jésus déjoue les obstacles qui s'opposent aux retrouvailles d'André et des siens."[172] Indeed, as with the *Odyssey* and *Amphitryon,* the disguise as protagonist allows the divine to act directly in human affairs. Yet, contrary to Prieur and in contrast with those other accounts, it is not immediately clear within the narrative how this disguise functions. In fact, within this narrative it makes little sense that the Lord would appropriate the form of Andrew. How would someone who looked like Andrew be any help in freeing women who had been sequestered to keep them away from Andrew, or in passing the jailers who stood guard over

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[170] Acts Andr. 32. On the manifestation of the young man as a manifestation of Christ, see Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 360-362. Yet see the discussion on the manifestations as a "young man" above.

[171] Acts Andr. 47; parentheses added.

[172] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 363. Prieur's final comment on this passage is closer to what I am arguing: "elle met en évidence l'importance de l'action d'André dans l'œuvre de salut;" Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 363.

Andrew?[173] Why are the women not surprised when Andrew leads them to the prison where they find the real Andrew already in the middle of preaching?[174] Such questions are apparently irrelevant for the author of Acts of Andrew.[175] There is nothing in the narrative that would require the Lord to assume Andrew's form in this situation.[176] Clearly, this disguise as protagonist serves a different purpose in the Acts of Andrew than it does in the writings of Homer or Plautus. If anything, this manifestation in the form of Andrew disrupts the narrative logic and, I would argue, draws attention to the connection between the Lord and his apostle, blurring the boundaries between the two.[177] This can be seen in other apocryphal Acts as well.

Each of the early apocryphal Acts shows such a close connection between the work of Christ and his apostle that it would be indiscernible whether it was Christ or his apostle who appeared were it not for the explicit cues of the narrator. In this section, I will analyze each manifestation of Christ in the form of his apostle in its literary context, beginning with the Acts of John. Analysis of manifestations in the Acts of Peter, Acts of Paul and Thecla, and Acts of Thomas will follow in that order.

In the Acts of John, the Lord appears only once in the form of John. Unfortunately,

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[173] Acts Andr. 31.

[174] This account is similar to one from the Acts of Thomas. The manifestation in the Acts of Thomas prompted a lesson on the Lord's polymorphic ability when the disciples were confused, believing that Thomas had appeared in two different places simultaneously (Acts Thom. 151-52). In the Acts of Andrew, however, there is no confusion.

[175] What's more, this same task was accomplished earlier in the Acts, and just as effectively, by Christ in the form of "a beautiful young boy" (Acts Andr. 32); see below.

[176] Acts Thom. 151-153 has a narrative similar to Acts Andr. 47, but uses the double image of the apostle as the narrative purpose for a Christological sermon. See my discussion on polymorphy and Christology above.

[177] This claim will be substantiated below.

the narrative account of that manifestation is missing from the extant text.[178] Chapter 87

begins *in medias res* with a group of people questioning John about the significance of the

Lord's manifestations to a woman named Drusiana.

> Then those who were present inquired about the cause, and were especially perplexed
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> because Drusiana had said, 'The Lord appeared to me in the tomb in the form of John
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> and of a youth.' And as they were perplexed and in some ways were not yet
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> confirmed in the faith, John said with patience: 'Men and brethren, you have suffered
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> nothing that is strange or incredible in your perception of the Lord.'[179]

This narrative develops into a Christological discourse with John sharing accounts of past

encounters between the apostles and the polymorphic Lord during the Lord's earthly

ministry—this is one of the two accounts in which the Lord's divine disguise is exploited for

Christological purposes.[180] As noted previously, there is nothing in the Acts of John to

suggest that the crowd's perplexity was caused by the Lord's particular manifestation in the

form of John. Had Drusiana said that the Lord appeared to her in the forms of a child and a

grown man or in the forms of an old man and a young man, the effect would have been the

same. John's Christological discourse suggests that the author of these Acts had numerous

divine disguises to choose from. In John's first examples, Peter and Andrew saw the Lord

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[178] Acts John 87 is central to discussion on the textual history of the Acts of John. In recent translations of Acts of John, paragraphs 87-105 appear between paragraphs 1-36 and 37-86; paragraph 86 is then followed by 106-115. For the history of the debate on the order of this text, see Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 25-68. If the text of Acts of John followed the original numbering, then the manifestation of Christ as a young man described in Acts John 87 would likely refer to the manifestations of a young man from Acts John 73 and 76; but Acts John 87 also refers to the manifestation of the Lord in the form of John which is not part of the episode described in Acts John 73, 76. If the text of Acts of John followed the order that appears in recent translations—inserting 87-105 in between 36 and 37—then the manifestation of the Lord to Drusiana occurred in an episode that is not extant, likely when her husband Andronicus locked her in a tomb (cf. Acts John 82).

[179] Acts John 87-88.

[180] The other account is in Acts Thom. 151-152.

appear as a child at the same time that John saw him as a handsome man; later John saw the Lord as bald with a long beard at the same time that James saw him as a young man.[181] So the Lord's manifestation in the form of John was not necessary to prompt a Christological discussion. In fact, as these examples from John's speech suggest, the confusion was caused by the Lord's ability to appear in multiple forms and not by any one particular form. The author's Christological interests cannot fully explain the narrative function of the Lord's manifestation in the form of John.

Ultimately it is not possible to say how the manifestation of the Lord in the form of John had functioned within the narrative because the full account in not extant. Yet Junod and Kaestli have suggested a possible scenario based on manifestations of Christ in the other apocryphal Acts. For instance, they suggest that Christ might have appeared in the form of John and then entrusted Drusiana to himself in the form of a young man to lead her to the apostle.[182] Whatever the actual missing account included, Junod and Kaestli insist that Christ's intervention in these different disguises must have functioned to help Drusiana overcome obstacles that kept her away from the apostle.[183] Yet, as we have seen, that is not the only purpose for Christ's polymorphic manifestations in the apocryphal Acts. Furthermore, as seen in the Acts of Andrew, the guise of a particular apostle rarely makes sense within the logic of such narratives—the form of John would be a poor disguise to help

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[181] Acts John 88-89.

[182] "On peut imaginer que, comme dans le cas de Mnêsara, le Christ lui est apparu en songe sous les traits de Jean et qu'il l'a confiée à un νεανίσκος pour qu'il la conduise jusqu'a la prison de l'apôtre. On peut aussi penser que, comme dans les Actes d'André, le Seigneur est intervenu pour la délivrer et lui servir de guide sous deux visages différents en des occasions successives." See Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis 1*, 90.

[183] "Et c'est précisément pour déjouer ces obstacles que le Christ doit intervenir lui-même sous différents visages. ... Ce qui nous semble certain, c'est que ces épiphanies lui permettaient de vaincre les obstacles qui la séparaient de son maître." See Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis 1*, 89-90.

a disciple being kept from John. Nevertheless, the fact that Christ might take on the appearance of an apostle suggests a special connection between the Lord and his apostle.[184] In fact, this connection is confirmed in Acts of John 100.8-10, where John is promised that he will become like the Lord.[185]

In Acts of Peter 22, the manifestation of Christ in the form of Peter occurs in the dream of a Christian named Marcellus. This dream was discussed in the previous chapter because Marcellus sees a demon that is identified as "the whole power of Simon and of his god." Within this same dream, Marcellus also sees Peter crying out: "Come, our true sword, Jesus Christ, and not only cut off the head of this demon, but break all her limbs."[186] Then, another man who looks like Peter enters the scene. This man carries a sword and uses it to slay the demon. When Marcellus wakes, he relates this part of the dream to Peter as follows: "And I looked at both of you, at you [i.e., Peter in the dream] and at him who cut up that demon, and to my astonishment you were both alike."[187] It is clear within the narrative of this dream that the figure who looked like Peter was actually Christ—he appeared in response to dream-Peter's cry for Christ to help and he does exactly what dream-Peter had asked for Christ to do. The significance of this dream within the Acts of Peter is explicitly attached to Peter's subsequent contest with Simon Magus. After Marcellus wakes and shares the dream with Peter, the narrator informs us that "Peter was more encouraged" and "rejoicing and strengthened by these words, he rose to go to the forum" to confront Simon Magus. The

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[184] In Acts John 100.8-10, John is promised that he will become like the Lord.

[185] Acts John 100.8-10.

[186] Acts Pet. 22.

[187] Acts Pet. 22.

dream was a prefiguration of Peter's forthcoming triumph over Simon Magus.[188]

As a prefiguration of Peter's triumph over Simon Magus, however, it was not necessary for the dream to include Christ's manifestation in the form of Peter. The dream could have foretold Peter's triumph if Peter himself had defeated the demon. The choice to present Christ in the form of Peter does more than foreshadow Peter's triumph; it also suggests a unique connection between Christ and his apostle. The man who slew the demon in the dream was clearly Christ, yet he looked like Peter and signified the work that Peter would do. This dream blurs the boundaries between Christ and his apostle.[189]

In Acts of Paul and Thecla 3.21, the Lord appears in the form of Paul to his disciple, Thecla as she stands in an arena condemned to face death by fire.

> And the governor was greatly moved, and after scourging Paul he cast him out of the city. But Thecla he condemned to be burned. And immediately the governor arose and went away to the theatre. And the whole multitude went out to witness the spectacle. But as a lamb in the wilderness looks around for the shepherd, so Thecla kept searching for Paul. And having looked into the crowd she saw the Lord sitting in

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[188] Stoops, "Miracle Stories and Vision Reports,"133-134; Jan N Bremmer, "Aspects of the Acts of Peter: Women, Magic, Place and Date," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism* (ed. Jan N Bremmer; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 9.

[189] Although most studies of the Acts of Peter have had little to say about this manifestation of Christ in the form of Peter, some have come close to what I am arguing here. In a footnote, Stoops identifies parallels to other instances of Christ manifest as apostle and concludes that "The use of this motif elevates the status of the apostle above that of ordinary believers by identifying him with Christ;" see Stoops, "Miracle Stories and Vision Reports,"134, n.82. In Bremmer's edited volume it is mentioned four times with no commentary on Christ manifest as Peter; see Jan N Bremmer, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998)), 9, 34, 47, 174. The exception is Martha Pesthy, who suggests a connection to the Twin motif from Acts of Thomas; see Monika Pesthy, "Cross and Death in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 129. Poupon, in a French translation of the Acts, includes this insight in a footnote attached to Marcellus's dream: "Dans les apocryphes, le Christ apparaît souvent sous les traits de son apôtre, pour signifier la continuité parfaite de son enseignement et de son action;" see Gérard Poupon, "Actes de Pierre" in Écrits apocryphes chétiens I (eds. François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain; Gallimard, 1997) 1091, note "B."

the likeness of Paul and said, 'As if I were unable to endure, Paul has come to look

after me.' And she gazed upon him with great earnestness, but he went up into

heaven.

There is no reason why Thecla or the readers of this narrative should have expected Paul to

appear in the theater—he had been flogged and cast out of the city.[190] Nevertheless, as

Thecla prepares to face her fate, she looks at the crowd hoping to see Paul. The reader is told

that Thecla sees "the Lord sitting in the likeness of Paul," but Thecla says, "*Paul* has come to

look after me."[191] Moments later, when he ascends into heaven with Thecla watching, there

is no indication that she recognizes the Lord as anyone other than Paul. From Thecla's

perspective, it was Paul who appeared. From the reader's perspective, it was the Lord.

The connection between the Lord and his apostle in this scene is clear. Recently,

some scholars have argued that the relationship between the apostle and the Lord in this

passage is emphasized through literary parallels. For instance, Richard Pervo has argued that

"the parallel between Paul and Christ" is reinforced by an allusion to Mark 6:34. In Mark,

Jesus encounters a group of people who "were like sheep without a shepherd" and Thecla

searches for Paul "as a lamb in the wilderness looks around for the shepherd."[192] Situating

this episode within its larger narrative context, Diane Lipsett shows how Paul and Christ are

connected when Thecla is first introduced into the narrative as the betrothed of Thamyris—

her desire was no longer for Thamyris, she desired to "stand in Paul's presence and hear the

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[190] Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 134.

[191] Acts Paul 3.21; emphasis added.

[192] Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 134. Yet ultimately Pervo argues that this polymorphy has Christological significance: "Polymorphy was congruent with Modalistic Monarchianism"; Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 134.

word of Christ."[193] Regarding the manifestation of Christ in the form of Paul, Lipsett insightfully explains:

> A Paul who could earlier speak in the speech genres of Christ now is mirrored by a Christ who can appear in the form of Paul. The earlier triangulation of Thamyris, Paul, and Thecla is now supplanted by a new triangulation, though with Christ mediating Paul rather than Paul mediating Christ.[194]

Yet, even if the reader missed these allusions, the passage is clear. Thecla wanted to see Paul. Since Paul could not be there, the Lord appeared in his place. "[I]t is Jesus who has come to deputize for his apostle," as Richard Pervo says.[195] As in the other apocryphal Acts, so too in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Lord and his apostle are connected and their distinct roles blurred.

In the Acts of Thomas, Jesus appears on multiple occasions in the form of Judas Thomas. In each instance, the manifestation of Jesus blurs the boundaries between Jesus and Thomas. The first time the Lord appears in the form of Thomas to the newly married couple, he functions as a substitute for Thomas.[196] Thomas is not allowed to stay, so Jesus appears in the form of Thomas and teaches what Thomas would teach time and again throughout the Acts. In Acts of Thomas 57, when Jesus appears in the form of Thomas to a woman about to be raised from the dead, she is not confused when then she sees Thomas himself. Rather the manifestation of Jesus in Thomas's form helps her to recognize the apostle: "And she also

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[193] Acts Paul 3.7.

[194] Diane B. Lipsett, *Desiring Conversion: Hermas, Thecla, Aseneth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 71-72.

[195] Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 134.

[196] Acts Thom. 11-15.

saw the apostle standing opposite her, and leaving her couch she sprang up and fell at his feet and took hold of his garments, saying, 'I pray, Lord, where is your companion' [...] 'He who is like you took me and gave me up to you.'"[197] In a similar situation, Thomas raises a recently deceased young man who also sees Jesus in Thomas's form. In this instance, the young man is confused by seeing Thomas addressed by someone who looks like Thomas. His explanation of the experience reinforces the connection between Jesus and his apostle:

> For you are a man having two forms, and wherever you wish, you are found, and are not prevented by anyone, as I see. For I saw how that man standing beside you said to you, "I have many wonders to show through you, and I have to accomplish great works through you..."[198]

The young man mistakenly believed that Thomas had two forms.[199] Yet the reader understands that the "man standing beside" the apostle was not another Thomas, but Jesus in the form of Thomas. The connection between Jesus and his apostle is reinforced in this passage since it is Jesus in the form of Thomas who says to the apostle, "I have to accomplish great works through you." The idea that Jesus is working through his apostle and may appear in the form of the apostle to do those same works, blurs the distinction between Jesus and his apostle. As Kuntzmann, in his study on twinship in the ancient Near East, explains: "La confusion entre Thomas et Jésus est alors totale, ou, mieux encore, Thomas a définitivement cédé la place à Jésus au terme d'une substitution en cours depuis la première page des *Actes*."[200] The Acts of Thomas is self-conscious about this collapse of Jesus into

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[197] Acts Thom. 54, 57.

[198] Acts Thom. 34.

[199] On the other man as Jesus in the form of Thomas, see Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," 103.

[200] Raymond Kuntzmann, *Le symbolisme des jumeaux au Proche-Orient ancien: Naissance, fonction et*

apostle and, in the end, Thomas has to affirm explicitly: "I am not Jesus, but I am his servant: I am not Christ, but I am his minister: I am not the Son of God, but I pray to be worthy of God."[201] The Acts of Thomas affirms that there is a distinction between Jesus and his apostle, but implies that any appearance, action, or teaching of Thomas could be that of Jesus himself.

Outside of the studies on polymorphy in early Christian literature, it is Christ's appearance in the form of Judas Thomas in the Acts of Thomas that has received the most scholarly attention.[202] This is understandable since Jesus appears in the form of his apostle more frequently in the Acts of Thomas than in any of the other apocryphal Acts.[203] The frequency of these manifestations in the Acts of Thomas is most commonly explained by the twin-motif that runs throughout the narrative. In Syriac tradition, Judas Thomas was understood to be the twin brother of Jesus.[204] In the Acts of Thomas, however, the emphasis

évolution d'un symbole (Paris: Beauchesne, 1983), 181; in reference to Acts Thom. 155.

[201] Acts Thom. 160. On Thomas's statement, "I am not Jesus" as part of this motif, see Gregory J Riley, "Thomas Tradition and the Acts of Thomas," in SBL 1991 Seminar Papers (ed. E.H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1991), 534.

[202] Studies on the connection between the "twin motif" and Christ's manifestations as Thomas will be discussed below. Some scholars, while acknowledging the uniqueness of this feature in Acts of Thomas, categorize it with other instances of polymorphy and focus on the Christological or soteriological significance. For the Christological function, see Riley, 533-42; Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 95-96. On the soteriological purpose, see Klauck, "Christus in vielen Gestalten," 337; Prieur, Acta Andreae, 363—"Elle souligne un aspect important de l'activité divine, que nous avons déjà mis en évidence: la présence pleine de sollicitude du Christ pour les siens." Cartlidge also argues for a soteriological purpose—"extension of the redeemer's salvific power"—but adds that it solves the "crisis of continuity which strikes a community as the time of the foundation myth and of the founding prophet fades behind the community in the passage of time" by placing Christ in there midst in the form of his apostle: "The 'twin brother' status of Thomas is a symbolic extension of the redeemer's salvific power into the time of the community;" Cartlidge, "Transfigurations of Metamorphosis," 63.

[203] At least five times in the Acts of Thomas but only once in each of the other apocryphal Acts: Acts Andr. (Greek) 47; Acts John 87; Acts Paul 3.21; Acts Pet. 22.

[204] In Syriac tradition Jude, the brother of James and Jesus (Mark 6:3 // Matt 13:55), was conflated with Judas "not Iscariot" (John 14:22) and with Thomas or Didymus (John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-29). Since Thomas and Didymus mean "twin," Jude the brother of Jesus became the twin brother of Jesus. See A.F.J. Klijn, "John XVI 12 and the Name Judas Thomas," in Studies in John: Presented to Professor D.J.N. Sevenster on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday (Supplements to Novum Testamentum Leiden: Brill, 1970), 88-96; Klijn, Acts of Thomas, 6-7; and Kuntzmann, Le symbolisme des jumeaux, 173-182.

on Thomas as the twin of Christ conveys more than Thomas's and Jesus's biological relationship.[205] As Bovon has convincingly argued, "Thomas, surnommé Didyme, c'est-à-dire jumeau, devient-il le frère spirituel de Jésus dans les Actes de cet apôtre."[206] The role of the apostle is heightened to such a degree that Thomas "soit envoyé pour révéler la puissance bénéfique du Sauveur ou manifesté sur terre comme l'icone du Seigneur invisible, ou enfin appelé frère jumeau du Révélateur, l'apôtre détient et répand la force vivifiante de la divinité."[207] Since Thomas was similar to Jesus, Jesus could readily appear in the form of Thomas.

The elevated role of the apostle in the apocryphal Acts likely contributed to the epiphanic motif of Jesus manifest in the form of an apostle. As we have seen, however, in other Greco-Roman narratives, gods rarely assume the appearance of a primary character. Rather, this form of epiphany is closest in function to the manifestation of gods in the form of their priests. In various Greco-Roman cultic practices, priests and priestesses were made to appear similar to the popular images of their respective gods and goddesses. Petridou, in her study of epiphanies in Greek literature, describes this practice as "the representational strategy whereby humans are iconographically assimilated to the popular image of a deity

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[205] Even though Thomas and Jesus are identified as twins in the Acts of Thomas, the nature of that 'twinship' is not entirely clear. When Jesus first appears in the form of Thomas to a newly married couple, he explains to them that he is not Thomas but his twin brother (Acts Thom. 11); this could suggest that their similar appearance has a biological explanation. On another occasion that Jesus appeared in the form of Thomas, however, Thomas declares Jesus to be 'polymorphic' (Acts Thom. 153); this suggests that Jesus's true form was not the same as Thomas's and that he only appropriated Thomas's form as needed. Klijn summarizes the problem as follows: "It is not clear in which way Judas is supposed to be the twin of Christ. [...] We are dealing with the idea that Jesus is able to appear in whatever body he likes. He adapts himself to the particular circumstances. Since one of the apostles was named the 'Twin' according to an ancient Semitic tradition it was not difficult to consider him the twin of Christ in a special way;" Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 7.

[206] Bovon, "La vie des apôtres," 152-153.

[207] Bovon, "La vie des apôtres," 152-153.

and effectively embody the deity."[208] For instance, Pausanias, in his discussion on

sanctuaries of Hermes at Tanagra in Boiotia, describes the following tradition:

> About the sanctuaries of Hermes with the Ram and of the Champion, the story told of
>
> the first title is that Hermes turned away a plague for them by carrying a ram around
>
> the town wall, and so Kalamis made a statue of Hermes carrying the ram over his
>
> shoulders. At Hermes' festival, the most beautifully-shaped young man is chosen to
>
> go around the circuit of the wall with a lamb on his shoulders.[209]

The individual selected to represent the god is chosen based on his physical similarity to a

popular image of the god: a "most beautifully-shaped young man." Then, by carrying a lamb

on his shoulders, he more closely resembles the god. Those who participated in this festival

could, as Petridou argues, "see a god on the face of a human who has been visually

assimilated to a deity's popularised image."[210] Since a priest could appear in the form of his

patron god, the god could readily appear in the form of his priest.[211]

This phenomenon is also found in early Jewish writings, such as Josephus's account

of an epiphany experienced by Alexander the Great. Josephus recounts how Alexander the

Great bows before Jaddus, the Jewish high priest. When Alexander's actions are questioned,

he explains, "It was not before him that I prostrated myself but the God of whom he has the

honour to be high priest, for it was he whom I saw in my sleep dressed as he is now (*or* 'in

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[208] Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 38.

[209] *Descr*. 9.22.2; unless otherwise noted, all translations of Pausanias *Guide to Greece* come from Peter Levi, *Pausanias: Guide to Greece* (London: Penguin Group, 1979 [org. 1971]).

[210] Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 37.

[211] Petridou notes how such epiphanies "comment on a certain ambiguity and simultaneously a dynamic interplay between the body of the mortal and the body of the immortal;" Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 38.

his present form'—ἐν τῷ νῦν σχήματι)."[212] Alexander then describes his dream: "as I was considering with myself how I might become master of Asia, he (i.e., the dream-messenger in the form of the Jewish high priest) urged me not to hesitate but to cross over confidently, for he himself would lead my army and give over to me the empire of the Persians." In this dream, the messenger who appears in the form of the high priest delivers a message common of divine beings in such epiphanies. Alexander's explanation blurs the distinction between the Jewish God and his high priest. Without appealing to the Greco-Roman cultic parallels discussed above, Flannery-Dailey suggests that this conflation of the Jewish high priest with the divine resulted from the dress of the high priest.[213] She points to Josephus's description of the high priest's dress as he prepares to meet Alexander and to Alexander's statement, "I have beheld no one else in such robes, and on seeing him now I am reminded of the vision (τῆς κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ... ὄψεώς) and the exhortation, I believe that I have made this expedition under divine guidance (θείᾳ πομπῇ)."[214] Then, based on parallels in other early Jewish texts that suggest "the vestments of the high priest were thought to mirror the appearance of divine beings," Flannery-Dailey, concludes that "it is likely the case that Jaddus's vestments are an earthly copy of those of the angelic high priest, whom Alexander had seen in a dream."[215] Since the priest's appearance was patterned after the divine, the

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[212] Josephus, *Ant*. 11.333; adapted.

[213] Initially, Flannery-Dailey describes this narrative as a "puzzle" and "shocking ... in its ancient context," since usually dreams are a "reality which only divine beings (such as angels) and the dead are able to inhabit;" Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 207-208.

[214] Josephus, *Ant*. 11.335. Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 207-208.

[215] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 208. See Letter of Aristeas 97-99; 4QShirShabb[f] (4Q405) *Frag.* 23 *col.* II. She does not discuss the Greco-Roman parallels. Others have considered it possible that this account is based on a tradition of Hercules appearing to Alexander; see also Shaye JD Cohen, "Alexander the Great and Jaddus the High Priest According to Josephus," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 7-8 (1982): 49-63; and Robert Karl Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Traditio-Historical*

divine could readily appear in the form of his priest. This Greco-Roman practice, already adapted in a Jewish context by Josephus, is the most plausible basis for the literary motif in the apocryphal Acts that depicts Christ manifest in the form of his apostles.

In the apocryphal Acts, the apostles are described as similar to Jesus. Since the apostles appear similar to Jesus, Jesus could readily appear in the form of his apostles. This literary motif, which at first appears unique to the apocryphal Acts, likely borrows from a pagan and Jewish cultic practice and belief that saw priests embodying the manifestation of their patron gods or angelic counterparts. The presence of this motif in the apocryphal Acts suggests that some Christians were familiar with the idea that the divine could be manifest in the form of the divine's human representative, a religious leader. Beyond the literary context of the apocryphal Acts, however, there is little to suggest that Christians experienced manifestations of Jesus in the form of past apostles or current church leaders. One possible exception may be the manifestation of Pomponius found in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*.

In the previous chapter, two dreams from the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* were introduced in order to study the role of demon figures in Christian dreams. This included the well-known account of Perpetua wrestling an Egyptian. Here, we return to that dream with a focus on its beginning and the role of Pomponius.

> The day before we were to fight with the beasts I saw the following vision.
> Pomponius the deacon came to the prison gates and began to knock violently. I went
> out and opened the gate for him. He was dressed in an unbelted white tunic, wearing
> elaborate sandals. And he said to me: "Perpetua, come; we are waiting for you." Then

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Analysis (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1996), 242-245. Cohen also argues that the dream-messenger who appears in the form of the high priest is a divine being.

he took my hand and we began to walk through rough and broken country. At last we

came to the amphitheatre out of breath, and he led me into the centre of the arena.

Then he told me: "Do not be afraid. I am here, struggling with you [*conlaboro*

tecum]." Then he left. I looked at the enormous crowd who watched in astonishment.

I was surprised that no beasts were let loose on me.

The dream continues with the Egyptian entering the arena, Perpetua's transformation into a

man, her fight with the Egyptian, and her subsequent victory. Pomponius, who had promised

to struggle with her, does not appear in the latter half of the dream that describes her struggle.

Studies of this dream focus more heavily on Perpetua's encounter with the Egyptian

than on her interaction with Pomponius, even though that interaction comprises the entire

first quarter of the dream account. Nevertheless, a few scholars have noted that the

characterization of Pomponius in this dream presents him as a divine figure. Heffernan,

questioning the author's emphasis on Pomponius's sandals, suggests that Pomponius is a

"hybrid characterization" that blends Christian and non-Christian characteristics of divine

manifestations.[216] For Heffernan, the description of Pomponius's sandals and tunic, as well

as his narrative function as messenger and guide—reflect characterizations of

Hermes/Mercury.[217] Most scholars, however, have argued that Pomponius represents

Christ.[218] Some have suggested a parallel between Pomponius knocking at the prison door

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[216] Heffernan explains this "hybrid characterization" as the result of an actual "unconscious syncretism on the dreamer's [Perpetua's] part"; Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 257. Although it is important to consider the potential real-world effects of dream discourse, it is ultimately impossible for the historian to identify authentic elements of the dream itself (i.e., the dream experience or memory of the dream experience prior to its narration) or to describe a historical figure's "unconscious." See Introduction.

[217] Heffernan also suggests a possible parallel in Hermes's/Mercury's role as "dream sender"; see Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 257.

[218] In addition to Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 225, 257, 260; see Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 77; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 164; Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 114, 118; and Peter Habermehl, *Perpetua*

and Christ, who says in Revelation, "I stand at the door and knock."[219] Others have suggested

that the detailed description of Pomponius's tunic and sandals present him as divine.[220]

The appearance of Pomponius may be inconclusive—he may have appeared as a

pagan or Christian deity—but his final words to Perpetua are not. The most compelling

evidence that Pomponius should be understood as Christ is found in his final message to

Perpetua. Just before Pomponius abandons Perpetua to face her fate alone (*et abiit*), he tells

her not to fear (*Noli pavere*), promises that he will be with her in the arena (*hic sum tecum*),

and promises to struggle with her (*et conlaboro tecum*).[221] As Bremmer has argued, "His

promise that he would be toiling with her—*conlaboro tecum* is an exclusively Christian

term—likens him, to a certain extent, to Christ, or God, himself."[222] Amat is even more

explicit about the role of Pomponius: "Celui qu'il représente véritablement, le Christ."[223] She

shows how the promise of Pomponius reflects a theme found in other martyrdom literature

and iconography—that Christ is present with his martyrs in their suffering.[224] There is no

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und der Ägypter, oder, Bilder des Bösen im frühen afrikanischen Christentum: Ein Versuch zur 'Passio sanctarum Perpetua et Felicitatis' (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 140; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

[219] Rev 3:20 (NRSV). E.g., Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 255.

[220] Robeck says "glorified form" like martyrs in Rev 6:11; Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 60. Heffernan notes that the Greek version uses the same phrase for Christ's robes in Luke 23:11; Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 256-257. Bremmer identifies a parallel between the description of Pomponius's dress and that of the enormous agônothetês who is also a Christ figure; Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 114.

[221] *Pass*. *Perp*. 10.4. Heffernan notes that "fear not" (*Noli pavere*) is even more emphatic in MSS A, G, P and C which read: *Noli expavescere*; see Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 259.

[222] Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 114. Robeck also suggests that Pomponius's promise could be "understood as a word from the Lord himself;" Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 62.

[223] Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 77; cf. Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 163-164.

[224] "On reconnaît sans peine une allusion à la présence réelle du Christ aux côtés du martyr, présence reconnue dès le Martyre de Polycarpe et la Lettre des Églises de Lyon et de Vienne, et même illustrée par l'iconographie;" Amat, *Songes et Visions*, 77.

need, however, to appeal to other martyrdom accounts in order to understand Pomponius's

promise. Later in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, similar language is used by

Felicitas, a Christian slave imprisoned with Perpetua.[225] Felicitas contrasts the struggle to

give birth to her daughter with the struggle she would face in martyrdom: "'What I am

suffering now,' she replied, 'I suffer by myself. But then another will be inside me who will

suffer for me, just as I shall be suffering for him.'"[226] Her description of martyrdom as shared

suffering—Christ suffering for her (*patietur pro me*) and her for Christ (*ego pro illo passura

sum*) mirrors the promise of Pomponius to struggle alongside of Perpetua (*conlaboro tecum*).

In Pomponius's final words, he is revealed to be Christ.[227]

In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, Pomponius is a real person who exists

outside of Perpetua's dream. In fact, he is a leader in Perpetua's Christian community.

Pomponius first appears at the beginning of the martyrdom account after Perpetua has been

imprisoned. He is identified as one of two "blessed deacons" that minister to Perpetua and

the other imprisoned Christians (*benedicti diaconi qui nobis ministrabant*).[228] Although

Perpetua does not make it clear who had baptized her during the early days of her

imprisonment, it is not unreasonable to imagine one of these deacons officiating.[229] In any

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[225] Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 255.

[226] *Pass. Perp.* 15.6.

[227] Dörnberg argues that it would be better to understand Pomponius as an angel instead of Christ since "Seine Funktion und sein Auftreten lassen ihn vielmehr in die Nähe eines Engels rücken." Dörnberg continues, "Zu den antiken Funktionen der Engel gehört es, dass sie die Menschen führen und begleiten." This argument, however, is not convincing when one recalls that in the apocryphal Acts, Christ frequently appears in disguise as a young man or as an apostle to perform these very functions. See Dörnberg, Burkhard von, *Traum und Traumdeutung in der Alten Kirche*, 124, n.267.

[228] *Pass. Perp.* 3.7.

[229] *Pass. Perp.* 3.5. For the roles of deacons in Carthage during times of Tertullian and Cyprian—in particular, for circumstances that allowed them to baptize imprisoned Christians—see J. Patout Burns and Robin Margaret Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids, MI:

event, Pomponius is clearly presented as the primary Christian authority figure with whom Perpetua interacts. Pomponius is one of the two deacons who bribes the soldiers to allow Perpetua and the others into "a better part of the prison to refresh [themselves] for a few hours."[230] When Perpetua wants her baby brought to her in prison so that she might nurse him, Pomponius is the one whom Perpetua entrusts with the task.[231] No other Christian leader appears in Perpetua's writings.[232] Based on these few writings attributed to Perpetua, it seems clear that if Perpetua were to see Christ in the form of a Christian leader, that leader would be Pomponius. Since this is the only example of Christ manifest in the form of a Christian leader outside of the apocryphal Acts, the suggestion that both rely on the same epiphanic motif must remain tentative. Nevertheless, these accounts from the apocryphal Acts and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* all attest to the work of Christian authors in the second and third centuries who struggled to see Christ manifest in recognizable "Christian" forms.

Epiphanies of the Cross

The final image that will be considered in this chapter is the cross. Unlike the images considered previously, for the cross there is little evidence of artistic representations or epiphany narratives from the second and third centuries.[233] Beginning in the middle of the fourth century CE, however, the cross becomes prominent in Christian art and epiphany

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Eerdmans, 2014), 171, 182, 372.

[230] *Pass. Perp.* 3.7.

[231] *Pass. Perp.* 6.7.

[232] Saturus is mentioned by Perpetua as someone who had strengthened their faith (*nos aedificaverat*), but he is not identified as a leader (*Pass. Perp.* 4.5). A bishop and a presbyter appear in the dream of Saturus (*Pass. Perp.* 13.1-8), but this section is not attributed to Perpetua.

[233] See Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 130-141; Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003 [org. 1985]), 58-64.

accounts. This dissertation, for example, began with the well-known account of Constantine's vision of the cross.[234] Manifestations of the cross are worth consideration in this chapter because of their later prominence and because second-century Christian texts reveal some of the earliest developments of this epiphanic image.

Some Christian authors in the second and third centuries imagined the future parousia of Christ to feature a cross. This future epiphany will be considered below. Here, we begin with two texts from the second century that feature a cross in narratives of past epiphanies: Acts of John and the Gospel of Peter.[235] At the beginning of this chapter, Acts of John 87-93 provided an example of polymorphy employed for Christological purposes. As John recounts his various encounters with the Lord in different forms, he demonstrates that no single human form was sufficient to define the Lord.[236] John concludes this treatise, in Acts of John 94-102, with his memory of an epiphany experienced during the Lord's (supposed) crucifixion. Having fled the scene of the crucifixion, John hid in a cave on the Mount of Olives and wept. Then, during the crucifixion, when darkness had covered the earth, the Lord appeared to John.

> And my Lord stood in the middle of the cave and lit it up, and said, "John, to the
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> multitude down below in Jerusalem I am being crucified, and pierced with lances and
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> reeds, and gall and vinegar is given me to drink. But to you I am speaking, and pay

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[234] In addition to the appearance of the cross to Constantine as described by Eusebius (*Vit. Const.* 1.28; contrast with Lactantius, *Mort.* 44.4–6), consider the appearance of the cross above Jerusalem, described by Cyril (*ad. Const.* 4, 6). See also the late fifth-century Translatio Philippi in which Christ assumes the form of the apostle Philip and a luminous cross; see Frédéric Amsler, "La *Translatio Philippi*: Survie ou Seconde Mort de Philippe?" *Apocrypha* 22 (2011): 115-134; M.R. James, *Apocrypha Anecdota: A Collection of Thirteen Apocryphal Books and Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 158-163.

[235] On the date of Acts of John, see above. On the date of the Gospel of Peter, see Paul Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 169-172.

[236] For the Christological interpretations of this account, see above.

attention to what I say. I put it into your mind to come up to this mountain, so that you might hear matters needful for a disciple to learn from his teacher, and for a man to learn from his God." And having said this, he showed me a cross of light set up, and around the cross a great multitude which had no one form; and in the cross was one form and one likeness. And the Lord himself I beheld above the cross, not having a shape, but only a voice, and a voice not such as was familiar to us, but a sweet and kind voice and one truly divine, and it said to me, "It is necessary that one man should hear these things from me, O John, for I have need of someone who will hear. This cross of light is sometimes called the Word by me for your sakes, sometimes Mind, sometimes Jesus, sometimes Christ, sometimes Door, sometimes Way...[237]

After attributing numerous Christological epithets to this cross of light, the Lord explains its salvific purpose and contrasts this cross of light with the cross of the crucifixion: "This, then, is the cross which has united all things by the Word, and marked off things transient and inferior, and then compacted all into one. But this is not the cross of wood which you will see when you go down here, neither am I he who is upon the cross."[238] This revelation concludes with the Lord's ascension, witnessed only by John.

This manifestation of the cross of light reveals the core theology of Acts of John. A detailed treatment of this theology is beyond the scope of this chapter.[239] Here I will briefly describe the differences and similarities between this manifestation of a cross and other accounts, focusing on its luminescent appearance and its relation to the simultaneous manifestation of the Lord.

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[237] Acts John 97-98.

[238] Acts John 99.

This passage from Acts of John may be the earliest account of a manifestation of a cross of light. The description of the cross's appearance and function seems to develop out of the theology of Acts of John. Just as accounts of the Lord's polymorphy had revealed that the Lord's true appearance was beyond earthly forms, here it is revealed that the true cross is also beyond earthly forms. Since earthly forms are inconsequential in Acts of John, salvation could not be achieved through a wooden cross. If the author wanted to affirm with other Christians that salvation comes through the cross, it was necessary to introduce a different kind of cross.[240] The complex Christological and soteriological explanations that accompany descriptions of the cross in Acts of John are not found in other accounts of cross epiphanies. Nevertheless, some features of this epiphany do recur: the luminescence of the cross and its relationship to the Lord.

These similarities that Acts of John shares with other accounts of cross-epiphanies may be coincidental. Although light is often associated with manifestations of the cross in later accounts—such as those of Constantine and Cyril—one need not suppose any literary dependence. As has been noted, light is a common motif in epiphany accounts. In fact, even in this account from Acts of John, light appears before the cross appears: "My Lord stood in the middle of the cave and lit it up."[241] Another similarity between Acts of John and later accounts of cross epiphanies is the identification of the cross as a form of the Lord.[242] In Acts

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[239] For theology behind this vision in Acts of John, see Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis 2*, 600-614, 656-677.

[240] Some have attributed the origin of this cross of light to the Stauros-Horos figure in Valentinian theology; cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.3.5. Alexander Böhlig, "Zum Vorstellung vom Lichtkreuz in Gnostizismus und Manichäismus," in *Gnosis und Synkretismus: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur spätantiken Religionsgeschichte, I* (ed. Alexander Böhlig; Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 135-163; Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis 2*, 611-612, 656-657. Yet, as Lalleman notes, similar descriptions are found in non-Valentinian texts; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 188-190.

[241] Acts John 97.

[242] E.g., in *Translatio Philippi* Christ assumes the form of the apostle Philip and a luminous cross; see Amsler,

of John, the voice of the Lord that is heard from the cross, the Christological epithets applied to the cross, and the cross's salvific function as Logos all suggest, as Lalleman has argued that "[t]he cross of light which John sees is best interpreted as a manifestation of Christ himself."[243] The reason the Lord appears in the form of the cross in Acts of John, seems to be theologically motivated in a way that differs from other similar accounts.[244] As will be seen below, the manifestation of a cross typically functions to identify Christ. In Acts of John, however, the Lord is recognized by John immediately, and it is the Lord who introduces and identifies the cross.[245]

This "cross of light" in the Acts of John has often been compared with the animated cross from the Gospel of Peter.[246] When the Akhmim fragment of the Gospel of Peter was discovered in the winter of 1887, it was immediately considered to represent a Christology similar to that found in Acts of John.[247] Scholars found evidence of docetism in several passages of the Gospel, including the climatic narrative of the resurrection.[248] In that scene,

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115-134; James, *Apocrypha Anecdota*, 158-163.

[243] Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," 107; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 187-188. A. Böhlig agrees: "Jesus selbst wird mit dem Kreuz identifiziert. Infolgedessen werden alle auf Jesus angewendeten Prädikate auf das Kreuz übertragen;" Böhlig, "Zum Vorstellung vom Lichtkreuz," 148. See also Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis 2*, 605.

[244] This argument will be developed below.

[245] Cf. Acts John 97-98.

[246] Several scholars have considered the talking cross of light from Acts of John to be a parallel to the animated cross of Peter's Gospel; e.g., Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (trans. J.A. Baker; London: Darnton, Longman & Todd, 1964 [org. 1958]), 267; H. Stocks, "Zum Petrusevangelium," *NKZ* 13 (1903): 307; Henry Barclay Swete, *ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΕΤΡΟΝ: The Akhmîm Fragment of the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 18; and Léon Vaganay, *L'évangile de Pierre* (2nd ed.; Paris: Libraire Le Coffre, 1930), 299.

[247] This was due in part to the testimony of Serapion as reported by Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.12.3-6. This Gospel is also mentioned in *Hist. eccl.* 3.3.1-2; Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 10.17; and possibly Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 106.3. For the most recent treatment of this passage, see Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*, 97-99.

[248] E.g., Swete identified five key elements in the Gospel of Peter that he thought best demonstrated its

guards witness the extremely tall Lord exiting the tomb led by two angelic beings and

followed by a cross.

> [The guards] saw three men come out from the sepulchre, two of them supporting the
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> other and a cross following them and the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but that
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> of him who was being led reached beyond the heavens. And they heard a voice out of
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> the heavens crying, 'Have you preached to those who sleep?', and from the cross
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> there was heard the answer, 'Yes.'[249]

The giant Lord and the walking, talking cross suggested to many a docetism similar to that

represented by the cross of light in Acts of John. There are, however, significant differences

between these two texts. Unlike the Acts of John which characterizes its polyonymous cross

as a "Cross of Light," the Gospel of Peter presents its animated and articulate cross with no

luminous characteristics. In further contrast to the Acts of John, where the body nailed to the

cross is unrelated to the divine Lord, in the Gospel of Peter even the crucified corpse is

explicitly the Lord's: "And then they drew the nails from the hands *of the Lord*."[250] The

sanctity of this corpse is confirmed by what happens when it touches the ground: "The whole

earth shook and there was great fear."[251] The Gospel of Peter does not deny the materiality of

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docetism: one of the five was the animated cross; see Swete, *ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ*, xxxviii. See also Adolf von Harnack, *Bruchstücke des Evangeliums und der Apokalypse des Petrus* (Texte und Untersuchungen; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1893), 30, 37; J. Rendel Harris, *The Newly-Recovered Gospel of St. Peter with Full Account of The Same* (New York: James Pott & Co., 1893), 35, 63; A. Lods, *L'évangile et l'Apocalypse de Pierre* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1893), 56-57; Stocks, "Zum Petrusevangelium," 296; and Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Petrus das kürzlich gefundene Fragment seines Textes* (Erlangen; Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1893), 37.

[249] Gos. Pet. 39-42; trans. Elliott, adapted. For the Greek text, I rely on the recent critical edition, Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*, 177-205. See also Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, eds., *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse: Die griechischen Fragmente mit deutscher und englischer Übersetzung* (GCS 11; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 32-49.

[250] Gos. Pet. 21; emphasis added.

[251] Gos. Pet. 21.

the Lord. It is, therefore, no surprise that scholars today reject most of the original arguments about the animated cross and the docetic Christology in the Gospel of Peter.[252] Today, there is little agreement on the meaning of the animated cross in Peter's Gospel. Some consider it an apocalyptic motif or the intrusion of "popular religion;" others suggest that it symbolizes victory, a cosmic tree, the tree of life, or the communal ascent of the righteous dead.[253] These theories do not, however, give sufficient consideration to parallels within the broader context of Greco-Roman epiphany narratives.[254]

In Greco-Roman accounts of epiphanies, gods were recognized as divine when they revealed their forms as exceedingly beautiful, extraordinarily tall, or capable of miraculous transformation—including metamorphoses and the ability to appear or vanish at will. Yet in a polytheistic culture such demonstrations of divinity were not sufficient to identify a *particular* god. Although Aphrodite's attractiveness was renowned, Demeter could also appear extraordinarily beautiful. Likewise both goddesses could transform themselves and

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[252] The watershed was an Emory dissertation and subsequent article by Jerry McCant, wherein he argued that the so-called docetic features of the Gospel of Peter were not self-evident; see Jerry McCant, "The Gospel of Peter: The Docetic Question Re-examined" (Diss., Emory University, 1978), ; later published in part as Jerry McCant, "The Gospel of Peter: Docetism Reconsidered," *NTS* 30 (1984): 258-73. His arguments against the docetic reading of the Gospel of Peter have been strengthened by Peter M. Head, "On the Christology of the Gospel of Peter," *VC* 46 (1992): 209-24; and, most recently, by Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*, 157-165.

[253] For cross as sign of triumph or victory, see Vaganay, *L'évangile de Pierre*, 299 ;David F Wright, "Apologetic and Apocalyptic: The Miraculous in the Gospel of Peter," in *The Miracles of Jesus* (eds. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg; Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1984), 412; Tobias Nicklas, "Resurrection in the Gospels of Matthew and *Peter*: Some Developments," in *Life Beyond Death in Matthew's Gospel Religious Metaphor or Bodily Reality?* (eds. Wim Weren, Huub Van De Sandt, and Joseph Verheyden; Biblical Tools and Studies Leuven; Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2011), 39. For cross as apocalyptic cosmic tree, see M.G. Mara, *Évangile de Pierre: Introduction, Texte critique, Traduction, Commentaire et Index* (Sources Chrétiennes 201; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1973), 189. For cross as a paradisiacal "tree of life," see Harris, *Newly-Recovered Gospel of St. Peter*, 63; Stocks, "Zum Petrusevangelium," 308-313. For cross as the communal ascent of the righteous dead, see John Dominic Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 387-393, 387. For cross as a "popularizing trend," see, Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*, 65.

[254] Recently, I have argued that the animated cross is best understood within the context of Greco-Roman epiphany narratives and that it parallels traditions of talking trees; see Jason Robert Combs, "A Walking, Talking Cross: The Polymorphic Christology of the Gospel of Peter," *Early Christianity* 5 (2014): 198-219.

reveal their divinity through supernatural height.[255] Nevertheless, there were attributes, both

features and accoutrements, unique to each god and goddess by which a particular deity

could be properly identified. For instance, Artemidorus explained that unrecognizable gods

and goddesses could be identified by their attributes or accoutrements (ἀπὸ τῶν ἐκτός)

because "gods have characteristic signs" (οἱ θεοὶ ἔχουσι παράσημα).[256]Athena had her aegis,

Dionysus, his vines, and Asclepius, the serpent intwined staff.[257]

    We have already seen this kind of identification in chapter one, when the second-

century orator, Aelius Aristides, described his encounter with the goddess Athena: "Then not

much later, Athena appeared with her aegis and the beauty and magnitude and the whole

form of the Athena of Phidias in Athens."[258] Athena was recognized as divine because she

possessed "the beauty and magnitude" of a goddess. More particularly, she was identifiable

as divine because she possessed "the beauty and magnitude" of the famous statue, "Athena of

Phidias in Athens." While Athena's beauty and stature demonstrated her divinity, these did

not make her identifiable as Athena. It is her similarity to the statue and, more importantly,

an accoutrement of that statue that identified her as the goddess Athena. As Aristides

narrates, "Athena appeared *with her aegis*." It is that aegis that Aristides recognized from the

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[255] E.g., compare the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.

[256] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 2.44; trans. Robert J. White, *Artemidorus: The Interpretation of Dreams* (Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1975).

[257] On recognizing gods by their attributes or accoutrements see Burkhard Gladigow, "Epiphanie, Statuette, Kultbild. Griechische Gottesvorstellungen im Wechsel von Kontext und Medium," in *Genres in Visual Representation: proceedings of a conference held in 1986 by invitation of the Werner-Reimers-Stiftung in Bad Homburg (Federal Republic of Germany)* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 98-121; here, 101; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 153-154, 158-164; and Versnel, "Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," 42-55.

[258] *Sacred Tales* 2.41; trans. C.A. Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales* (Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1968), 231.

statue of "Athena of Phidias in Athens" and remembered from the tales of the *Odyssey*.[259] As

Aristides tried to convince his two friends and foster sister of what he was seeing, he pointed

to the goddess, cried out her name, and then "pointed out the aegis."[260] Athena was

identifiable as Athena because she bore the aegis.

Even when a god was not identifiable by comparison to a particular statue, a common

accoutrement could still function as the distinguishing sign. In Hippocrates, *Epistulae*, the

author describes how he recognized Aesclepius when the god had "appeared near [him]" not

by comparison to a particular statue, but by the presence of the god's favored serpents:

"Asclepius did not appear, as the statues of him are wont to do, gentle and calm, but in a

lively posture and rather frightening to behold."[261] Despite the unexpected difference in

Asclepius's appearance, one defining feature remained: "Serpents followed him."[262] Even

though the god's appearance and posture were entirely different from those statues familiar

to the author, Asclepius was still identifiable because of his sign, his serpents.

One of the most vivid accounts of a god signified by particular accoutrements comes

from the *Hymn to Dionysus*. The hymn begins with the god appearing in disguise as a prince

lost at sea. He is captured by pirates and then, at the end of the hymn, identifies himself as

"Dionysus the mighty roarer."[263] By the end, however, such an introduction is entirely

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[259] The goddess told Aristides, as he recounts: "I myself was indeed both Odysseus and Telemachus, and she must help me;" *Sacred Tales* 2.42; trans. Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 232.

[260] *Sacred Tales* 2.41; trans. Behr, *Sacred Tales*, 231-232.

[261] Hippocrates, *Ep.*, 15; #448 in Emma J. Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein, eds., *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1998 [org. 1945])), 258-259.

[262] Hippocrates, *Ep.*, 15; #448 in Edelstein and Edelstein, eds., *Asclepius,* 258-259.

[263] *Hymn Dion. l.* 56; trans. Martin L. West, *Homeric Hymns; Homeric Apocrypha; Lives of Homer*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 184-189.

unnecessary because the god has identified himself already through various manifestations. After he miraculously escapes their bonds, Dionysus reveals himself through the sudden appearance of a "sweet and fragrant" stream of wine flowing through the ship. Then, as if that was not sufficient for them to identify the god of wine, a flowering vine full of grapes appears on the highest sail and spreads down the mast. Finally, loud-roaring Dionysus (Διόνυσος ἐρίβρομος) transforms himself into a "loud-roaring lion" (λέων ... μέγα δ' ἔβραχεν)—an image at the heart of Euripides's *Bacchae*.[264] In contrast to the appearance of Athena discussed above, here it is not a single accoutrement that identifies the deity. Instead, Dionysus is distinguished by multiple symbols representing his "divine sphere of influence."[265]

Although this hymn predates the Acts of John and Gospel of Peter by centuries, the motifs attested in this hymn persist well into the Christian era.[266] Mosaics and other reliefs depict Dionysus surrounded by vines or accompanied by lions and bears.[267] Pausanias, writing in the second century CE, includes an account of the Eleans who "assert that the god [Dionysus] attends their festival, the Thyia."[268] How do the Eleans know that Dionysus is

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[264] *Hymn Dion. ll.* 35-47; trans. West.

[265] Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 71. A recent study of this hymn demonstrates how each of the divine signs would have evoked for the audience "an entire dionysiac mythology;" Dominique Jaillard, "The Seventh *Homeric Hymn* to Dionysus: An Epiphanic Sketch," in *The Homeric Hymns: Interpretative Essays* (ed. Andrew Faulkner; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 150.

[266] On the persistence of these themes and the influence of Homeric Hymns on later traditions, see J.M. Bremer, "Greek Hymns," in *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (ed. H.S. Versnel; Studies in Greek and Roman Religion 2; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 203-215; and Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 115.

[267] On Dionysiac imagery in the Roman era, see Paul Zanker and Björn C. Ewald, *Living with Myths: The Imagery of Roman Sacrophagi* (trans. J. Slater; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012 [org. 2004]), 149-157, 318-334; consider also a number of important articles collected in the recent volume, Renate Schlesier, ed., *A Different God?: Dionysos and Ancient Polytheism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).

[268] Pausanias, *Descr.*, 6.26.1.

present? It is through the miraculous transformation of three sealed pots of water, which the Elean priests place in their temple. According to Pausanius, "the most respected Elean citizens" bear witness that, when unsealed, the water in the pots is discovered to have become wine.[269] The miraculous appearance of wine attests to the presence of the god of wine.

So far I have only demonstrated how a god's accoutrement can make that god identifiable. In the Gospel of Peter, however, the animated cross does more than identify the risen Lord. It moves on its own and even speaks as though it were the Lord; and, in the Acts of John, the cross of light is explicitly identified as a form of the Lord. This confusion between divine beings and their signs is also found in pagan epiphany narratives. A divine accoutrement can function as more than a mere sign, it can also manifest fully the god it signifies. In such instances, the accoutrement is often revealed to be a divine form through its animation or speech.

One example of animated divine signs was already seen in the *Hymn to Dionysus*. There, a stream of wine miraculously flowed on its own, a vine suddenly appeared and grew at a supernatural rate, representative animals also mysteriously appeared on the boat, and one of those animals spoke. Dionysus was signified by them all. Moreover, Dionysus could also be understood as manifest in each of them. The possibility of the god being completely present through his sign was demonstrated in that hymn by Dionysus's final metamorphosis. In that instance, Dionysus was not simply represented *by* a lion, the god transformed himself *into* a lion. The god's presence was fully manifest in the object that symbolized him, because he had become that object.

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[269] Pausanias, *Descr.*, 6.26.1-2.

The understanding that a god could invest a divine symbol with his or her divinity meant that certain divine symbols alone could signify a god's presence. The god's identifying accoutrement could appear in place of the god.[270] For instance, Pausanias's Eleans found Dionysus's presence fully manifest through wine despite the absence of any other divine form.[271] Georgia Petridou, in her recent study of epiphanies in ancient Greek literature, calls this a "metonymy epiphany" because part of the god manifests the whole.

> A metonymy epiphany is, for instance, when Dionysus manifests himself as wine; when Demeter or Kore manifest themselves as wheat or an ear of corn or even as flour; or when the Muses appear as bees, which were traditionally associated with poetry and wisdom. [... T]hey do not involve the whole of the divine body, but only a fraction, in particular, a fraction of the divine substance; or better a symbol of the divine sphere of influence.[272]

In the *Hymn to Dionysus*, the god is explicitly a prince and a lion, but implicitly he is also a bear, a vine, and a flood of wine. As Petridou so concisely explains, "Dionysus is the wine-god. Dionysus is wine."[273]

That animated signs might act as the god they symbolize is also clear in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* when Asclepius appears in a dream to an unnamed Roman at Epidaurus. Again the god is recognized by his common accoutrement or symbol: "He stood by the bed,

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[270] As Petridou explains, "the divine presence can be epitomised by the deity's sacred plant, animal, weaponry, and the divine paraphernalia in general;" Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 67. See also Versnel, "Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," 47; and Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 10.

[271] For additional examples, see Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 62-76. See discussion in Chapter 1.

[272] Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 71.

[273] Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies," 73; see also Versnel, "Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany," 51.

holding a rustic staff in his left hand, stroking his long beard with his right, just as he is wont to be seen in his temple."[274] Here, however, it is his message about that symbol that is important: "Look at this serpent that twines around my staff [...] For I shall disguise myself as my serpent [*vertar in hunc*]."[275] The god was true to his word. The next day a massive golden serpent slithered into the Temple and was recognized as Asclepius himself. The symbol of the god became more than just a representation of the god's presence, it was the god, present. What's more, even though Asclepius as a serpent sets sail with the Roman emissary, he also remained at his temple in Epidaurus as promised. The god had explained to the Roman, "I shall come [with you as a serpent], and leave a phantom of myself behind (*simulacraque nostra relinquam*)."[276] Asclepius is fully present in two locations and in two forms at the same time, and one of those forms is his animated sign.

In this Greco-Roman literary context it should come as no surprise that Christian texts from the second century would rely on a similar trope to identify a divine being in an epiphanic setting. Furthermore, given the increase in the number and type of associations between Christ and cross appearing in second- and third-century literature, it is equally unsurprising that the resurrected Lord appears with/as the cross in the Acts of John and the Gospel of Peter. Just as Dionysus was known as the *God of the Vine* because of his association with wine, the Christian Lord who returned from death on the cross—or, in Acts of John, who saves his chosen through a cross of light—could be portrayed as *God of the Cross*.

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[274] Ovid, *Metam.* 15.653-656; trans. Mary M. Innes, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid* (New York: Penguin, 1955).

[275] Ovid, *Metam.* 15.659-661; trans. Innes; all Latin added from Frank Justus Miller, *Ovid: Metamorphoses, Books IX–XV*; LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984 [org. 1916]).

[276] Ovid, *Metam.* 15.658; trans. Innes.

The significance of the cross as a symbol in Christianity developed rapidly. Theological speculation on the nature of the cross and its relationship to Jesus began already in the first century.[277] According to some first-century Gospels, the marks from the cross on Jesus's hands and feet allowed his disciples to recognize him after his resurrection.[278] By the second and third centuries, the cross began to function as Christ's identifying sign in the same way that signs functioned for pagan gods. Justin Martyr saw the image of the cross everywhere as a sign of Christ:

[The cross] is the greatest symbol of [Christ's] power and authority, as can be shown from things you can see. Reflect on all things in the universe [and consider] whether they could be governed or held together in fellowship without this figure. For the sea cannot be traversed unless the sign of victory, which is called a sail, remain fast in the ship; the land is not plowed without it; similarly diggers and mechanics do not do their work except with tools of this form. The human figure differs from the irrational animals precisely in this, that man that stands erect and can stretch out his hands, and has on his face, stretched down from the forehead, what is called the nose, through which goes breath for the living creature—this exhibits precisely the figure of the cross. So it was said through the prophet, "The breath before our face is Christ the Lord." Even your own symbols display the power of this figure—on the standards and trophies, with which you make all your solemn processions, using these [cross-

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[277] E.g., 1 Cor 1:17-18; Gal 6:14; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20.

[278] E.g., John 20:20, 25-27; cf. Luke 24:40. Note, however, that Luke 24:40 in absent in some manuscripts; see Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 218-219. Regarding the purpose for Jesus showing his hands in John 20:20, Grant Osborne explains, "stress is not so much on physical proof as on recognition;" Grant R. Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 167; see also Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 164, 178.

shaped objects] as signs of authority, even though without understanding what you're

doing. Then you set up the images of your deceased emperors on this figure, and in

the inscriptions call them gods.[279]

When Justin describes the image of the cross reflected in the human form, he connects that

image directly with Christ through the creative exegesis of Lamentations 4:20—the human

figure with its breath "exhibits precisely the figure of the cross" and, paraphrased, the

prophet says, "The breath before our face is Christ the Lord." By the beginning of the third

century, pagans ridicule Christians as worshippers of the cross.[280] Tertullian responds first by

insisting that "fundamentally the cross is a symbol" (*crucis qualitas signum est*) and then by

defending the superiority of this Christian symbol over the shapeless log (*ligni informis*)

representing Athenian Pallas or Pharian Ceres."[281]

Second- and third-century interpretations of the "sign of the Son of man" from

Matthew 24 reveal the cross functioning as Christ's identifying sign at his parousia—the

ultimate epiphany. In Matthew 24:30, Jesus responded to his disciples' question about the

signs of his parousia:

For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the

coming of the Son of man. [... T]hen will appear the sign of the Son of man in

heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of

man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out

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[279] Justin, *1 Apol*. 55.3-8 (Richardson, ECF); ellipses added. See also *Dial*. 86; 91.2 and 112; Tertullian, *Adv Jud*. 10.7-14; *Nat*. 1.12; *Oct*. 29.

[280] Tertullian, *Nat*. 1.12.1; *Oct*. 12.4; 29.6.

[281] Tertullian, *Nat*. 1.12 (ANF). Latin from CSEL.

his angels.[282]

Christians read this passage in a way that presumed gods were accompanied by their signs. For instance, compare the account in Apocalypse of Peter to that in Matthew. In the Apocalypse of Peter, Jesus responds to the same question differently:

> For the coming of the Son of God will not be manifest, but like the lightening which shineth from the east to the west, so shall I come on the clouds of heaven with a great host in my glory; with my cross going before my face will I come in my glory, shining seven times as bright as the sun will I come in my glory, with all my saints, my angels.[283]

The "sign of the Son of man" was replaced with the Son of Man's sign, his cross. The Epistle of the Apostles 16, Apocalypse of Peter 1 (Ethiopic), and Apocalypse of Elijah 3.2-4, all rewrite Matthew 24 in a way that associates the "sign of the Son of man" with the cross of Christ.[284] The most succinct interpretation of Matthew 24:30 appears in a surviving fragment from Hippolytus's commentary, written in the early third century CE: "The sign that [Matthew] mentioned is the sign of the cross of our Savior."[285] In the future, climactic

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[282] Matt 24:27, 30-31a (RSV). Apoc. Pet. may also allude to Matt 16:27, "coming with angels to judge," and to Acts 26:13, Paul's experience of Jesus as "brighter than the sun."

[283] Apoc. Pet. 1; trans. C. Detlef G. Müller. "Apocalypse of Peter." Pages 620-638 in *New Testament Apocrypha, Volume II: Writings Relating to the Apostles; Apocalypses and Related Subjects,* Edited by Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Cambridge; Louisville: J. Clarke & Co; Westminster / John Knox Press, 1992).

[284] Some who have relied on these parallels for their interpretation of the Gos. Pet. have acknowledged that they are based on a particular exegesis of Matt 24:30, but they have not considered just how different the interpretation of Matthew is from the function of the cross in the Gos. Pet.; e.g., Vaganay, *L'évangile de Pierre*, 299; Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 268; Mara, *Évangile de Pierre*, 188.

[285] "Der Äthiope. Hippolytus hat erklärt und gesagt: Das Zeichen, welches er erwähnt, ist das Zeichen des Kreuzes unseres Heilandes, dann werden weinen alle Völker der Erde, d. h. alle Sünder, die auf der Erde wohnen. / Der Araber. Er sagt: Das Zeichen, das erwähnt wird, ist das Zeichen des erlösenden Kreuzes. Dann werden alle Geschlechter der Erde wehklagen, d.h. alle Sünder, die sich von der Gesamtheit der Geschlechter getrennt haben" (*GSC* 1:206, *ll*. 11-17). Prieur considers this the first explicit connection of the sign with the cross: "[Hippolyte] est aussi le premier qui identifie explicitement le signe de Matthieu 24, 30 à la croix;" Jean-Marc Prieur, *La croix chez les Pères: du IIe au début du IVe siècle* (Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 8; Strasbourg:

manifestation of Christ to the world, the cross was expected to precede him as his identifying sign.[286]

In the Acts of John, the cross of light is associated with the Lord, but it does not function to identify him. The animated cross in the Gospel of Peter, however, does function as the Lord's identifying sign. The author of the Gospel of Peter framed the resurrection as a moment when the Lord's identity is revealed. During the resurrection scene, Jesus is never named. The absence of any titular identification during the resurrection scene stands in stark contrast with the rest of the Gospel of Peter. In the extant fragment, in almost every passage leading up to the Lord's burial, the author makes the identification of the Lord explicit through the excessive application of Christological titles.[287] In the resurrection narrative, however, his identity is ambiguous. Not a single christological title is used until the event has concluded and those who witnessed it declare, "Truly he was the Son of God."[288] The location of this statement is significant. Whereas the Gospels of Matthew and Mark place a similar proclamation at the moment of Jesus's death on the cross, the author of Peter's Gospel makes it the response to witnessing the resurrected Lord accompanied by a cross.[289] Although the Lord's extraordinary height already made him identifiable as divine—he is taller than the two luminous young men who descended from heaven and entered the tomb—

Université Marc Bloch, 2006), 137.

[286] For other late accounts of the cross at the parousia, see W. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore* (trans. Keane; London: Hutchinson, 1896), 233-234.

[287] "Lord" (Gos. Pet. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 19, 21, 24); "Son of God" (Gos. Pet. 6, 9); "King of Israel" (Gos. Pet. 7, 11); and "savior" (Gos. Pet. 13). Once "the Lord" (Gos. Pet. 24) is buried, he is not identified by a title until the manifestation of the animated cross. Then those who witness it declare, "Truly he was the Son of God" (Gos Pet. 45).

[288] Gos. Pet. 45 (ANF).

[289] Matt 27:54; Mark 15:39; a parallel to Luke's proclamation of Jesus's innocence (Luke 23:47) appears at Gos. Pet. 28.

it did not demonstrate his particular identity.[290] It is the appearance of the cross that revealed his identity.[291]

With the prominence of the cross in Christian discourse, which included the idea that the cross could be seen in mundane objects everywhere, one might expect more epiphanies of the cross in this early period. Before the fourth century, however, there is no clear evidence for the cross in Christian art and no evidence for the cross in epiphany accounts outside of the Acts of John, Gospel of Peter, and the descriptions of Christ's parousia.[292] Yet, within these accounts of three very different types of epiphany, there is evidence that some early Christians imagined the cross appearing as the identifying sign of their God.

Conclusion

Just like other Greco-Roman authors, Christians wrote about divine beings manifesting themselves in order to guide, protect, heal, teach, foretell, and to accept new

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[290] Gos. Pet. 36-37, 40.

[291] For more on the cross as a form of Christ, see Combs, "Walking, Talking Cross," 198-219.

[292] One possible exception is the manifestation of Christ through the martyr Blandina as she hung in the form of the cross: "in their torment with their physical eyes they saw in the person of their sister him who was crucified for them;" *Martyr of Lyons* 41; trans. Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 75. This manifestation of Christ best understood in the context of *imitatio Christi*; see Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

devotees. Some Christians adopted the popular pagan images of the young man or shepherd as manifestations of Christ, others imagined Christ in the uniquely Christian images of an apostle, a deacon, or even the cross. All of these images with their different origins and functions attest to Christian participation in the broader Greco-Roman discourse on epiphanies. They also reveal the challenge faced by Christians who hoped to distinguish the manifestations of their own divine beings from those described by non-Christians. The early history of Christian art attests to a similar challenge and provides an informative parallel. Early Christian art was characterized by popular pagan images adopted for their potential Christian valance and eventually by unique Christian images fashioned from popular scriptural traditions. We have now seen that the early Christian discourse on epiphanies should likewise be characterized as a period of adoption and innovation.

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