

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

SIGNS OF LIFE: LATE ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY, NARRATIVE,
AND THE PARADOX OF LIVING IMAGES

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For my parents, Dan and Nora, whose love of learning led me down many paths

“There is no one rule governing images, nor one set form, nor one single skill or material for their making” (Ἀγαλμάτων δὲ οὐχ εἷς νόμος οὐδὲ εἷς τρόπος οὐδὲ τέχνη μία οὐδὲ ὕλη μία)

–Maximus of Tyre, *Oration 2*

“Lifeless to those a definition for what life is”

–Del the Ghost Rapper aka Del the
Funky Homosapien aka Terren
Delvon Jones, *Clint Eastwood*

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A Note on Style, Citations, and Translations

In matters of style and formatting, I have followed the requirements of the University of Chicago Dissertation Office's "University-Wide Requirements for the Ph.D. Dissertation." After that, I have made every attempt at consistency in following the guidance of the Chicago Manual of Style 17 and the *Society of Biblical Literature Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014) for titles and any short titles or abbreviations of ancient works. I hope that any future readers of this dissertation will forgive me for any remaining variation between, for example, Latin and English titles. When the *SBL Handbook* did not contain a Latin title, I followed those listed in G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). I deviate from the recommendations of the *SBL Handbook*, however, by providing full text information for any ancient work from which I cite and analyze text in the body or notes of the dissertation. In instances when I only refer to a passage or cite secondary literature that does the same, I do not include a full text citation either in the notes or bibliography. Texts analyzed in more detail at the core of chapters 2–5 are abbreviated in English (e.g., *Mart. Mark*).

New Testament citations come from the 28th ed. of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, eds. Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft); Septuagint citations come from *Septuaginta: id est Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs, rev. Robert Hanhart (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft). At a few points, I refer to stand lexica and grammars without full citation. These include Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) (LSJ), Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Lampe), Walter E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1939) (Crum), and Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956) (Smyth).

All translations in this project are mine unless noted, though when there are well-known and effective published translations available, I typically include this information in the notes and bibliography. In these cases, I have typically rendered the Greek and Latin myself (for the Coptic *Homily on the Virgin* in chapter 5, I follow the translator more closely), but particularly when I am dealing only with small portions of texts or the translation is in the same volume as the edition, and I have been influenced in my reading by the published translation, as especially in chapter 1), I cite the translation as “revised” to acknowledge my intellectual debt. Partly to this end, I have also chosen to include in-line Greek, Latin, and Coptic for readers to compare the text themselves. Some readers may find this tedious, some (like myself) may find it gratifying. I hope that readers in the former group will forgive this perhaps non-standard practice, either allowing their eyes simply to pass over these parenthetical contributions or appreciating the effort I’ve made to make these materials substantively available to those who might be interested.

Abstract

The core of this dissertation consists of close readings of late ancient Christian narratives with a focus on the role of material images within them and how, through narratological means (such as focalization, characterization, pacing, the use of space, etc.), the authors of these texts affirm, upset, and complicate audience expectations surrounding the encounter of divinity in material objects. Chapter 1 identifies four distinct but interrelated arguments that occurred repeatedly from the second to ninth centuries as Christians grappled rhetorically with the tension between the phenomenological effect of epiphanic images and their status as lifeless matter. I characterize these as ontological, epistemological, demonological, and psychological/ethical arguments. Chapters 2–5 show how different narratives from the fourth through eighth centuries explored and capitalized on this paradox of living images by playing paradoxically in the spaces between animate and inanimate that characterized both human beings and material images in Late Antiquity.

The central narratives analyzed in this project, gathered for comparison for the first time, are the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, the *Martyrdom of Mark*, the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, and the *Image of Berytus*. Despite varied dates, concerns, plots, and purposes, each narrative features “living images” as key characters in their tales. These characters—two healing saints who travel between shrine and image, a martyred apostle, a shattered statue, a talking stone sphinx, monstrous cannibals, and, finally, bleeding icons of Jesus and Mary—along with the ways they are encountered, present opportunities for the authors of these texts not only to carve out Christian spaces for material cult, but also to reflect upon the disjunctions between spiritual and corporeal life by blurring and redrawing the boundaries of what counts as living. The authors of these narratives put forth such reflections not directly, but

by playing on, affirming, and subverting knowledge about the (in)abilities of images to mediate the presence of divinity in the world, and in particular by selectively attributing “signs of life” (such as movement, speech, sight, blood) to Christians, pagans, Jews, and material objects.

The project contributes to the study of late ancient Christianity primarily by offering fresh analyses of Christian texts and providing models for incorporating evidence from narratives into studies of ancient materialities. By positioning my argument and methodology in relation to the study of icon veneration in the era before the Iconoclast Controversy, as well as in relation to how the “New Materialisms” movement has influenced recent work in the history of Christianity, I show how sophisticated narrative poetics complicate retrievals of ancient Christian views on the relations between images and divinity. By focusing on the particular, diverse narratological choices made by rhetorically interested human agents, however, I argue that a dynamic, flexible ancient Christian discourse on images allowed them to navigate both the problems and opportunities presented by material images, rejecting the special objects of others as “lifeless idols” but experiencing their own as “living images” with links to divine realities.

Introduction:

Between Living and Lifeless

Andrew of Crete, an eighth-century bishop active in the Byzantine ecclesiastical politics of his day, impressed the following image upon his listeners near the beginning of a homily *On Human Life and Those who have Died*:

A human being is the most complicated and intricately-designed tool, the most precious lump of clay, the border between life and death (τὸ ζωῆς καὶ θανάτου μεθόριον); the compound and conglomerate of intellect with matter (νοερὸν ἐν ὕλῃ), the product of reason and senses, the human image not-wrought-by-hands (ὁ ἀχειρότευκτος ἀνδριάς), the living statue (τὸ ἔμψυχον ἄγαλμα), the figure of renown (τὸ περιώνυμον ζῶον), the well-drawn form (τὸ εὐδιάγραπτον ἱνδαλμα); the divinely-formed mirror, the frontier between what is above and below (τὸ τῶν ἄνω καὶ κάτω μεταίχμιον), the compound both visible and intellectual, the entity subject to corruption and yet incorruptible.¹

Prior to this passage, Andrew draws on language from the Psalms to meditate on the cheapness of human goods, highlighting how fleeting they and even human life itself can be, while observing the remarkable fact that humans speculate about heaven above while tripping over rocks at their own feet. But the paradox does not stop there. For Andrew, the human being is a contradiction: pulled down by the senses, yet reaching up for reason and intellect, a reflection of higher things, but still below, noetic and physical, precious and base. Yet the most paradoxical of Andrew's anthropological figures hinge on a cluster of classical art terms for statue (ἀνδριάς, ἄγαλμα, ζῶον, ἱνδαλμα) that notably omits the biblical lexeme of the human as the image (εἰκὼν) of God following Genesis 1:26-27.² In fact, the language Andrew chooses points especially to the insensate and lifeless human creations (like idols) that, Christians often argued, took one's attention off the living God. Andrew can describe the human as paradox—inert and yet moving,

¹ Andrew of Crete, *Oratio XXI. In vitam humanam et in defunctos*. PG 97 1268B–1301B. Excerpt at 1269A. All translations are mine unless noted (and see above, for a note on translations).

² On these lexemes and some of the difficulties in translating them, see Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 19–45.

both alive and dead—because the tension between life and representations of living things was ever present, even when that meant living Christians were like the lifeless “pagan” art disparaged in Christian anti-idol discourse.

At about the same time as Andrew of Crete delivered his homily, the authors of the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, or “Brief Historical Notes,” were examining precisely that “pagan” art which remained in eighth-century Constantinople.³ Evidently concerned with the power of images,⁴ a set of government officials and self-styled philosophers set out to document, understand, and perhaps exercise some control over the statues and painted panels of emperors, officials, heroes, and deities past. In this context, one Theodore wrote to Philokalos, whose collection the *Parastaseis* may ultimately have been, with a stern warning: “Pray that you do not fall into temptation (εὐχου μὴ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς πειρασμὸν) and take care when you look at old statues, especially pagan ones” (καὶ ταῖς ἀρχαίαις στήλαις καὶ μάλιστα ταῖς ἑλληνικαῖς πρόσεχε θεωρῶν). The reason for Theodore’s warning was as practical as it was theological. Having headed to the amphitheater known as the *Kynegion* with his colleague Himerius “to investigate

³ Text and Translation in Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin, eds., *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 55–165. I follow Cameron and Herrin’s translation (with slight revision), due to the idiosyncrasies of this text. On the date, and collective authorship, see pp. 3–29.

⁴ Cameron and Herrin, *Parastaseis*, 18, 31–34, though the significance of this concern for the contemporary Byzantine Iconoclast Controversy is somewhat obscure. Liz James, “Pray Not to Fall into Temptation and Be on Your Guard”: Pagan Statues in Christian Constantinople,” *GESTA* XXXV:1 (1996): 16 rightly observes that this laconic and often obscure text can be seen as propaganda for either the iconoclast *or* iconophile sides, or simply as concerned with some of the same issues at stake in eighth century discussions of the power of images. Similarly, Jesse W. Torgerson and Mike Humphreys, “Chronicles, Histories, and Letters,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, ed. Mike Humphreys (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 217–18 note that *Parastaseis* 5 and 63 contain negative stories about Iconoclast emperors Leo III and Constantine V, respectively. At the same time, however, Leo III is chastised not for destroying Christian icons but “many ancient monuments” in a place where “many people used to perform astronomical calculations” and which was surrounded by “tombs of pagans and Arians”; Constantine V is criticized for his actions against the monk Anastasius, not his ostensive iconoclasm. Still, “a world where statues could kill, necessitating a physical response, was also one where icons could wield power, again necessitating a response.” The view of the authors and compilers of the *Parastaseis* is not exactly clear, though Humphreys and Torgerson conclude that, as a source compared with the tenth century *Patria* which incorporated the *Parastaseis*, it can be read as “a shifting testament to the myriad testimonies and perceptions that formed the evolving historical memory of Constantinople.”

the statues there” (τὰς ἐκεῖσε ἱστορηῆσαι εἰκόνας), Theodore found himself struck with wonder (θαυμάζοντος) at one statue in particular, “small in height and squat and very heavy” (μικρὰν τῷ μήκει καὶ πλατεῖαν καὶ παχεῖαν πάνυ). The two men identify the statue (στήλη), which upon hearing its name, “fell from its height, which was great (πεσεῖν τὴν στήλην ἐκ τοῦ ἐκεῖσε ὕψους, οὗ τοσούτου ὑπάρχοντος), and gave Himerius a great blow and killed him on the spot” (καὶ δούναί τῷ Ἱμερίῳ καὶ παραπυλὸν θανατῶσαι). Theodore understandably panics, fleeing and taking refuge in the church out of fear that he’d be accused of murder, and is only exonerated when a certain John found it predicted that “a man of rank would be killed by this statue” (ὑπὸ τούτου τοῦ ζωδίου ἀποκτανθῆναι ἔνδοξον ἄνδρα). Accordingly, they bury the statue since “it was impossible to destroy it” (διὰ τὸ μὴ δέχεσθαι κατάλυσιν).⁵

Clearly statues could be dangerous to the unwary, but the letter leaves unanswered several pressing questions: Did the statue fall of its own volition? Did a demon cause its fatal descent? Was the effect of burial merely apotropaic or did it signal the death of the statue? Was the statue impossible to destroy because of its durable materiality or because the statue (or the figure it portrayed) would not “accept” (δέχεσθαι) destruction? According to Andrew of Crete, the human being as a living image stood poised between the living divine and the dead material, unstable and liable to tip in either direction. The *Parastaseis* reminds us that, for late ancient Christians, inanimate statues were apt to tip as well.

In this dissertation, I analyze how a set of Christian narratives from Late Antiquity (c. fourth–eighth centuries) explored and played tensively with the spaces between animate and inanimate that characterized both human beings and material images, as in the two examples above. These narratives, which I have gathered for comparison for the first time, are principally

⁵ *Parastaseis* 28 (Cameron and Herrin, 88–91).

the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, the *Martyrdom of Mark*, the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, and the *Image of Berytus*. Despite varied dates, concerns, plots, and purposes, each narrative features “living images” as key characters in their tales. These characters—two healing saints who travel between shrine and image, a martyred apostle and a shattered statue, a talking stone sphinx and monstrous cannibals, and, finally, bleeding icons of Jesus and Mary—along with the media in which they are encountered in these narratives, I argue, become an opportunity for the authors of these texts not only to carve out spaces for Christian material cult, but also to reflect upon the disjunctions between spiritual and corporeal life by blurring and redrawing the boundaries of what counts as living. The authors of these narratives put forth such reflections not directly, but by playing on, affirming, and subverting knowledge about the (in)abilities of images to mediate the presence of divinity in the world. In particular, they selectively attribute “signs of life” (like movement, speech, sight, blood) in conflicts between Christians, pagans, Jews, and material objects. The effects of these literary decisions are diverse—as the chapters will illustrate—but together the analyses of these narratives demonstrate both a persistent interest among late ancient Christians in the problems and opportunities presented by material images and a dynamic, flexible ancient Christian discourse on images that allowed them to reject the special objects of others as “lifeless idols” but experience their own as “living images” with links to divine realities.

Iconoclasm, Narrative, and New Materialisms

My focus on narrative works in this project stems from and speaks to two scholarly conversations: 1) debate about the emergence of a “cult of icons” in the centuries immediately prior to the Byzantine Iconoclast Controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries; and 2) the

twenty-first century theoretical movement broadly known as “New Materialisms.” Both discussions require some explanation in order to show how “Signs of Life” intervenes and why I have chosen the sources and methods I have.

The study of religious images in Late Antiquity, as well as theological views and religious practices surrounding them, has been largely determined by the contours and outcomes of disputes between iconophiles and iconoclasts known as the Byzantine Iconoclast Controversy. I will analyze some of the key theological texts addressing images from the later period in chapter 1, but it will be useful now to describe some of major developments in scholarship on this historical period to help identify the stakes of my project. While the precise character of Iconoclasm in Byzantium was a matter of debate for scholars in the middle of the twentieth century, the events themselves were generally viewed with consistency. In the 720s under Leo III (r. 717–41), verbal and material policies were carried out against icons, culminating in the deposition of Patriarch Germanos and the destruction of the Christ icon above the Chalke Gate. According to this narrative, the controversy over icons increased in alacrity during the reign of Constantine V (r. 741–75), especially in his convening of the Council of Hieria in 754, which formally condemned the production and veneration of icons, leading to intense opposition from monastic federations and disputes over the very role of monasticism and the cult of the saints. Just over a decade after the death of Constantine V, Irene, the queen regent for Constantine VI (Constantine V's grandson) was able to convene the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, restoring icons and canonizing the theological basis for their veneration and role in orthodox piety. Perhaps predictably, the so-called “Iconophile Intermission” would last for less than thirty years before Leo V (r. 813–20) would reinstate a modified version of Leo III and Constantine V’s

iconoclastic policies until finally, in 843, the “Triumph of Orthodoxy” re-solidified the place of icons in eastern Christianity.⁶

Recent revisionist work on the Iconoclast Controversy, however, especially that of Auzépy, Speck, and Brubaker,⁷ has challenged the significance of the Iconoclast Controversy for the Byzantine Empire and those who lived in its environs in those centuries, as well as questioned many of the events as traditionally reconstructed. In demonstrating that many of the sources for the reconstruction of events—particularly the alleged destruction of the Christ Icon above Chalke gate—were “hostile and late,”⁸ Auzépy not only provided a new, episodic model of iconoclasm in this period, but also cast the reliability of many sources that supported the iconophile arguments into question. In the hands of Paul Speck, this meant suspecting interpolation everywhere, even when criteria of stylistic, grammatical, and/or topical shifts did not necessarily support the suggestion of intentional tampering. On the grounds of purported anachronism, however, Speck argued that almost the entirety of sources (largely hagiographical and narrative, though not entirely) providing evidence for widespread icon veneration in the sixth and seventh centuries had in fact suffered from insertions and edits at the hand of iconophiles attempting to ground their own practices in earlier eras. Speck’s destabilizing arguments were intended to and, indeed, had the effect of undercutting the textual basis of Ernst Kitzinger’s influential theory about the rise of image practices in popular Christian culture from about the mid-sixth century, which was based on an apparent explosion of references in narrative sources

⁶ See the excellent historiographical analysis with extensive bibliography in Mike Humphreys, “Introduction,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm* (ed. Humphreys), 4–15, which I follow here.

⁷ See, e.g., collected essays in Marie-France Auzépy, *L’histoire des iconoclastes* (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2007); Paul Speck, *Ich bin’s nicht, Kaiser Konstantin ist es gewesen: Die Legenden vom Einfluss des Teufels, des Juden und des Moslem auf den Ikonoklasmus*, *Poikila Byzantina* 10 (Bonn: Habelt, 1990); Leslie Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012). Additional works by Brubaker and Haldon are discussed below.

⁸ Humphreys, “Introduction,” 11, describing the impact of Marie-France Auzépy’s essay, “La destruction de l’icône du Christ de la Chalce par Léon III: Propagande ou réalité?” *Byzantion* 40 (1990): 445–92.

dated to this period.⁹ The intensification of the cult of images this literary explosion suggests, Kitzinger had theorized, stimulated a subsequent tamping down of these practices by the iconoclasts and eventual sublimation of both practice and prohibition in iconophile image theory.¹⁰

Leslie Brubaker, first by herself and then with John Haldon in two substantial volumes, adopted many of Speck's conclusions, particularly his skepticism regarding the integrity of purportedly early sources.¹¹ In the view of Brubaker and Haldon, what iconoclasts—less Leo III and more Constantine V—reacted against strongly were practices supporting the notion that an image of Christ or the saints could manifest the person depicted in a way akin to relics. Constricting her view to a purported “transparent image”—an “icon” in the narrow sense that would properly characterize a “cult of icons”—Brubaker argues that any mention or description of an icon before c. 680 (when, she argues, texts featuring such phenomena can be firmly dated) is either an interpolation or refers to *acheiropoieta* images, which were also relics.¹² Although iconophile theorists would differentiate between the shared essence of image and prototype depicted, on one hand, and the shared likeness on the other, in order to defend the icon from being an “idol” (see chapter 1), Brubaker and Haldon argue that it was the sense of real presence

⁹ Ernst Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954): 115. For discussion of Speck's interventions (and their persuasiveness) see Humphreys, “Introduction,” 12–13 and Benjamin Anderson, “Images in Byzantine Thought and Practice, ca. 500–700,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, 145–46.

¹⁰ For more on Kitzinger's essay and its influence, see below, pp. 23–4, 143–53.

¹¹ Leslie Brubaker, “Icons Before Iconoclasm?” *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo* 45 (1998): 1215–54; Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), which provided narrative and argumentative substance to Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680–850): The Sources* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

¹² On “transparent image,” see Brubaker, “Icons Before Iconoclasm?” 1226, 31, 35, 48, 51, 54) and Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 54. On *acheiropoieta* not really being “images,” see Brubaker, “Icons Before Iconoclasm?” 1230–31, 34, 44; Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*, 35–6, 55 (also discussed in Humphreys, “Introduction,” 14–15, 55–56; Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 146 et passim). Cf. below, p. 83 n. 114.

of Christian holy persons in images that depicted them, which emerged around 680, that better characterizes the “cult of icons” and which drove the controversy.

This argument has been critiqued from a number of directions. As has been rightly noted by Averil Cameron, for instance, Brubaker and Haldon restrict “icon” (εἰκών), a Greek term with some of the greatest lexical variety in the entire language, as well as the term “cult,” to such an extent that what can be considered to constitute a “cult of icons” means tautologously that no cult of icons existed before there was a cult of icons.¹³ Moreover, although textual manipulation no doubt occurred during the Iconoclast Controversy, the burden of proof remains on those suggesting interpolation. Ironically, as Benjamin Anderson observes, by presuming interpolation on the basis of anachronism, it is revisionist scholars like Speck and Brubaker who anachronistically define the cult of icons.¹⁴ Most important for the analysis here, however, Anderson has recently and accurately noted that “traditionalists” like Kitzinger and “revisionists” like Brubaker have both “tended to treat the preserved narrative texts as direct proxies for contemporary practice.”¹⁵ Both approaches employ what Anderson describes as a “line-graph” assumption: presuming a quantifiable substance, they seek “to chart fluctuations in ‘the power of images’ by collecting attestations in the preserved narrative sources, and then to identify proximate causes for those changes.”¹⁶ As Elsner notes in his 2012 essay, “Iconoclasm as Discourse,” however, there is no good reason to assume that the apparent increase in literary testimony to icons and image practices is anything more than “textual noise.”¹⁷

¹³ Averil Cameron, “The Anxiety of Images: Meanings and Material Objects,” in *Images of the Byzantine World: Visions, Messages and Meanings. Studies Presented to Leslie Brubaker*, ed. Angeliki Lymberopoulou (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 50, 54. Cf. Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 145.

¹⁴ Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 146.

¹⁵ Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 147.

¹⁶ Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 148, cf. 155-7.

¹⁷ Jaś Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse from Antiquity to Byzantium,” *Art Bulletin* XCIV:3 (2012): 372, whom Anderson cites at “Thought and Practice,” 147, 157.

There is, however, more than one way that the literary testimony can produce “textual noise” in search of signal. Kitzinger had stated outright why he preferred narrative sources: “The chief interest these stories have for us ... lies precisely in the information they impart, almost incidentally, about every-day practices and beliefs concerning images.”¹⁸ But is this necessarily true? In an effort to identify changes in the sixth and seventh centuries that could have led to the Iconoclast Controversy in that time and place rather than another,¹⁹ Anderson turns to analyze the canons at the Quinisext Council in 692, as well as epigrams and images dating to the same centuries, concluding that the bishops were plenty aware of how art had long functioned to mediate between, e.g., human and divine. What was new at Quinisext was not the popular devotion to images, as Kitzinger presumed, nor the “notion of the image,” as Brubaker and Haldon claim, but the fact that the bishops considered it their purview to comment at all. “A picture emerges of two semi-autonomous spheres, that of the bishops at the council on the one hand, and that of the making and viewing of art on the other; two spheres that are not so much antagonistic as barely connected....Just as theology did not deal directly with images, neither did images deal directly with theology.”²⁰

Anderson reaches this conclusion, however, as well as his recommendation that we “speak instead of a ‘discourse of images’ which is content to harbor contradictions and may even

¹⁸ Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 96; cf. Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 156.

¹⁹ Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 184.

²⁰ Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 163–64., cf. 185. Exceptions to this, he argues (178–83), are focused in Constantinople and Nicaea, directly commenting on Christological controversies through inscriptions of the sixth-seventh centuries, which may suggest one reason why the iconoclast controversy took place in this region and not elsewhere in the Empire; for regional distinctiveness, also see Phillip Niewöhner, “The Significance of the Cross before, during, and after Iconoclasm: Early Christian Aniconism in Constantinople and Asia Minor,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 74 (2020): 185–242. Anderson’s claim that theology and images rarely had anything to do with each other is not to suggest that bishops were uninterested in art or that art and holy images were primarily the territory of “the popular.” As Anderson describes, examining extant monumental images from the period, bishops and “elites” commissioned and were featured in art all over the empire often with holy figures in such a way that they are in the role of petitioner to the saint parallel to how another would approach the image (166–78). Rather, the discourse of images “was perfectly competent to its task, just as the bishops were to theirs” (164).

openly delight in paradox,”²¹ by deliberately avoiding analysis of argumentative texts on images like the homily of Leontius of Neapolis and narratives like those that supported the models of Kitzinger and Brubaker/Haldon.²² While Anderson’s focus on material distinct from the recent history of scholarship yields new conclusions and is preferable for the specific questions surrounding the *cause* of the Iconoclast Controversy, his rejection of the supposition that an increase in narrative testimony and a growth in practices of icon veneration leaves unexamined the assumption that narratives provide an unobscured window into image practices and beliefs in Late Antiquity. Does narrative literature featuring images nevertheless offer transparent evidence of something new or newly emphasized in Christian practices of piety even if more literature does not necessarily entail a more popular practice? Setting narrative sources aside to defend against perpetuating an iconophile-slanted history, as Anderson’s largely excellent work does, no more slackens the grip the Iconoclast Controversy has held over studying late ancient images and mediations of holiness than does accepting the eighth-century version of the story wholesale. To understand the role(s) and functions of religious images in Late Antiquity, we have to somehow account for and interpret narrative literature. Is there a particular *narrative* discourse of images?

One potential way forward, and the second scholarly conversation from which my dissertation has emerged, may be found in the “material turn” and the approaches offered by “New Materialisms.” In a broad set of theoretical discussions inaugurated in different ways during the late 1980s and early 1990s by David Freedberg’s “response” theory of art,²³ Alfred Gell’s decoupling of agency from biological life,²⁴ and the related interventions of assemblage

²¹ Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 185.

²² Stated outright by Anderson, “Thought and Practice,” 182. Part of Anderson’s motivation is the difficulty of dating these sources; but this problem, in my view, should be handled on a case by case basis.

²³ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Similarly wide ranging is Kenneth Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

²⁴ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

theory²⁵ and Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory,²⁶ a "material turn" has embraced a (re)centering of "material things and phenomena—objects, practices, spaces, bodies, sensations, affects, and so on—" in scholarly inquiry.²⁷ Rather than being carriers of meaning or semiotic symbols that privileged human meaning making, which, Sonia Hazard argues, grants "excessive authority to ideation,"²⁸ advocates for material approaches suggest that material things are not so much the recipients of human subjectivity but rather the discipliners of it. Material things create "the very conditions of ideation and believing...things act on humans and shape them."²⁹ As a result, it is almost a truism today to assert, as Babette Tischleder does in a recent volume on lively objects in contemporary novels, that "objects are no longer dead."³⁰

Recent work in religious studies on images has been influenced by a scholarly movement often folded in with this turn, namely New Materialists and those working in Object-Oriented Ontologies (OOO).³¹ Scholars working in this vein have sought to explore and imagine how the things of the world, including objects like stone or even trash on the side of the road, are enmeshed in the lives of human subjects, affect us, and embed us in networks of relationships, thus putting forward a "concept of 'life'" that combines matter and life, "two elements that have

²⁵ Classically, Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); recently, Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

²⁶ Especially Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

²⁷ Sonia Hazard, "The Material Turn in the Study of Religion," in *Religion and Society* 4 (2013): 58.

²⁸ Hazard, "The Material Turn," 61.

²⁹ Hazard, "The Material Turn," 61. Cf. Kevin Schilbrack, "The Material Turn in the Academic Study of Religion," *Journal of Religion* 99:2 (April 2019): 219–227.

³⁰ Babette B. Tischleder, *The Literary Life of Things: Case Studies in American Fiction* (New York/Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2014), 17.

³¹ Though "New Materialist" was used for some time prior, the identifier was popularized by Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010); Diana H. Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). Practices vary as to whether "New Materialist" is a larger category organizing an array of related approaches and interests or itself a "school" of posthumanism. Throughout this chapter and the project more broadly, I use it as a catch-all unless otherwise specified.

often been regarded as oppositional or even contradictory.”³² The scholarly literature is perhaps too diverse to characterize as a “field;”³³ “New Materialist” encompasses the OOO work of philosopher Graham Harman and ecocritic Thomas Morton, for whom objects have a stability, being, and essence which is beyond and inaccessible to human knowers, as well as the work of political theorist Jane Bennett, for whom objects have no boundaries or stability but rather, as “Vibrant Matter,” are constantly reconstituted as assemblages.³⁴ Still, these scholars share a common interest in rearticulating so-called “modern” ontologies (often located most acutely in Descartes’s *cogito ergo sum* division of subject and object) such that subject/object, meaning/matter distinctions among purportedly living and non-living things are not determined *a priori* but instead—when the “subject” as a concept is not simply tossed out—understood to be relational, shifting, and dynamic, a paradigm within which all things are considered capable of action. The resultant, or at least desired, “flat ontology,” in which there is no hierarchy between different kinds of beings, often slides into a flat epistemology of sorts, in which the “object,” now democratized to include every sort of being or integrated into shifting assemblages, cannot

³² Thomas Lemke, *The Government of Things: Foucault and the New Materialisms* (New York City: New York University Press, 2021), 47.

³³ A point made plainly by Caroline Walker Bynum, *Dissimilar Similitudes: Devotional Objects in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2020), 266 n. 38: “Proponents of new approaches, such as object-oriented ontology, thing theory, and various sorts of ‘new materialism,’ do not agree on what the current material turn is or should be.” In support of Bynum’s point, see the sheer diversity of responses in David Joselit, Carrie Lambert-Beatty, and Hal Foster, eds., *Monoskop Log October 155: Special Issue: A Questionnaire on Materialisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016). For an attempt to organize the chaos (perhaps a fitting, unruly chaos, given the subject matter), see Susan Yi Sencindiver, “New Materialism,” *Oxford Bibliographies* in “Literary and Critical Theory” (New York: Oxford University Press), Last Modified July 26, 2017. DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780190221911-0016.

³⁴ Among the many works of Graham Harman, see recently *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Pelican, 2018); Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, cited above. See the analyses and additional bibliography in Lemke, *Government of Things*, 19-56; Benjamin Boysen, “The Embarrassment of Being Human: A Critique of New Materialism and Object-Oriented Ontology,” *Orbis Litterarum* 73 (2018), 225-41. Although Latour might object to being called a New Materialist proper, his interest in the agency and life of “objects” is a constant reference point for New Materialist and OOO work, and his writings are at the very least sympathetic. See Bill Brown, *Other Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), especially 165-73; Tischleder, *Literary Life of Things*, 28-30.

be known.³⁵ Epistemological reorientations lead many theorists to politics, hoping that by envisioning ways that matter and inanimate things have agency we can challenge dominant concepts of subjectivity and extend modes of “analyzing power relations beyond the sphere of the human.”³⁶ Consistently, this effort is concerned with environmental and social justice issues—especially that of climate change—and therefore the political concern commonly leads to the laying of groundwork for an ethics “based on the complex encounters between human and nonhuman entities and their constitutive relations of mutual dependence and exchange.”³⁷

While not every aim or conclusion of New Materialisms and OOO is of relevance for my historical project here (nor are they always philosophically coherent),³⁸ the attention to flattened ontological distinctions—both to shifting subject/object relations and to places where the inanimate and animate reveal themselves to be categories less stable than their names might indicate—holds tremendous potential for the study of material holiness in Late Antiquity. For instance, the recent and often brilliantly provocative monograph of Virginia Burrus, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics: Cosmologies, Saints, Things*, illustrates one way to translate New Materialist ideas into Late Antiquity.³⁹ Engaging with work by Harman, Morton, and Bennett, Burrus seeks to recover ancient Christian pasts useable for imagining an Anthropocene future in

³⁵ See Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 230-34. Lemke, *Government of Things*, 4 notes that New Materialisms is also motivated by an epistemological goal of weakening disciplinary boundaries between natural sciences and humanistic and social scientific fields in an effort “to understand biology and nature as historical and contingent rather than governed by eternal and deterministic laws.”

³⁶ Lemke, *Government of Things*, 4.

³⁷ Lemke, *Government of Things*, 5.

³⁸ See e.g., Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 230-31 on problems of self-contradiction; Jonathan Basile, “Life/Force: Novelty and New Materialism in Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter*,” *SubStance* 48:2 (2019): 3-22.

³⁹ Virginia Burrus, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics: Cosmologies, Saints, Things* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019). As she says on p. 5, her aim is to bring “current questions, concerns, and theories into dialogue with late ancient Mediterranean ones” by which she hopes to “facilitate a provocative encounter with difference.”

which humans do not imagine themselves as “masters of nature” and are attentive “to the interconnection and the liveliness and agency of all beings.”⁴⁰

In the third section of her monograph, which focuses on “things,” Burrus examines how thing-power—“the inherent liveliness or vitality of material bodies” that empowers agency to be “distributed within ever-emerging (and ever-dispersing) collectivities or assemblages”⁴¹—appears in late ancient Christianity. She asks, “How, in particular, do late ancient Christians cultivate relationships to nonhuman things?”⁴² Burrus then analyzes how late ancient Christians cultivated relationships to an array of things—such as relics and icons (which remain undifferentiated in her argument) or buildings and landscapes, “in all of which they acknowledge a lively agency”⁴³—and she explores how human desires to touch, see, taste, etc., are carried out in relation to, for instance, the “ever renewing assemblage” of relic and reliquary.⁴⁴ She argues that “by cultivating special relationships with such supercharged objects, Christians likewise cultivated particular sensibilities regarding material things more generally.”⁴⁵ These relationships are “no less important than relationships with other humans” and in fact are interwoven with them, so that they “ultimately undercut the distinctions between the material and the spiritual, the natural and the artificial” insofar as the relic acts, calling the Christian to venerate it, touch it, be

⁴⁰ Burrus, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics*, 1. She cites Harman explicitly on pp. 20, 147-48, and throughout the notes. Morton is one of Burrus’s biggest interlocutors, framing her analysis in relation to his object-oriented focus repeatedly throughout the introduction (1-9) and the preludes of her sections on hagiography (“Queering Creation,” 81-85) and things (“Things and Practices,” 147-51). Although Bennett’s framework is distinct from OOO in her emphasis on flux and relationality rather than essence and stability, Burrus (fairly) reads Bennett as largely consistent with OOO in focus and attention, as on e.g., pp. 147, 150-51.

⁴¹ Burrus, *Eco-poetics*, 150. The second citation is a direct quote of Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 21.

⁴² Burrus, *Eco-poetics*, 151.

⁴³ Burrus, *Eco-poetics*, 151.

⁴⁴ Burrus, *Eco-poetics*, 158.

⁴⁵ Burrus, *Eco-poetics*, 163.

healed. “What counts as an animate being or a ‘living organism?’” Burrus asks, “For ancient Christians, anything *might* count.”⁴⁶

Burrus’s questions and her attention to the at times surprising ways in which material things worm their way into the stories, arguments, and relationships of late ancient Christians inform this project in two clear ways. First, the sources I analyze *do* flatten ontological distinctions between human and stone, wood, animal, plant, angel, and the like, and Burrus’s effort to bring modern theories and concerns into conversation with late ancient material helps illuminate some of the conceptual labor the sources I investigate may have been undertaking or assuming. Second, a model of “life” that is dynamic and labile is necessary, I propose, for describing the miraculous images in narrative sources in Late Antiquity in a way that does not also require a suspect quantification of their “power,” as described above.

However, there are also two related points that prevent me from adopting any New Materialist and OOO models wholesale and which encourage my turn specifically to narrative texts. Both OOO theorists and New Materialists like Bennett have been strongly criticized for their “democratic” models because they so radically decenter the human that human agency and responsibility are erased. This is a problem philosophically, insofar as it signals a return to a surprisingly “familiar narrative of human subjectivism” in which the very things which are supposedly beyond and inaccessible to the human are “rendered in anthropomorphic terms.”⁴⁷ Moreover, the erasure of human agency results in a weak, voluntarist ethic and a political theory effectively without power relations.⁴⁸ No person, in the end, whether individual or corporate, can be held at fault for an action, positive or negative, while social and political conditions are passed

⁴⁶ Burrus, *Ecopoetics*, 163.

⁴⁷ Lemke, *Government of Things*, 35-38, quote at 36. Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 34-36.

⁴⁸ Lemke, *Government of Things*, 54; Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 37-39.

over in favor of lively objects. While this is troubling on multiple grounds,⁴⁹ from the historical perspective of this project, operating with a model of human agency effaced in favor of thing/object agency makes it difficult to analyze how power relations and religious polemic may have affected what it means to depict, imagine, or perceive things/objects with signs of life, not to mention the role of human beings in fashioning worlds and seeking to move others toward certain conclusions through rhetorically powerful literature.

This brings me to the second point of reticence. The most full-throated articulations of New Materialisms and the recent material turn more broadly have been accompanied by a strong rejection of the so-called linguistic turn and its “discursive idealism” due to the conviction that “primarily textual accounts are insufficient for an adequate understanding of the complex and dynamic interplay of meaning and matter.”⁵⁰ While nearly as internally disunited as the material turn has been, the linguistic turn is generally characterized by “a cross-disciplinary consensus” that “textuality and linguistic signs acted as master metaphors” for features of human existence as diverse as “images, rituals, social organization, cultural exchange, historical alterity, and

⁴⁹ As Brown, *Other Things*, 168 observes, “when Latour writes, trenchantly, of ‘democracy extended to things themselves,’ of a new democracy of persons and things, those claims can’t help but be haunted by the fact that we don’t yet enjoy democracy among persons.” The clarity of this lesson was in striking view during the protests for George Floyd in summer 2020 when it was manifest that objects such as windows were too often valued above human lives. While I think that articulating how statues of Confederate generals, for instance, affect the lives and interactions of those they oversee and how they are treated as quasi-animate beings can, in fact, reveal social and material relations, Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 238 points to a presumably unintended consequence of the most strongly stated New Materialist positions: “Inasmuch as object-oriented ontology and new materialism make appeals that we should spend our energy and resources engaging with things and objects supposedly alive and morally attuned, they do neoliberalism and capitalism a great favor by insisting that the problem has to do not so much with the social and political conditions as with our missing appreciation of or empathy toward the inner life of things and objects.” In this sense, New Materialisms as a theoretical approach really is quite distant from the “old,” Marxist materialism.

⁵⁰ Lemke, *Government of Things*, 1-2; Cf. Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 231: “Emerging in opposition to the linguistic turn, new materialism and object-oriented ontology seem to assert a dualism, that is to say, a separation between language and matter, and between subject and object. ...both new materialism and object-oriented ontology stress the gap between thinking (theory) and being (reality).” Hazard, “Material Turn,” describes this rejection in more positive tones.

psychic life.”⁵¹ Though many would now agree with Julie Orlemanski that “[p]lenty of things do not operate like language — or, to take the poststructuralist tack, do not fail as language fails,”⁵² major effects of this work, namely to weaken the authority of traditional sources of historical truth (such as official state histories), to question and deconstruct the “simple evidentiary value of documents,” and, concomitant to both, “the application of literary critical techniques and discourse analysis to historical writing”⁵³ should persevere.

Instead, however, despite the OOO insistence that objects as such are ultimately unknowable, much of the rejection of language-centered frameworks seems inspired by a “desire to...restore a pure and immediate connection with the past or at least some central aspect of experience...,”⁵⁴ even to the extent of retrieving “childhood experiences of a world populated by animate things rather than passive objects.”⁵⁵ As Boysen puts it, the very attempt of New Materialists to deny human exceptionality and decenter human subjectivity in favor of an object world or assemblages stems from a semeiophobic discomfort with “the mediated character of human perception of the world.”⁵⁶ Accordingly, New Materialist arguments are often

⁵¹ See the concise summary of its trajectory in Julie Orlemanski, “Philology and the Turn Away from the Linguistic Turn,” *Florilegium* 32 (2015), 157–72, quote at 157. See Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) for a deeper analysis of ways in which these debates intersected with historiographical practices.

⁵² Orlemanski, “Philology and the Turn,” 172; cf. the slightly different diagnosis on the end of the linguistic turn in Nancy Partner, “Narrative Persistence: The Post-Postmodern Life of Narrative Theory” in *Re-Figuring Hayden White*, eds. Frank Ankersmit, Ewa Domańska, and Hans Kellner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 84: “But excited debates over the death of the author, or the evisceration of facts, the Big Ideas about language offered by postmodernism, were both too radical and too vague to change the entire discipline.”

⁵³ Partner, “Post-Postmodern Life,” 82. Partner and Orlemanski both trace the relationship of the linguistic turn to the New Criticism movement and New Historicism of the 1950s as well in terms of reading techniques and concerns (Partner 87; Orlemanski, “Philology and the Turn,” 167–68). Partner also spends considerable time in her essay on the impact of “narrative” on thought outside the academy, e.g., at 91, where she warns: “Before historical theorists move on from postmodernism, from the linguistic turn, as if all its important work has been accomplished, we would do well to pay attention to this deepening traction of self-conscious narrative construction throughout our intellectual and political world.”

⁵⁴ Partner, “Post-Postmodern Life,” 82.

⁵⁵ Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*, vii, cited and discussed in Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 229.

⁵⁶ Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 227–29, quote at 227. He describes “semeiophobia” as “an unease and malaise with the idea of human reality as being semiotic. Striving to cast off the semiotic dimension of human reason, consciousness, perception, and agency and condemning it for representing a mistaken idea about human

accompanied by an insistence that critique is somehow passé because it favors demystification and breaking things down (i.e., analysis), practices which, proponents argue, overly rely on the idea that there is a “true world of realities lying behind a veil of appearances.” In turn, they argue, critique considers human perception and agency exceptional.⁵⁷ As Boysen summarizes the view, “Reflection, critical thinking, judgment, and the exercise of reason occlude the path to things in themselves.”⁵⁸ Rather than anthropocentric and negative critique, Bennett, for instance, taking her cue from Latour, seeks modes of engaging with the world that affirm the liveliness and fundamental entangledness of things, and thus (ironically deploying the language of critique) “present the true picture of the real beyond humanist distortions.”⁵⁹ As a result, leading figures in New Materialist scholarship maintain that “we must (to employ Paul Ricoeur’s famous phrase) shy away from the hermeneutic of suspicion...; we must learn to put our skepticism aside and nurture a capacity to take things at face value.”⁶⁰

Determining the extent to which a hermeneutics of radical charity is generative for various philosophical, political, and ethical projects is beyond the scope of this project. However, for an historical project focused on an era when the majority of our sources remain textual

exceptionalism, new materialism seeks to formulate a flat, monistic ontology, in which humans are merely to be understood as one agent among others” (225).

⁵⁷ Bruno Latour, “An Attempt at a Compositionalist Manifesto,” *New Literary History* 41 (2010): 474–5, cited in Lemke, *Government of Things*, 6.

⁵⁸ Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 229.

⁵⁹ Lemke, *Government of Things*, 7. For a more thorough analysis of the New Materialist rejection of “critique,” see the exceptional work of Ashley Barnwell, “Method Matters,” in *What If Culture Was Nature All Along?* ed. Vicki Kirby (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 26–47.

⁶⁰ Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 229 discussing Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xiii–xvi. In religious studies, the desire for non-linguistic objects of study is sometimes paired with a particular deployment of the argument that the field of religious studies (and definitions of religion that prize words and language) are overly “Protestant” (e.g., Hazard, “Material Turn, 70 n. 1). Exemplifying the dubious way that critique is often lauded and disparaged in posthumanist studies, Donovan O. Schaefer, a leading proponent of affect theory in religious studies, somewhat surprisingly critiques the critical theorizations of Jonathan Z. Smith, Bruce Lincoln, Tomoku Masuzawa, and Russell McCutcheon as exemplars of the linguistic-cognitive view of religion, which he then also connects to “how a Protestant model of religion as ‘faith’—a set of propositional beliefs—had been smuggled into the study of religion.” Donovan O. Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015) 4–14, 19–23; quote at 7 with reference to Talal Asad and Clifford Geertz.

(though certainly ample material culture is also extant!), the practice of abandoning a hermeneutics of suspicion and taking the views presented by texts at face value cannot be maintained. To be sure, one cannot completely accuse Burrus in *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics* of this mode of reading. She makes room for human creativity⁶¹ and provides thoughtful analysis of literary hagiography in section II of her book,⁶² and—as her reliance upon texts of various kinds (including narratives such as Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Macrina*)⁶³ in Section III suggests—shows a willingness to read against the grain. But her reliance upon scholars like Harman, Morton, and Bennett, whose work is fully susceptible to such criticisms, raises questions about conclusions like the following.

Discussing scholarly arguments about the role of buildings—churches, in this case—as a “mesh of things and their relations” yet also “a thing with its own relations” that exerts force on the world around it, Burrus turns from describing the notion of lithic time and envisioning how a column found at Tel-Dor in Israel that invoked Golgotha would “have performed as an animate being participating in the life of a larger animate being, the basilica of Dor” to the writings of Paulinus of Nola.⁶⁴ The letters and poems of Paulinus are necessary, it turns out, because little of the Dor basilica actually survives, and thus cannot (if it could in any case) provide the resources for imagining the “life of a late ancient basilica...thronged with human visitors, configuring and configured by relations both interior and exterior.”⁶⁵ When Paulinus writes to his friend Sulpicius

⁶¹ E.g., Burrus, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics*, 5.

⁶² In addition to the content of her analysis, see the programmatic statement in Burrus, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics*, 84: “the premodern saint I am summoning is, most obviously, a figure of literary representation. Yet I want to attend to the ways that the saint also exceeds the bounds of literary representation, arriving in and as an assemblage of textual, visual, and ritual productions better understood as performative than as representational.” While not necessarily a wholly new approach to the reading of saints lives, this section demonstrates her willingness to read these texts as the literary products they are.

⁶³ Burrus, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics*, 151–156.

⁶⁴ Burrus, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics*, 165, 169.

⁶⁵ Burrus, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics*, 169.

in Letter 32 about the basilicas they are building in their respective towns at the same time, Burrus reasons that “he imagines that he and Sulpicius are themselves buildings: ‘For even as we erect these buildings in the Lord because we have received the faith, we are ourselves erected by the Lord through the growth of this same faith’ (32.18). ...Metaphorical thinking?” she continues. “If so, not *mere* metaphor. Paulinus is able not only to think with buildings but to think as a building, and to imagine that buildings think—and desire.”⁶⁶

This conclusion, however, is simply asserted, not argued from the text, imputing to Paulinus a mystical ability to think as a building rather than a human while simultaneously obscuring that his is the agency imagining, writing, and persuading. By eschewing the role of metaphorical poetics entirely in her effort to get beyond “*mere* metaphor,” Burrus here slips into the anti-critical, positivistic mode of reading advocated by many New Materialists. It is never explained what it would mean to think “as” a building but Burrus’s analysis paradoxically does focus on thought and imagination. Consequently, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics* can do little more here than report Paulinus’s description of the basilica he is building and never explores, for instance, how the elision of building and body or the ekphrastic animation of the basilica helps to advance the rhetorical goals of Paulinus’s letter or how his embodiment of buildingness impacts his descriptions.

Florilegial Reading

This missed opportunity is not simply a difference in emphasis between Burrus’s approach (or those like it) and mine, though it is also that. More to the point, taking the text

⁶⁶ Burrus, *Ancient Christian Eco-poetics*, 170. For “*mere* metaphor,” she makes reference to Glenn Peers, “Byzantine Things in the World,” in *Byzantine Things in the World*, ed. Glenn Peers (Houston: Menil Collection, 2013), 41. On Peers’s work, see below, pp. 147–49.

literally like Burrus does contradicts her own presupposition that “ancient Mediterranean Christians were drawn to excess”⁶⁷ insofar as it denies the same inexhaustibility to text that it seeks in material things. This disavowal of textual excess, whether intentional or not, I argue, is a consequence of what I call a “florilegium style of reading” or “florilegal reading,” which *Ancient Christian Ecopoetics* shares at times with historical scholarship on the cult of images before Iconoclasm. I will return to this issue in chapter two, but for now let me describe what I mean by florilegal reading by illustrating how two scholars—Ernst Kitzinger and Glenn Peers—weigh in on whether or not the image practices described in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* constitute idolatry insofar as they suggest the conflation of image and prototype.

A florilegium, the result of flower-collecting (*florilegus*), as it were, was most often a textual anthology comprised of excerpts from longer literary works for use in various contexts such as schoolrooms, speeches, and the like.⁶⁸ As such, florilegia formed a crucial part of ancient literary culture. When Christian ecumenical councils developed in the fourth century as a mode of resolving theological conflicts, Emperor Theodosius in 383 proposed a synod for leaders of various Arian affiliations to deliberate over issues of dogma; one representative made the influential suggestion of using written patristic authority as a referee. The attempt failed due to disagreements over who counted as an authority, but, over the next centuries, especially as an operative canon of patristic authors came to be recognized, florilegia became a centerpiece of doctrinal arguments and conciliar acts, first at the Council of Ephesus in 431, and then particularly at the Council of Constantinople II in 553 and beyond.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Burrus, *Ancient Christian Ecopoetics*, 6.

⁶⁸ On florilegia generally, including collections of epigrams that fall under this category, see Henry Chadwick, “Florilegium,” in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* vol. 7, ed. Theodor Klauser (Leipzig: K. W. Hiersemann, 1950), cols. 1131–60; Alexander Alexakis, “Byzantine Florilegia,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, ed. Kenneth Parry (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 15–50.

⁶⁹ For the use of florilegia in ecumenical councils and conciliar acts, see Alexander Alexakis, *Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115 and Its Archetype* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996), 1–42.

The practice of creating and copying florilegia intensified throughout the seventh and eighth centuries as the purportedly preservationist ideology behind it became the practical norm of (polemical) theological writing, especially on the issue of icons.⁷⁰ Iconophile authors would compile or copy florilegia ostensibly documenting patristic support for the veneration of images (iconoclast authors doing the opposite), build their arguments around them, and then append the anthologies at the end so that it appeared that whatever point they had argued was simply the summary of the orthodox fathers, even though the very fact of selection and excerption was itself an interpretive act with intentional and powerful hermeneutical effects. However, extracts frequently contained compounding mistakes, whether due to faulty copying, citation from memory, intentional revisions, interpolation and pseudepigraphy, or grammatical changes to fit a different style.⁷¹ The issues were significant enough that a point was made of bringing full books to the Council of Nicaea II in 787, from which the extracts would be read aloud.⁷²

Among these excerpts were three short narratives from the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, two healing saints whose cult was at its most popular in the sixth and seventh centuries. In the first (*Cos. Dam.* 30), a man prays before an icon of the saints and Mary before being visited by the saints in a dream and undergoing a long process of healing. In the second (*Cos. Dam.* 13), a soldier carries a small icon of the saints with him wherever he goes, which comes in handy when his wife is visited in a dream by the saints because of her tooth abscess, and the icon

⁷⁰ Alexander Alexakis, "Papyrus and Parchment: Additional Problems in the Transmission of 8th Century Theological Texts," *Byzantion* 83 (2013): 4.

⁷¹ Nicely summarized in the abstract of Alexakis, "Papyrus and Parchment," 12. One particularly sharp example concerns extracts from the works of Pseudo Dionysius, the full texts of which are included in only a few folios later in Par. gr. 1115. Strikingly, the passages are cited in a manner consonant with what are regarded the best manuscripts of Pseudo Dionysius's works (and the critical edition), while those in the excerpts are not. See "Parchment and Papyrus," 5.

⁷² Alexakis, "Byzantine Florilegia," 35 notes, however, that the passages read at Nicaea II which were also in earlier florilegia, such as that appended to the *Adversus Iconoclastas* (dating to the early 770s), match the textual form of those earlier florilegia quite closely. The presentation of entire books may in some cases have been more pretense than substance.

helps her identify the two doctors. The third (*Cos. Dam.* 15), which has attracted the most scholarly attention, features a pious woman who paints the image of the saints in her home across an entire wall. While writhing in pain one night, she decides to approach the image, scrape off the plaster from the wall where Cosmas and Damian are depicted, and consume the mixture created by combining the plaster and water. “With the intervention of the saints” (τῆ τῶν ἁγίων ἐπιφοιτήσει), her pains cease. What exactly transpires in this miracle seems obscure. Does the materiality of paint and plaster heal her? Do the saints act through their images? Was it the visual encounter?⁷³

Through their inclusion of these three miracle stories in the conciliar florilegium, the iconophiles at Nicaea II sought to fix in place their interpretation as the result of divine approval. In between the reading of *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15, John, the leader (τοποτηρητής) of the eastern patriarchs, offered a confident inference. “It has been demonstrated to us quite clearly that the wonder-working saints appear through their icons as well. For they were revealed to the woman through the icon while healing her” (Ἀπεδείχθη σαφῶς ἡμῖν, ὅτι καὶ διὰ τῶν εἰκόνων φαίνονται οἱ ἅγιοι θαυματουργοῦντες, διὰ γὰρ τῆς εἰκόνοσ ἐφανερῶθησαν τῆ γυναικὶ ἰώμενοι αὐτήν). Manzon, the bishop of Prakana, jumps in with his own story, relating how in the previous year he had been “gripped by a most taxing disease” (ἀσθενία περιέπεσα χαλεπωτάτη) until he had an image of Jesus brought to him and asked for his Lord “to visit” (ἐπισκέψαι) him. “As soon as” he “placed this sacred image on the suffering limb, the disease was driven out instantly and he was restored to health” (ἄμα τῷ ἐπιθεῖναι με τὴν αὐτὴν σεβασμίαν εἰκόνα εἰς τὸ πάσχον μέλος παραυτὰ ἀπηλλάθη τὸ νόσημα, καὶ ὑγιῆς κατέστην).⁷⁴ Manzon’s contribution is remarkable.

⁷³ For more on these miracle stories, see chapter 2.

⁷⁴ Erich Lamberz, ed., *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Concilii Actiones IV-V* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 390; my translation. Cf. Richard Price, *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, Translated Texts for Historians 68, vol. 2 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), 310. We should note that when John

Perhaps relying on the close connection between sight and touch in ancient and medieval theories of vision,⁷⁵ the bishop draws a straight line from a conclusion about saints' visual appearances to the tactile materiality of their icons, implicitly connecting Miracles 30 and 13 to the decidedly material cure in *Cos. Dam.* 15. By linking them, moreover, and by reading these short narratives as refutations of the iconoclast charge that image veneration was idolatrous, the iconophiles aimed to cement the interpretative context of *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15 around the benefits of icons.

Somewhat surprisingly, scholars with strikingly distinct presuppositions have taken for granted the conclusions of the iconophiles John and Manzon—even if they have interpreted the ramifications rather differently. For Kitzinger, the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, while largely relegated to the footnotes in his “Cult of Images,” are key examples of how “a deep-seated animistic attitude” whereby “divine forces were present in religious images” had in the sixth century “reasserted itself vis-à-vis the Christian religious images regardless of whether it had any special association with a relic, and long before it in turn became the subject of profound philosophical speculation.”⁷⁶ Using the language of image and prototype, Kitzinger concludes that stories featuring miraculous images “leave behind the concept of the image as a purely static and lifeless mirror reflection and enter the realm of thoughts and ideas attributing to images some form of animate life and power. . . .the Christian image had become indistinguishable from the pagan idol.”⁷⁷ *Cos. Dam.* 15 punctuates the claim: when the woman is cured, evidently by

says that the saints appeared to the woman “while healing her” (ἰόμενοι αὐτήν) that the woman is not actually healed in the excerpt. See my analysis of this miracle story in chapter 2, pp. 129–36.

⁷⁵ See Roland Betancourt, “Tempted to Touch: Tactility, Ritual, and Mediation in Byzantine Visuality,” *Speculum* 91:3 (July 2016): 660–89.

⁷⁶ Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 117–18.

⁷⁷ Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 146; see the image and prototype language on 145.

drinking the plaster mixture, “the act...is blandly described as ‘the entering in’ (ἐπιφοίτησις) of the saints. This amounts to complete identification of picture and prototype.”⁷⁸

As Anderson has observed, Brubaker is largely in agreement with Kitzinger’s view of late antique image miracle stories (although somewhat ironically Brubaker identifies in *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 the shift toward the “transparent image,” which she interprets as what renders them properly “iconic” rather than idolatrous). Brubaker’s biggest critique of Kitzinger is that she regards his dating of *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 to the sixth century as entirely too early, suspecting instead either a composition in the 680s or invention and subsequent interpolation by iconophiles.⁷⁹ The same cannot be said of Glenn Peers, however, who, though he never doubts a sixth-century date, by his own description disagrees with Kitzinger almost totally. Influenced especially by Latour and New Animist anthropologists Tim Ingold, Nurit Bird-David, and Graham Harvey,⁸⁰ Peers has pushed over the past fifteen years for the “empathetic and heuristic adoption of the relational, animist worldview” that is characteristic, he argues of both Late Antiquity and Byzantium and “accepts an easy flow among literally all subjects.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 148.

⁷⁹ For Kitzinger’s own doubts about the date of *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 prior to the “outbreak of the [Iconoclast] Controversy” (for him roughly 730 CE), see “Cult of Images,” 98 n. 45 and 148 n. 273, which Brubaker highlights in “Icons Before Iconoclasm?” 1219.

⁸⁰ Tim Ingold, “Re-thinking the Animate, Reanimating Thought,” *Ethnos* 71 (2006), 9-20; Nurit Bird-David, “‘Animism’ Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology,” *Current Anthropology, Supplement* 40 (1999): S67–79; Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). For a concise lineage of these debates among social scientists, see Alf Hornborg, “Animism, Fetishism, and Objectivism as Strategies for Knowing (or not knowing) the World,” *Ethnos* 71 (2006): 21-32.

⁸¹ Glenn Peers, “Real Living Painting: Quasi-Objects and Dividuation in the Byzantine World,” *Religion and the Arts* 16 (2012): 434. This New Animism differentiates itself from the Tylorian, evolutionist view by insisting that the older model still relies on a strong spirit/matter division wherein spirit or soul comes from outside to animate an object. Everything may be alive, but only because the lifeless object *contains* spirit. In the so-called new animism, proponents of which often straddle scholarly analysis and ethical imperative, relationality is the only pre-requisite for liveliness. As Amy Whitehead, *Religious Statues and Personhood: Testing the Role of Materiality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 103 concluded, “We generally assume that for something to be alive, it has to do something, but from an animist perspective all it needs to be alive is for someone to relate to it.” With this recovered animism in view, Peers argues that the literary evidence—including some by “elite” authors such as Michael Psellos in his famous eleventh-century *Homily on the Crucifixion*—reveals a world “where the boundary line between inanimate and animate was breached” and where “transformations take place at both ends of the spectrum, so that

Concomitant with this animism for Peers is a rejection of “modernism,” both in the macro sense interrogated by Latour, as well as in the more specific, art historical sense characterizing early twentieth-century concerns in the visual arts with “Enlightenment rationality and the quest for mimesis”;⁸² it was only in more recent times that the religious art of Byzantium was transformed, as it were, into art object.⁸³ One of Peers’s most robust discussions of Christian animism is in fact directed explicitly against “modernists,” and he singles out Kitzinger, who, Peers argues, drew “a dividing line between the world of objects and world of meaning” and imputed that boundary back onto late the ancient world.⁸⁴ At the same time, however, Peers acknowledges that this dividing line is also prevalent in Late Antiquity. “This [animist] notion that no division between image and model needed to exist goes against many accepted explanations for Byzantine art, including,” he adds, “some of their own.”⁸⁵ Unlike Kitzinger, however, Peers argues that those whose practices of piety (represented by hagiographical literature) upset these distinctions did not so much misunderstand as *disregard* their importance altogether. In fact, it was the “theologians” who misunderstood the world around them.

objects gain agency and persons grant action to things” (Peers, “Real Living Painting,” 440, 435). Paintings—even those that were not media of miracles—were not just objects of human creation, Peers argues, but they occupied subject positions and agency over the humans who interacted with them. We can see the seeds of Peers’s fascination with this theoretical perspective in his 2004 monograph (Glenn Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* [University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004]) and further development in Glenn Peers, “The Icons’ Spirited Love,” *Religion and the Arts* 13:2 (2009): 218-247, but the fullest articulations of his position come in the two articles discussed here. Both seem to have been prepared in conjunction with Peers’s curatorial work for the Menil Collection in Houston (Glenn Peers, ed., *Byzantine Things in the World* [Houston: Menil Collection, 2013]).

⁸² Brubaker, “Invention of Byzantine Iconoclasm,” 1148. On the relationships between modernist artists and thinkers and understandings of Byzantine visual arts, see Roland Betancourt and Maria Taroutina, eds., *Byzantium/Modernism: The Byzantine as Method in Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

⁸³ Brubaker, “Invention of Byzantine Iconoclasm,” 149.

⁸⁴ Glenn Peers, “Object Relations: Theorizing the Late Ancient Viewer,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 975, 988.

⁸⁵ Peers, “Real Living Painting,” 437. Peers is focused in this essay on eleventh century materials (i.e. post iconoclastic), but iconophile explanations are set at odds with narrative sources in his work on earlier material as well, as will be seen below. For further scholarship on the continued Byzantine contestation of image theory in the eleventh century, see Charles Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting: Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) and Paroma Chatterjee, “Problem Portraits: The Ambivalence of Visual Representation in Byzantium,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40:2 (2010): 223–247.

In order to oppose the “animistic worldview” to the perspective of the “theologians,” Peers opens a 2012 essay with *Cos. Dam. 15*, the same brief narrative that Kitzinger uses to secure his identification of idolatry, claiming that it reveals “a powerful surfeit of matter.” The woman’s healing after consumption of the plaster, he concludes, attests to “a clear healing presence of God in the paint” itself, and an “essential relationship” of Cosmas and Damian “with their images.”⁸⁶ Returning to the passage a few pages later, he asserts that the description of the healing paint was more the “natural interpretation of the lively ingredients of matter” than a reflection of any irrational, idolatrous obsession. “[M]atter’s cooperation made the paint healing,” Peers argues, “the saints are not said to appear to her directly but must have acted through the matter, we are left to infer, that the woman shaped in their likenesses on her walls and then ingested.”⁸⁷ Thus, while Peers self-consciously opposes his animist approach to the “modernist” concerns of Kitzinger, his actual analysis of sources like *Cos. Dam. 15* ends up much the same. In addition, because he seems to assume that the relations between image, viewer, and divine (among other possible subjects) as described in literary accounts *reveal* an animist world, Peers, alongside many New Materialists, robs human authors of any agency in constructing those stories in which objects have agency.

Strikingly, neither Peers nor Kitzinger evince any interest in the fact that the selected *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* read at Nicaea II were only extracts. In fact, due to the influence of Kitzinger’s essay, the literary material he collected has become something of a dogmatic florilegium itself.⁸⁸ And while it seems that his reading of *Cos. Dam. 13* and *15* was

⁸⁶ Peers, “Object Relations,” 971–72.

⁸⁷ Peers, “Object Relations,” 983.

⁸⁸ Cf. Leslie Brubaker, “Ernst Kitzinger and the Invention of Iconoclasm,” in *Ernst Kitzinger and the Making of Medieval Art History*, eds. Felicity Harley-McGowan and Henry Maguire (London: The Warburg Institute, 2017), 146–47, who refers to Kitzinger’s essays as “iconic themselves” and expresses her shock at discovering how often subsequent scholars simply cited Kitzinger’s examples—“including incorrect references to textual editions”—to “buttress their own arguments” rather than conducting independent research. Brubaker names

based upon the full miracle story,⁸⁹ his interest only in the incidental details, as it were, about images in hagiography means that he treats excerpts of text as effectively a transparent, true image of popular views. The treatment of narrative portrayal as statement of fact thus relies upon the same appeal to clarity and a flattening of generic differences between hagiographical and e.g., liturgical, homiletic, or epistolary literature remarkably similar to that which undergirded dogmatic florilegia. On the other hand, Peers discusses only an even more minutely extracted passage from *Cos. Dam.* 15, which seems to be based on Cyril Mango's modern anthology, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*.⁹⁰ The decision to analyze only a small fragment then allows him to assert, not unlike the bishops John and Manzon at Nicaea II, that the account supports a straightforward belief in material saintly presence. Ironically, Peers also concludes that the "theologians" at Nicaea II cannot perceive the same spiritual, animate reality.

Florilegial reading, then, as I use it in this project, at least when it comes to discussing the role of images in late ancient Christianity and beliefs about the liveliness of matter, characterizes a mode of excerpting and reading that treats narrative portrayals and even metaphorical poetics altogether as straightforward descriptions of reality about the liveliness or lifelessness of matter. To be sure, as Alexakis points out, "the citation of an extensive treatise" was not necessarily conducive to the context or "needs of a conciliar session."⁹¹ The same might be said of some scholarly writing. But the portion of a narrative text that was recited only in part at an

only Patricia Cox Miller's *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 131–33—actually precisely at her discussion of Cosmas and Damian (see chapter 2)—but we also might point to Henry Maguire, "Magic and the Christian Image," in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995), 66–7, who expresses a nearly identical discussion and evaluation of *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 though with greater reference to the context of Nicaea II.

⁸⁹ Kitzinger, "Cult of Images," 107 n.89 briefly discusses the prescription of κηρωτή by the saints in *Cos. Dam.* 13, which is not mentioned in the excerpt from Nicaea II. See chapter 2 of the current dissertation.

⁹⁰ Cyril A. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood-Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 139.

⁹¹ Alexakis, *Parisinus Graecus 1115*, 5.

ecumenical council as evidence for a theological position cannot necessarily be taken to represent either the full text or its rhetorical concerns. To assume otherwise is to both rely upon the rhetorical force and to some extent reproduce the very debate which the florilegium at Nicaea II was compiled to resolve. In the case of the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, this has meant using the purported beliefs about images on display to evaluate whether or not the bishops at Nicaea II were correct, with Peers and Kitzinger each effectively recapitulating the conclusion of the bishops John and Manzon: these short narratives demonstrated the fact that the saints appeared in their images. What can we find when we attend to the full accounts of *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15 and ask what role the material images play narratologically to advance, resolve, or complicate the theological tensions played out therein?

While Burrus does not rely on or construct a dogmatic florilegium, by not exploring how, e.g., the observation of Paulinus's buildingness works within his goals in that letter and by denying metaphor by fiat, Burrus's argument rests effectively on the same sort of fixed authority that florilegia do. The New Materialist dogma that matter is animate becomes supported by patristic citation. In the same ways that ontological distinctions are flattened, so is literary creativity. While this tendency should be questioned altogether, it is especially important for this project to identify narrative particularities in depicting the liveliness of objects, especially when the animation of lifeless matter is part and parcel of miraculous events. The juxtaposition of miraculous with mundane does not mean that descriptions of practices and statements of fact can be taken for granted.⁹²

⁹² Roland Barthes called this phenomenon of narrative the "reality effect" or the "effect of the real" (see Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard [New York: Hill and Wang, 1986], 141–42). As Barthes explains in the case of nineteenth-century novels that piled up excessive details, the intention—or at any rate the effect—was to lure readers into believing in the illusion of reality created by the author. The impact of this effect on late ancient hagiography, full of "unreal" events such as demonic confrontations and miracles, is to render the more mundane details all the more believable and extractable. This issue (and Barthes's contribution) has been considered with characteristic precision in the context of finding "real" women in

Narratological Reading

Hence, my own approach to studying material images as they appear in texts in this dissertation is narratological and rhetorical. Modern studies of narrative have emphasized that the figure of the narrator is as much a creation of the author as any character.⁹³ Scholars need accordingly pay careful attention to the choices of an implied author to focalize the action and information of the narrative through a primary narrator (omniscient, at a distance, following closely the actions of characters) or any number of secondary and tertiary narrators. Different levels of speech and narration advance the plot, provide description, and recount embedded narratives to explain events in the main narrative, develop themes, persuade both internal and external audiences of certain interpretations, entertain, and alter the understanding of readers through narrative tension and irony. The dynamic set of relationships between author/narrator/audience and between story/events/narrated text established through narratological means makes narrative particularly important as a “*human strategy* for

ascetic texts by Elizabeth A. Clark, “The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the ‘Linguistic Turn,’” *Church History* 67:1 (March 1998): 19–20. Clark advocates for seeking traces of women by, e.g., examining the social and theological contexts of texts such as Gregory’s *Life of Macrina* to see what role Macrina plays as a character advancing the cause of debates external to the text (31). In the case of the narratives I study in this project, this means attending both to what Margaret M. Mitchell has called the “agonistic paradigm” of textual interpretation (*Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], esp. 59–78) and to the intertwining of historicity and fictionality that all narrative effects (Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988], esp. 180–92). In many instances, practices of image veneration, prayer, procession, and the like may reflect historical practices, but this means neither that they happened as described in the narratives (a point I hope will stimulate little disagreement) nor that the description of these practices can be fully isolated from their role in the plot, which may, in turn, reflect back upon the descriptions and the beliefs that ostensibly undergird them.

⁹³ Foundational studies in modern narratology important for my understanding include Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1983); Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); and Kent Puckett, *Narrative Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Particularly useful for translating these concepts and approaches to ancient and Byzantine contexts are Ingela Nillson, “Narrative: Theory and Practice,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, ed. Stratis Pappaioannou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 273–93 and the ambitious, currently four-volume series, *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, esp. René Nünlist, Angus M. Bowie, and Irene de Jong, eds., *Narrators, Narratees, and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature*, *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative* vol. 1, Mnemosyne Supplements 257 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), especially the synthetic overviews in 1–12 and 545–54.

understanding and organizing the world, coming to terms with time, space, and other human beings.”⁹⁴ As such, the descriptions of practices in narrative cannot be taken for granted.

In James Phelan’s rhetorical paradigm of narrative, the starting point for scholars is the notion that narrative is a “multidimensional purposive communication from a teller to an audience.”⁹⁵ This is not an argument for the authorial genius, but rather an *a posteriori* reasoning back “from the effects created by narratives to the causes of those effects in the authorial shaping of narrative elements.”⁹⁶ In this way, the analyst does not make a dogmatic declaration of “narrative does this,” but rather tries to remain attentive to the diversity of narrative acts by identifying a “feedback loop of authorial agency, textual phenomena (including intertextual relations) and reader response.”⁹⁷ While the reader who responds in any given instance in this project is typically me—though I seek at many points to strengthen my readings through attention to how these narratives were received and adapted by later authors including florilegalists—by entering this hermeneutical circle of sorts, I seek as a “rhetorical reader” to join the “authorial audience,” which is theorized as an ideal audience for whom the author (implied or actual) writes.⁹⁸

Accordingly, my analyses in this project take as axiomatic that the choice to give a role to material images in a narrative is one that requires interpretation. Narratologically, part of what makes the narratives analyzed in chapters 2–5 interesting is the authors’ choices to portray these

⁹⁴ Nillson, “Narrative,” 273, emphasis added.

⁹⁵ James Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else: A Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2017), 5.

⁹⁶ Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, 6. On notions of the “author” in late ancient and Byzantine Christianity, see Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Aglae Pizzone, ed., *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: Modes, Functions, Identities* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), esp. Aglae Pizzone, “The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: A View From Within,” pp. 3–18.

⁹⁷ Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, 6.

⁹⁸ Phelan, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else*, 8.

images in effect as characters. Characterization in narratology refers to the “ways in which traits (of all kinds) are ascribed to a character in a text,” as well as to the “interpretive processes by which ‘readers’ of that text form an idea of that character.”⁹⁹ As de Jong, along with de Temmerman and van der Boas, observes, techniques of characterization in narrative are often applied to spaces, nature, animals, and inanimate objects through personification and the “intentional stance,” namely, the tendency to assume that “even non-human objects” are “intentional, rational agents.” This tendency serves as a cognitive explanation for why readers are willing to engage with and seek to understand the minds and inner lives of fictional, “textual characters.”¹⁰⁰ At the same time, instances of characterization have to match, in at least some regard, audience expectations of how certain types of individuals act, look, and operate in the world, creating a dynamic interaction between author and reader whereby characters are drawn between poles of stereotypes and expected kinds of characters, on the one hand, and given gradually more shape such that readers must create new categories and schemas, on the other.

By tracking who speaks, who sees, and who describes images as alive or dead—and to what purpose within the narrative frame—we can describe a wider and more nuanced range of views in Late Antiquity on the problems and opportunities presented by religious images than recognized by the florilegal practice of taking (or claiming to take) textual excerpts at face value. Moreover, a focus on whole narratives, to the extent possible, and more specifically to the techniques, models, and innovations in the depiction of images in late ancient Christian narratives, helps mitigate concerns that New Materialist and OOO approaches so thoroughly efface human subjectivity and agency that no individual or group can be ascribed responsibility

⁹⁹ Koen De Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas, “Character and Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature: An Introduction,” in *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature*, Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative vol. 4, Mnemosyne, Supplements 411 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Temmerman and Emde Boas, “Character and Characterization,” 16.

for choices made, while simultaneously obscuring the fact that the anthropomorphizing tenor of describing things as lively is ultimately performed by human beings. Throughout my analyses, I ask: What are the intended effects and techniques of characterizing images? How do they affect the narrative? What do those intended effects tell us about the concerns and beliefs regarding material images and related forms of cult?

The rhetorical aspect of characterization informs this project in two primary ways. First, in a somewhat literal sense, modern narratological categories of analysis often form quite a close analogue to (and in some cases are derived from) the training and practices of ancient rhetoric. The practice of ἠθοποιΐα or προσωποποιΐα, for instance, found throughout ancient *progymnasmata*, focused on training students to compose and deliver speeches in the voice (or “character”) of famous individuals from history and literature. Students had to consider the personality of the speaker, the addressee of the speech—including age, occasion, place, and social status—and the general subject among other, varying topics to compose the most plausible, clear, and affecting speeches they could.¹⁰¹ This skill was useful in deliberative rhetoric, for instance, when persuasion toward a particular course of action often included imagining what great figures from the past would have done in the same situation. While the speech was itself a fiction, the rhetorician needed to strike a balance between portraying a plausible image of the figure in whose voice they were speaking and their own persuasive goals.

¹⁰¹ See Nillson, “Narrative,” 275–78 for examples from the Byzantine period. Cf. Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata* 10: “First of all, then, it is necessary to deduce what sort of person the one speaking is—and to whom the speech is addressed, as well as the person’s present age, the occasion, the place, social station, and the underlying matter about which the projected speeches will be delivered. Only then is one ready to attempt to say fitting words” (πρῶτον μὲν τοίνυν πάντων ἐνθυμηθῆναι δεῖ τὸ τε τοῦ λέγοντος πρόσωπον ὁποῖόν ἐστι, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ὃν ὁ λόγος, τὴν τε παροῦσαν ἡλικίαν, καὶ τὸν καιρὸν, καὶ τὸν τόπον, καὶ τὴν τύχην, καὶ τὴν ὑποκειμένην ὕλην, περὶ ἧς οἱ μέλλοντες λόγοι ῥηθήσονται· ἔπειτα δὲ ἤδη πειρᾶσθαι λόγους ἀρμόττοντας εἰπεῖν) (text in Leonardus Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci* vol. 2 [Leipzig: Teubner, 1854; repr. Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1966], 115; trans George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Writings From the Greco-Roman World [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], 47–8, revised).

The effect was often a kind of rhetorical “necromancy,” as Margaret M. Mitchell has described John Chrysostom’s animating exegeses of the apostle Paul, wherein the speaker brought a dead or otherwise non-existent individual to life through speech.¹⁰² A similar outcome was the goal of ekphrasis, the technique of vivid description. Ekphrasis could include vivid descriptions of visual images, but, as Ruth Webb has shown, the mode of speech more broadly constituted attempts to transform the verbal into the visual.¹⁰³ Through ἐνάργεια (vividness) and σαφήνεια (clarity), speakers hoped to bring a person, scene, event, or place “before the eyes” of listeners, who, in their mind’s eye, “would form the equivalence of a painting, or rather, a set of moving impressions.”¹⁰⁴ Speech gave substance to the speaker’s mental image—*phantasia*—which was intended to affect the souls of listeners in such a way that it would drum up and shape their own *phantasiai*.¹⁰⁵ The images created by speech were intended to unite the mental images of speaker and listener, but the orator held tremendous power in his ability to create new images.¹⁰⁶ And while purveyors of ekphrastic speech could lead a listener through the verbal

¹⁰² Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), esp. 121–34 on Chrysostom’s *hom. in Rom. 32*, a fascinating act of verbal conjuring in which Paul’s body is reconstituted from his dust. For Mitchell’s use of the term “necromancy” (or “necromantic”), see xix and 133, with reflections on how Chrysostom’s necromantic art speaks back to modern literary theory at 433–36.

¹⁰³ Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, (3–9. In slight disagreement with Webb, however, Michael Squire, “Ekphrasis: Verbal and Visual Interactions in Ancient Greek and Latin Literature,” in *Oxford Handbooks Online* (DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935390.013.58, 2015) notes the ways that Philostratus, perhaps the most famous purveyor of ekphrases of visual art, incorporates all the other rhetorical categories of ekphrasis into his descriptions: “also presenting his ekphraseis of images that cover all the topics of ekphrasis (non-artistic) covered in rhetorical handbooks—persons, places, events, times, speechless plants and animals, etc.” (There are no page numbers in this online handbook nor a print version; see p. 20 in the downloaded PDF.) Even descriptions of visual images, however, seek to convey the speaker’s vision to the auditors by translating the visual into the verbal and back again.

¹⁰⁴ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 96. On “before the eyes,” see e.g., Ps. Longinus, *On the Sublime* 15.1 and Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9.2.41. Cf. Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 101–4.

¹⁰⁵ The language here relied on a less precise version of Stoic epistemology, which constituted effectively a philosophical koine (Squire, “Verbal and Visual Interactions,” 5). As Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Greco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 231 observes, “both *enargeia* and *phantasia* carry the weight of technical precision (whether rhetorical or philosophical), yet simultaneously suggest an engagement with abstract, immaterial (and even divine) entities that, crucially, are experienced via the medium of sight.”

¹⁰⁶ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 27, 93–103, 113–120.

images they painted to an experience that he or she could not otherwise access, practitioners knew that there was “a level of factitiousness, illusion, and semblance required.”¹⁰⁷ Their representations in words never ceased to fall short of the goal—at least not without an audience willing to meet them halfway.¹⁰⁸

Like *ekphrasis*, rhetorical narration (διήγημα) was a foundational aspect of ancient education, and narrative (διήγησις) featured as a key component of ancient argumentation (in the law courts and elsewhere) as the speaker’s version of the facts of the case. As such, narrative, too, was considered to be “inevitably partial,” and students were taught that “plausibility was far more important than truth.” Vividness could enhance the plausibility of narrative, which emphasized all the more how “ekphrasis is part of a fictional creation which is far from neutral or innocent.”¹⁰⁹ The image that the speaker created could help the listener see the events that actually happened, but it need not. Objects, events, people, states of affairs, times, and inanimate objects all came to life through vivid speech—or at least an image of life that the author/orator created—in order to move audiences toward certain outcomes and conclusions.¹¹⁰

Second, to bring this discussion back to characterization, a significant piece of creating these living literary images and persuading audiences of their holy status was modeling

¹⁰⁷ Squire, “Verbal and Visual Interactions,” 5. Cf. Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 103–5 (esp. 103): “whether it represents credible or incredible things, verbally produced enargeia is always a matter of illusion.” (For different ways that Greek authors played with the illusory reality of their ekphrastic practices, see Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 167–92.)

¹⁰⁸ Ekphrastic speech is always “thus a paradoxical phenomenon. It is able to arouse emotions through immaterial semblances of scenes that are not present to the listener and may never have taken place. It uses the medium of language to create an impact on the world, the power of which is expressed in physical terms” (Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 106). As Webb continues, the illusory image created “is not so much an object, or scene, or person in itself, but the effect of seeing that thing” (127). The success of this effect, however, depended on the listener willingly participating.

¹⁰⁹ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 75.

¹¹⁰ See Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 64 for a comparative chart of the topics of ekphrasis, narrative, and enkomion; Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 68 for comments on how narrative and ekphrasis work together to enhance the plausibility and persuasiveness of the speaker’s case (with reference to Barthes’s “reality effect” [see above, n. 92]). On the imaginary quality of all narrative and their relation to “truth” see Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 1–25.

characters according to earlier exemplars. In fact, building on a play between literary and material that was already ancient by the emergence of a Christian literary culture,¹¹¹ through encomiastic homilies and especially narrative *Lives* Christian authors aimed at making the audience of such literary portraiture into living images in their own right. “Through *Lives*,” as Averil Cameron has written, “Christian writers could present an image not only of the perfect Christian life but also of the life in imitation of Christ, the life that becomes an icon.”¹¹² She adds, “The *Life* itself becomes an image,” and through it Christian lives in the present are figured in “relation to sacred lives of the past.”¹¹³ The verbal, textual depiction of a holy person’s life, therefore, was framed as both capturing the image of Christ that they cultivated in their own person and *being* the image of that holy person. Through these “living icons” (ἔμψυχοι εἰκόνες), pious Christians could enact an epiphanic encounter with Christ and place themselves within a divine iconic economy. Accordingly, by making apostolic and saintly forms visible through carefully crafted portraits of their souls modeled on biblical and earlier saintly exemplars, authors drew up characters that fit into imaginable and imitable character types that sought to persuade the audience to pursue, e.g., virtuous actions, ways of life, and modes of understanding the world around them.¹¹⁴ The portrayal of the saints and other characters within these narratives on the model of earlier holy lives required a kind of “narrative intertextuality” whereby authors

¹¹¹ See, e.g., the comparison made by the fourth century BCE orator, Isocrates, between the “portraits of bodies” (αἱ τῶν σωμάτων εἰκόνες), which are “fine memorials” (καλὰ μνημεῖα), and the “portraits of deeds and purpose” (αἱ τῶν πράξεων καὶ τῆς διανοίας), which are superior and visible only in words. While statues likened to the body “must remain only in the place where they have been erected,” the word portraits enable those whom they inspire “to imitate the character and purpose of one another” (τοὺς δὲ τρόπους τοῦς ἀλλήλων καὶ τὰς διανοίας... μιμεῖσθαι) (text, translation, and analysis in Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 62–3).

¹¹² Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991), 143.

¹¹³ Cameron, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 145; Cameron’s insights are discussed as well in Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 59, with additional sources.

¹¹⁴ Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 65. These literary portraits of others, however, often also functioned as self-portraits of the speaker or writer as Mitchell discusses in the case of Chrysostom imitating Paul; cf. the astute analysis of literary portraiture in Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, throughout.

counted on ideal readers to follow allusions, motifs, and character models within a larger story world and thereby be able to recognize and question both deviations from the expectation and their implications.¹¹⁵ The persuasive force of narrative, in fact, often depended on it.

Similar audience expectations, I wager, extended to assumptions about the liveliness of matter. Chapter 1 of this dissertation is devoted to laying out in detail the range of beliefs about material images and the relationships between inanimate matter and spirit that, at turns, both enabled and prevented the mediation of divinity in the realm of sense perception; in short, lively qualities in inanimate matter were both expected and exceptional, requiring an array of responses and explanations. By attending closely to how authors fulfilled and subverted expectations, I aim to describe different ways in which Christian narratives display sustained and distinctive engagement with the persistent problems of mimesis and the ontological chasm that separated divinity and matter. These literary negotiations cannot be dismissed simply by appeal to “practice” or “belief.” Rather, by characterizing or relying on characterizations of images as both animate and inanimate, the authors of the narratives on which I focus sought to move audiences to various conclusions—not necessarily or solely about images in general but other, related instances of religious and cultural controversy through particular, sometimes astounding images.

The narratives I study in chapters 3–5 simply cannot be analyzed without consideration of interreligious polemic, while the short accounts analyzed in chapter 2 similarly display concern on the part of an author with contentious theological and liturgical topics. Attention to the different portrayals of images as ambiguously animate figures among other characters and

¹¹⁵ On “story world” as “something that goes beyond the narratively constructed space in which a *single* story is set, see Sarah Iles Johnston, “The Greek Mythic Story World,” *Arethusa* 48:3 (Fall 2015): 287; on Christian apocrypha as constructing story worlds, see Hugo Lundaug, “The Fluid Transmission of Apocrypha in Egyptian Monasteries,” in *Coptic Literature in Context (4th–13th cent.) Cultural Landscape, Literary Production, and Manuscript Archaeology*, ed. Paola Buzi (Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2020), 213–27.

how these characterizations advance positions within contemporary controversies will allow greater nuance and depth of analysis than studies that treat and interpret narrative claims as matters of fact. In addition, the enhanced depth and comparative rigor of a narratological and rhetorical approach will lead in some cases (as in chapters 3 and 4) to an expansion of the canon of sources to be analyzed in the study of images before the Iconoclast Controversy by showing how thinking with and about images took place in surprising ways. Conversely, in chapters 2 and 5, renewed focus on well-known accounts will lead to revisionary readings of narrative sources that obtained fixed interpretations as part of iconophile florilegia.¹¹⁶

Finally, a narratological focus can and should be consonant with New Materialist interests, insofar as many of the leading proponents of New Materialisms and OOO themselves turn to literature for models of flattened ontology and the “real.”¹¹⁷ Harman, for instance, highlights the writings of H.P. Lovecraft, whose horror fiction, he claims, grants a kind of indirect access to a “‘mad’ uncanny reality beyond the apparent one belonging to science and normal human beliefs.”¹¹⁸ It is especially Latour, however, who, with his flat ontology and characterization of the agencies of inanimate things, somewhat surprisingly adapts the notion of an *actant* from the semiotic narratology of A.J. Greimas. A thinker as much a part of the linguistic turn as any, Greimas’s work suggests the value of narrative *as narrative* for questions

¹¹⁶ On the advantages of focusing on a small number of examples closely compared, see the “weak comparison” of Bruce Lincoln, “Theses on Comparison” in *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars: Critical Explorations in the History of Religions* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 121–130; Bruce Lincoln, *Apples and Oranges: Explorations In, On, and With Comparison* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

¹¹⁷ I am also seeking in this project to break down the “either/or division of creative versus destructive capacities” that Barnwell, “Method Matters,” 30 identifies as the predominant methodological attitude toward credulity versus critique in posthumanist and new materialist studies.

¹¹⁸ See Graham Harmon, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Alresford, U.K.: Zero Books, 2012); this characterization of how Harman values Lovecraft comes from Boysen, “Embarrassment,” 234.

about the spaces between the animate and inanimate that occupy my sources.¹¹⁹ Agency and liveliness, in narrative and social relations, are matters of doing, not being.¹²⁰ Accordingly, I track what the ambiguously animate actants do—both as characters in the narrative drama and how, at times, they influence the action from off the page—and ask how the authors of these narratives, through shifting actantial roles, move both animate and inanimate characters across the boundaries that delineated life and death.

As Bill Brown remarked, literature may be where Latour sees the free world of object-agents regained, but “it is also the place where such freedom can be lost—or, most precisely, the place where the dynamics of gaining and losing are especially legible.”¹²¹ Therefore, while I am not applying a single theory or framework, I am guided by New Materialist questions and object-oriented points of attention because the late ancient sources I analyze are preoccupied with them as well. Because they are narratives, however, I analyze these texts with attention to narratological choices in plotting and temporality, modes of description, and aspects of characterization. The varying degrees of agency and lively features granted to typically inanimate objects, as well as the techniques of flat characterization of human characters, are choices that require interpretation within the scope and goals of the narrative as a whole. Thus, while this project remains an historical investigation, it proceeds predominantly by narratological methods with attention to the roles of paradoxically living and dead objects.

¹¹⁹ The crucial essay is Algirdas J. Greimas, “Actants, Actors, and Figures,” in *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory*, trans. Paul J. Perron and Frank H. Collins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 106–20; see the discussions in Tischleder, *A Literary Life of Things*, 28–31 and Brown, *Other Things*, 171–72.

¹²⁰ As de Temmerman and van der Boas, “Character and Characterization,” 12–13 observe, Aristotle already in his *Poetics* 1448a28 and 1449b31 had described characters as “doers” (οἱ πράττοντες and οἱ δρῶντες, respectfully), which formed the basis of narratological analyses of character from Propp to Greimas.

¹²¹ Brown, *Other Things*, 7.

Outline Sketch (σκιαγραφία) of the Dissertation

The core of this dissertation consists of close readings of Christian narratives with a focus on the role of material images within them and how, through narratological means (such as focalization, characterization, pacing, the use of space, etc.), the authors of these texts affirm, upset, and complicate audience expectations surrounding the encounter of divinity in material objects. Comparison of the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, the *Martyrdom of Mark*, the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*, and the *Story of the Image in Berytus* reveals a literary discourse of images in Late Antiquity with far more dynamism than florilegal reading would suggest. Across these narratives, I argue, we see that when authors characterize material images there is no fully predictable outcome, in part because narratives are not “about” images in the same way that apologetic, invective, and conciliar texts are. Rather, by creatively appropriating and combining commonplace explanations and arguments about the materiality of idols, relics, and icons, the authors I study in this dissertation used images for an assortment of rhetorical and theological purposes. Narrative, in other words, provided a medium through which to play out the tense dynamics of images with paradox and irony. Accordingly, the detailed study I undertake in this project produces new insights into late ancient “image theory” by depicting what authors expected audiences to accept, be surprised by, and reject.

Chapter 1 identifies four distinct but interrelated arguments that occurred repeatedly in Christian rhetorical engagements with material objects of cult: the ontological, the epistemological, the demonological, and the psychological/ethical. Cult images in the ancient Mediterranean, both those that aimed at more naturalistic representation and those that represented through aniconic metonymy, attracted a sense of agency and liveliness that was negotiated in a variety of ways, including through rituals, prayers and acts of persuasion, the

purported appearance of bodily liquids, and the interpretation of dreams. After surveying different modes and media through which ancient Greco-Roman cult images displayed “signs of life,” I analyze three moments—with a range of supplementary cases—of argumentative grappling with such living images: the apologetic defense of why Christians do not worship the statues (exemplified by Athenagoras’s *Legatio*); the defense of relic veneration in Jerome’s invective *Against Vigilantius*; and the back and forth between defense and invective against Christian icons in the Iconoclast Controversy. By providing analysis of arguments across such a long period of time, the second to ninth centuries, I show that the repertoire of arguments both for and against material worship was remarkably consistent even as the specific kind of “image” under discussion shifted.

Chapter 2 focuses on the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 30, 13, and 15, introduced above, the last of which is among the stories most well-known by scholars of early Byzantium and which has functioned as a prime exemplar of Byzantine beliefs in animate matter. Each of these accounts featuring material images was read in the florilegium of Nicaea II in 787, making them a perfect opening case for testing the benefits of narratological reading over florilegial reading. In this chapter I reevaluate these three miracle narratives, which have surprisingly never been read and interpreted in comparison with each other, rejecting the extremely common argument that the miracles in these accounts entail the conflation of image and prototype. Rather, by analyzing how the author plays the icons against dream images of the saints, I show how the material images in fact remain lifeless and are subordinated to the cultic cure of *kērōtē*.

Chapter 3 turns away from materials known to scholars of iconoclasm to a little-studied apocryphon known as the *Martyrdom of Mark*. This narrative, which at first seems to have little to do with images, aside from the classic toppling of the idols motif that the author develops to

great success. However, my analysis shows how the author turns Mark not only into a living imitation of Jesus, but a lifeless epiphanic image as well. Moreover, by carefully and proleptically modeling the death of the evangelist at the hands of Serapis worshippers in the narrative on the destruction of the Serapis cult statue in 392, this text makes a claim for the supremacy of Mark the living image and his lifeless relics in the cultic life of the city.

Chapter 4 also focuses on a narrative typically outside the purview of scholars of late ancient and Byzantine images, the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*. This lengthy and, at times, frankly absurd narrative, is in some ways the opposite of the *Martyrdom of Mark*: whereas the role and understanding of images in the latter was subtle, the *Acts* feature an extended episode where the main character is a walking, talking stone sphinx that identifies itself as an idol. By embodying paradox and contradiction in a showdown against the chief priests and people of the Jews, I argue, the sphinx in this highly ironic portion of the plot represents an attempt to wrest idol-polemic from Jewish rivals. However, the sphinx plays other roles as well; it exemplifies obedience and witness, providing an ethical model for the apostle Andrew and readers of these *Acts*. In this way, the lifelessness and life of this stone idol both surprise and affirm readers' expectations about the power of God and the power of stone.

Finally, chapter 5 analyzes the homiletic narrative known as the *Story of the Image in Berytus*. This narrative describes the fate of an icon of Jesus that falls into the hands of the Jewish population of the city of Berytus (Beirut), who decide to imitate their fathers in mocking, hitting, and crucifying Jesus—albeit through his icon. At the climactic moment, when the spear pierces the icon's side, blood and water pour out as in John 19:34. Like the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, this narrative was also read out (in full, as far as we know) at Nicaea II, but with relatively little commentary either in the florilegia or among modern scholars. Yet, my analysis

shows how the author creatively combines the premises of ontological and ethical imitation to stage the showdown as one between effectively equivalent, paradoxically lifeless and living images in Christ the icon and the Berytus Jews. The blood that comes from the icon's side not only indicates its own embodied liveliness and intimate connection to Jesus himself, but it also works for this author to signal corporeal death and spiritual incorporation of the Jews into Christ through baptism. This use of blood is distinct from two commonly adduced parallels for the *Story of the Image in Berytus*, though all three narratives display a preoccupation with the boundaries between life and death.

I return in the conclusion to some of the questions about New Materialisms and what the narratives studied in this dissertation can contribute to the perception of lively matter and object agency, as well as reflections on the further study of narrative depictions of living images.

1.
The Paradox of Living Images:

Debating Lively Matter in Late Ancient Christianity

Mimetic forms in the ancient world were understood to hold the potential for making the absent or unreachable present and embraceable, but they also held the danger for deception and an overreliance upon the bodily senses that obscured the truth. The dangerous side of this mimetic paradox was particularly acute in the case of material images, especially those that purported to represent greater than human subjects. As Verity Platt asks,

The tension springs from a paradox that is negotiated by all sacred images in Greek culture—between their phenomenological effect (when they are experienced as a form of epiphany) and their ontological status (that is, their material and representational nature, their existence as objects). In what did the ‘sacred’ status of cult images reside?¹

In images of immortal or divine figures, their matter—stone, wood, metal, etc.—was generally considered to occupy an ontological position almost opposite their divine or divinized status. What connected image to prototype? Was the divine representable in lifeless matter? And what was one to make of these objects that seemed “by virtue of their powers, simultaneously to imitate and replace, to assume a life and autonomy of their own”?²

Among classical and postclassical Greek authors, as Deborah Steiner argues, the paradox created by accounts of “the seeing, moving, and not infrequently speaking image” over and against “the inanimate character assigned to sculpted works in Greek sources, which present the fashioned objects as quintessentially immobile, blind, and deaf and dumb” requires seeing the ancient image as a versatile “cognitive tool”³ that helped to “both define and transcend the divide

¹ Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 82.

² Deborah Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classic Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 78.

³ Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 136.

between the categories of the living and the lifeless.”⁴ Allusions to statues frequently signaled the departure of a human being from the world of the living, for instance, by highlighting the deprivation of senses in death. Images that moved, saw, and spoke, however, facilitated religious thought in different ways. Movement and vision, for instance, were abilities whereby the gods far outpaced mortals, which was in turn reflected in the epiphanic actions of their cult images. Divine images provided a mirror of sorts with which to view both the deceased and the immortal, Steiner concludes. When divine statue and mortal human came into contact in literature, inversions of capabilities—madness, blindness, immobility—often occurred. “The figures, together with the uncanny powers ascribed to them,” Steiner argues, “supply visualizations and expressions of the gap between mortals and divinities, and a means of contrasting two entirely distinct modes of being.”⁵

Ancient Christian anthropology affirmed the distance between mortals and the divine, but the combination of the biblical account of the human being created in the “Image of God” and understandings of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ complicated considerably an already complex conception of how lifeless images, human beings, and divinity could relate. Already in the letters of Paul, whose writings were in many ways the *sine qua non* of late ancient Christian ethical self-portraiture, the apostle sets himself up as alive and dead at the same time. As part of a complex argument about the grounds for his apostolic authority, for instance, Paul in Galatians 2:19–20 explains, “For through the law I have died to the law (ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον), in order that I might live for God (ἵνα θεῷ ζήσω); I have been co-crucified with Christ” (Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι). Near the end of the letter, Paul adds that he now “bears the marks of Jesus in [his] body” (τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σῶματί μου βαστάζω) (Gal 6:17), a

⁴ Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 183.

⁵ Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 183.

claim echoed in 2 Corinthians 4:10–12, where he argues that he and his associates are “always carrying around the dying of Jesus in the body” (πάντοτε τὴ νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες). He clarifies that “while living, we are always being handed over to death on account of Jesus (ἀεὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες εἰς θάνατον παραδιδόμεθα διὰ Ἰησοῦν), in order that the life of Jesus might also be manifest in our mortal flesh (ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φανερωθῇ ἐν τῇ θνητῇ σαρκὶ ἡμῶν). The result is that death is active in us, but life in you.” (ὥστε ὁ θάνατος ἐν ἡμῖν ἐνεργεῖται, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ ἐν ὑμῖν). Rather than marking fully the gap between mortal, fleshy human beings and God, the death that Paul carried around in his own body is what he claims binds him to Christ, “who is the image of God” (ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ) (2 Cor 4:4, cf. Col 1:15). He both carried this image (2 Cor 5:7) and himself was one, having already instructed the Corinthians to “become imitators of me as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1, cf. 4:16). To become an immortal image of God, one had to die to mortal things below.⁶

Human beings, moreover, were already mediators from the moment of creation. To cite just one illustrative example, in the early fifth century, Theodoret of Cyrrhus summarized what he took to be a common interpretation of how the human being in Gen 1:26 is made “in the image” (κατ’ εἰκόνα) of God: “after completing the material and spiritual creation (τὴν κτίσιν τὴν αἰσθητὴν τε καὶ νοητὴν πεποιηκώς), the God of the universe formed the human being last (ὁ τῶν ὅλων Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον διέπλασεν ἔσχατον) and set him like an image of himself in between inanimate and animate things, between material and spiritual (οἷόν τινα εἰκόνα ἑαυτοῦ ἐν μέσῳ τεθεικώς τῶν ἀψύχων τε καὶ ἐμψύχων καὶ αἰσθητῶν καὶ νοητῶν)...”⁷ Among the chief

⁶ On the influence of Pauline living death in late ancient preaching and self-formation, see Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, esp. 49–55, 133–34. On the connections between the arguments in 2 Cor 4 and Gal 2, see below in chapter 3 of the current dissertation, esp. pp. 169ff., and the scholarly literature cited there.

⁷ Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Quaestiones in Gen.* 20.2 (critical edition in N. Fernández Marcos and A. Sáenz-Badillos, *Theodoretus Cyrensis Quaestiones in Octateuchum*, TECC 17 [Madrid 1979]; I cite from John F. Petruccione, ed., and Robert C. Hill, trans., *Theodoret of Cyrus: The Questions on the Octateuch Volume I, On Genesis and Exodus* [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007], 50–1).

proponents of this view was Gregory of Nyssa, who, in his work *On the Making of Man*, argued that one way the human being serves as the image of God is as a participatory link between above and below, a creature placed between the two spheres but also partaking in and enjoying both natures.⁸ Theodoret is not entirely convinced that this is what Genesis means by *κατ' εικόνα*, preferring most of all the explanation that the soul is the image insofar as it imitates (unsubstantially) the combination of rationality (word) and vitality (breath) that is the trinity, but he appears plenty comfortable with the notion of the human being as both animate and inanimate.⁹ The Christian, restored to this initial status, stood on the edge between spiritual and corporeal, being in effect both immortal and mortal at the same time.¹⁰

If mortal and immortal were not entirely distinct modes of being for Christians, but both embodied in the human being, then how did Christians respond to the paradox that was manifested when inanimately material images showed signs of life? In this chapter, I analyze Christian argumentative responses to the paradox of living images in three key manifestations of this tension: statues of majority culture gods and heroes, relics of Christian saints, and Christian icons, each of which was subject by Christians to suspicions of causing idolatry. These three categories of epiphanic media each presented distinct features and modes of making the absent present, but likewise shared an ontological status as lifeless material things, which rendered uncertain the capacity of these “cult images” to provide access to or knowledge about living subjects—let alone immaterial, spiritual, or divine beings.¹¹ Hence, those who carried out rituals,

⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 2.1, 16.9 (Jean Laplace, trans., *Grégoire de Nysse: La création de l'homme*, Sources chrétiennes 6 [Paris: Cerf, repr. 2002], pp. 90, 155).

⁹ Theodoret, *Quaestiones in Gen* 20.3 (Petruccione, *Questions on the Octateuch*, 1.50–1).

¹⁰ Cf. Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 5, with additional reference to Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 38.11 (PG 36.321–24).

¹¹ The difference between icon and idol is sometimes among modern scholars articulated as one between images that have a real prototype and those that do not (e.g., Antony Eastmond, “Between Icon and Idol: The Uncertainty of Imperial Images” in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, eds. Antony Eastmond and Liz James [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003], 77: “if an idol did have a prototype, it

offered prayers, and gave honors to statues, relics, and icons were often derided—by Christians, but also at times by Jews and “educated Pagans”—as worshipping the lifeless image in place of the living deity. Conversely, however, miraculous bouts of liveliness were frequently reported in antiquity, making lifeless images into active, living things and presenting both problems and opportunities for those who wished to assert Christian supremacy, as the analysis below shows. What we see below in the responses to the paradox of living images is, at its core, a kind of argumentative continuity: signs of life could be leveraged to prove that the statue, relic, or icon really was filled with living divinity and that it was deceptive, demonic, and dead.

only existed within the image; it could have no external validity. ...In semiotic terms, in an idol the signifier and signified are identical.” This strand of argumentation had important advocates throughout antiquity, as I will show below, but it was only ever part of the equation for determining whether an image was “true” or “false.” Looking ahead for a moment, it is worth noting that Iconophiles base their justification of the connection between icon and prototype on precisely the terms that would render them eidolic in earlier antiquity: visual, external resemblance that enabled homonymy (see Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 5 on this sense of eidolic). This is not to say that their account was theologically invalid, but to underscore how definitions of icon and idol were dynamic and shifting, not natural categories but two possibilities even within the same image. There is perhaps no better example of the shifting eikonic/eidolic character of images than the imperial image. See Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 102–114; Eastmond, “Between Icon and Idol,” esp. 82; Maria Cristina Carile, “Imperial Icons in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: The Iconic Image of the Emperor Between Representation and Presence,” *Ikon* 9 (June 2016): 75–98; Valerio Neri, “The Emperor as Living Image in Late Antique Authors,” *RIHA Journal* 223 (30 September 2019): (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/riha.2019.2.68111>).

Moreover, in this chapter (and the project more generally), I tend toward using “image,” “divine image,” and “cult image” more or less interchangeably rather than “icon” or “idol” except in specific instances. Despite Alice Donahue’s insightful argument that the modern term “cult image” (or Kultbild) does not correspond to any particular kind of image in antiquity (Alice A. Donahue, “The Greek Images of the Gods: Considerations on Terminology and Methodology,” *Hephaistos* 15 [1997]: 31–45; cf. Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society*, 19–45), Joannis Mylonopoulos’s proposal to use “divine image” because they were used to visualize and communicate with the divine, distinct from others that honored or told a visual narrative (Joannis Mylonopolis, “Introduction: Divine Images versus Cult Images. An Endless Story about Theories, Methods and Terminologies,” in *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, ed. Joannis Mylonopoulos [Leiden: Brill, 2010], 1–20), and Phillip Kiernan’s recent decision to describe the “focal point of worship” in Roman temples as “idols,” a subcategory within the larger set of cult images that included votive offerings, decorations, reliefs (Phillip Kiernan, *Roman Cult Images: The Lives and Worship of Idols from the Iron Age to Late Antiquity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020], esp. 3–14), I find utility in using “cult image” precisely because any cult object, whether explicitly mimetic or more conducive to “mystical viewing” practices, could come to garner cult status, receive veneration or worship, and be reported as exhibiting divine presence through healings and other miracles (on “mystical” vs. “naturalistic” viewing, see Jaś Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], esp. 88–124; Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007], esp. 1–26.).

There are two additional reasons for focusing in this chapter on statues, relics, and icons. First, the narratives analyzed in chapters 2–5 feature statues, relics, and icons as actants and thus the description in this chapter of how Christians argued about these three ostensibly lifeless media provides a crucial backdrop for analyzing the types of issue confronted and deployed in the narrative texts. In addition, because the first section of this chapter constitutes a survey of ways that images (both those more on the mimetic side like paintings and statues, as well as those more metonymic like special trees, stones, and relics) were described in Greco-Roman majority culture sources as animate or otherwise blurring the line between image and prototype, this chapter provides resources for tracing out lines of continuity and difference in modes of liveliness.

Second, homing in on isolated moments of tension around these three media of divine presence allows for sustained analysis of particular arguments, from which we can abstract and redescribe a repertoire of intertwined but analytically distinguishable explanations and arguments for the liveliness of inanimate matter. These primarily include what we can call ontological explanations that emphasize the distance between matter and spirit, image and divinity or, conversely, the connection they share; epistemological explanations, which trade on the potential for images to reveal higher realities and distract from them (this includes what we can call the “memorializing” function of images, i.e., the effect of seeing an image on one’s memory of a subject and their deeds and characteristics); arguments that appeal to the demonological and attribute life or lifelessness to material images based on the activities of demons; and psychological or ethical explanations, which revolve around the status of the soul. By describing these types of common argumentative appeals, this chapter identifies a repertoire of expectations

authors could count on readers having about divine images, and thus creates the basis for comparison with narrative works in the chapters that follow.

Statues That Were Living and Not Living

In an account of the life of his mentor Isidore, Damascius, the head of the philosophical School of Athens when Justinian shut it down in 529, noted a particular detail about one of Isidore's own teachers, Heraiscus the Alexandrian:

Heraiscus actually had natural talent for distinguishing between sacred statues that were 'living' and those that were 'not living' (ὁ μὲν δὴ Ηραΐσκος αὐτοφυῆς ἐγένετο διαγνώμων τῶν τε ζώντων καὶ τῶν μὴ ζώντων ἱερῶν ἀγαλμάτων). For when he looked, his heart would immediately be afflicted by divine commotion and he would leap up in both body and soul, as if seized by the god (εὐθὺς γὰρ ἐμβλέπων ἐτιτρώσκετο τὴν καρδίαν ὑπὸ τοῦ θειασμοῦ καὶ ἀνεπήδα τό τε σῶμα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν, ὥσπερ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ κατάσχετος). If he was not so moved, however, then the statue was lifeless and had no share of divine inspiration (εἰ δὲ μὴ κινοῖτο τοιοῦτον, ἄψυχον ἦν ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἀγαλμα καὶ ἄμοιρον θείας ἐπιπνοίας).¹²

It is not entirely clear from the context of the passage whether the living images Damascius mentions here are specifically the kind of divine *symbola* that Neoplatonic theurgists sought to identify and combine to create a temporary dwelling space for a given god on earth¹³ or if Heraiscus also had a knack for discerning between statues that received worship (and thus were divine) and those which were more ornamental, as Philip Kiernan has recently suggested.¹⁴

Regardless, Damascius's recollection in the sixth century witnesses the persistence of a

¹² Damascius, *Vita Isidori*, Fragment 174. The fragments are preserved in the tenth century Byzantine dictionary and encyclopedia known as the *Suda* (Ada Adler, ed., *Suidae Lexicon*, vol. 5 [Leipzig: Teubner, 1938, repr. 1971], 5:450; I have accessed this passage and the translation (with slight revisions) by Catherine Roth from the indispensable "Suda On Line" (<https://www.cs.uky.edu/~raphael/sol/sol-entries/eta/450>).

¹³ Michael Motia, *Imitations of Infinity: Gregory of Nyssa and the Transformation of Mimesis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), esp. 61–70; Sarah Illes Johnston, "An Animated Image: A Case Study," *Arethusa* 41:3 (Fall 2008): 445–77; Algis Uzdavinyas, "Animation of Statues in Ancient Civilizations and Neoplatonism," in *Late Antique Epistemology: Other Ways to Truth*, eds. Panayiota Vassilopoulou and Stephen R.L. Clark (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 118–140.

¹⁴ Kiernan, *Roman Cult Images*, 9, 268–9.

longstanding view of many from Greco-Roman antiquity: some statues had individual agency—they were alive, at least some of the time—and therefore shared a special connection with the more-than-human entities they represented.

The basis for the divinity of these statues is reflected from an early date the ridicule of their skeptics. The Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus, for instance, famously described those who spoke to images of the gods as conversing with houses since both statue and house were made from inanimate materials like stone, wood, and metal—and both about as likely to answer your prayers.¹⁵ Plato, in his *Laws*, put in the mouth of the Athenian interlocutor during an argument for honoring one’s parents an unfavorable comparison between ancestors and statues of the gods: “Surely,” he argues, “the ‘statue’ that is the state of our ancestors is marvelous for us in a way that is superior to inanimate statues (θαυμαστὸν γὰρ δήπου τὸ προγόνων ἴδρυμα ἡμῖν ἐστίν, διαφερόντως τῶν ἀψύχων): the former statues, insofar as they are alive, always pray on our behalf when served and the opposite when dishonored; the latter do neither...” (τὰ μὲν γὰρ θεραπευόμενα ὑφ’ ἡμῶν, ὅσα ἔμψυχα, συνεύχεται ἐκάστοτε, καὶ ἀτιμαζόμενα τὰναντία, τὰ δ’ οὐδέτερα).¹⁶

The foundation of these critiques was effectively an ontological argument whereby divinities were so far beyond the statue that the inanimate object could in no way befit them.

¹⁵ Heraclitus, frag. 5: “And they pray to these statues—it is like if someone were talking idly with houses, not knowing who either the gods or heroes are” (καὶ τοῖς ἀγάλμασι δὲ τουτέοισιν εὐχονται, ὁκοῖον εἴ τις δόμοισι λεσηνεύοιτο, οὐ τι γινώσκων θεοὺς οὐδ’ ἥρωας οἵτινές εἰσι); cf. frag. 128 (text in Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz [eds.], *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. 1, 6th ed, (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951), Retrieved from: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/Iris/Cite?0626:002:24638>). The passage is preserved by Origen in *Contra Celsum* VII.62, where he cites Celsus’s use of the quote to demonstrate Christian philosophical immaturity.

¹⁶ Plato, *Leges* 11, 931e (text in John Burnet, *Platonis opera*, vol. 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907 [repr. 1967] Retrieved from: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/Iris/Cite?0059:034:715380>). For these and other examples of ancient philosophical critique, see Charly Clerc, *Les théories relatives au culte des images chez les auteurs grecs du IIe siècle après J.-C.* (Paris: Fontemoin, 1915), 90–110; Barasch, *Icon*, 49–62; Humphreys, “Introduction” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, 47–49; Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 51–2; Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 89–90.

Aristotle, in his consistently influential *De anima*, had articulated philosophically the grounds of such an argument. He writes:

The “animate” is distinguished from the “inanimate” by living (διορίσθαι τὸ ἔμψυχον τοῦ ἀψύχου τῷ ζῆν). But since “living” is indicated in a variety of ways, we say that a thing lives if even any one of the following is present (πλεοναχῶς δὲ τοῦ ζῆν λεγομένου, κἂν ἓν τι τούτων ἐνυπάρχη μόνον, ζῆν αὐτό φαμεν): mind, sense perception, movement or rest in space, in addition to the movement that takes place via nutrition, as well as decay and growth (οἷον νοῦς, αἴσθησις, κίνησις καὶ στάσις ἢ κατὰ τόπον, ἔτι κίνησις ἢ κατὰ τροφήν καὶ φθίσις τε καὶ αὐξήσις)... In the case of “animals,” therefore, “living” is defined by this principle (Τὸ μὲν οὖν ζῆν διὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ταύτην ὑπάρχει τοῖς ζῴσι), but the “animal” is defined preeminently by sense perception (τὸ δὲ ζῶον διὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν πρώτως). For even those which neither are moved nor change with respect to place, but have sense perception, we call “animals”, and not merely “living” (καὶ γὰρ τὰ μὴ κινούμενα μὴδ’ ἀλλάττοντα τόπον, ἔχοντα δ’ αἴσθησιν ζῶα λέγομεν καὶ οὐ ζῆν μόνον).¹⁷

Life is defined for Aristotle by the possession of a soul, which is discernable, first of all, through decay or growth and a nutritive faculty in plants, and then, in the case of animals, the faculty of sensation. Touch is the most basic and universal of sensations, but there exists a litany of abilities granted by different souls that allow them to be categorized and hierarchized—by rarity of ability if nothing else. As Aristotle continues a little later,

many animals have neither sight nor hearing nor a sense of smell altogether (πολλὰ γὰρ τῶν ζῴων οὔτ’ ὄψιν οὔτ’ ἀκοὴν ἔχουσιν οὔτ’ ὀσμῆς ὄλωσ αἴσθησιν). Of those that have sense perception, some have the faculty of movement in space, and some do not (καὶ τῶν αἰσθητικῶν δὲ τὰ μὲν ἔχει τὸ κατὰ τόπον κινητικόν, τὰ δ’ οὐκ ἔχει). Lastly, and least common, are those with faculty of reasoning and thought” (τελευταῖον δὲ καὶ ἐλάχιστα λογισμὸν καὶ διάνοιαν).¹⁸

This categorizing work created the conditions for anthropocentric hierarchies of value and agency, if not necessarily intentionally then in effect, where some things were more alive than others and

¹⁷ Aristotle, *De anima* II.2, 413a–b (text in Aristotle, *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath*, trans. W.S. Hett, LCL 288 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936 rev. 1957], 74 [translation revised]).

¹⁸ Aristotle, *De anima* II.3, 415a (Hett 84). These distinctions are broken down further in book III, where Aristotle reasons about the purpose of different senses for the well-being of the living thing (see especially *De anima* 434a–435b, III.12–13). On the necessity of touch, see *De Anima* 435b, III.13 (Hett 201, 203: “For ‘living’ is defined by [touch] (ταύτη δὲ ὄρισται τὸ ζῆν); for it has been demonstrated that without touch, an ‘animal’ cannot exist” (ἄνευ γὰρ ἀφῆς δέδεικται ὅτι ἀδύνατον εἶναι ζῶον).

were accordingly ascribed a greater degree of individual agency.¹⁹ To be sure, limit cases could confound boundaries. Sometimes, Aristotle noted, “nature advances a little at a time from inanimate things to living ones (animals) (Οὕτω δ’ ἐκ τῶν ἀψύχων εἰς τὰ ζῶα μεταβαίνει κατὰ μικρὸν ἢ φύσις), with the result that their boundary line goes unnoticed due to the continuity and is the middle point of both” (ὥστε τῆ συνεχείᾳ λανθάνει τὸ μεθόριον αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ μέσον ποτέρων ἐστίν).²⁰ His example of the sea sponge, which would emerge again and again in the history of reception, represents well both the problem and the solution. “The sponge is in every manner similar to plants” (ὁ δὲ σπόγγος παντελῶς ἔοικε τοῖς φυτοῖς), he observed. “But it always shows by small difference, one to another, that it actually has life and movement (ἀεὶ δὲ κατὰ μικρὰν διαφορὰν ἕτερα πρὸ ἐτέρων ἤδη φαίνεται μᾶλλον ζῶην ἔχοντα καὶ κίνησιν).²¹ Despite the occasional limit case, then, the general schema was clear and influential. Although Aristotle says little outright in his surviving oeuvre regarding life in inanimate matter like stone, wood, and metal, we can, at least tentatively, reason from his silence in *De anima* that they fall outside the categories of “living things.” According to these definitions, statues and other forms of material images were by their material nature irrevocably lifeless because they could not speak, reason, breathe, hear, or even move.²² In terms of their ontological status, statues were the polar opposite of the gods they were made to represent.

Nevertheless, examples from diverse chronological, geographical, and generic sources

¹⁹ See the work of Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), which I discuss further in chapter 4.

²⁰ Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 588b (text in Aristotle, *History of Animals, Volume III: Books 7-10*, ed. and trans. D. M. Balme, LCL 439 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991], 60, 62 [translation revised]).

²¹ Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 588b (Balme 64).

²² The question of whether rocks and other inanimate beings had souls did occasionally come up in the history of interpretation (see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015], 218–22) and already in *De anima* I.2, 405a (Hett 26) Aristotle mentions that Thales thought that stone has a soul because, speaking of magnets, stone causes movement to iron. Even in these instances, however, stone’s liveliness is so meager as to be render stone effectively inanimate, and this was the conclusion drawn and played upon by the sources I examine in this project.

testify to the lively phenomenological effect divine images had in Greco-Roman antiquity, either by exhibiting signs of life themselves or stimulating those who worshipped before them to treat them like living beings. Processions and rituals, for instance, often sought to involve the deity's cult statue in civic life and cultivate the sense that the deity was active in the protection of the city. As Steiner and others have noted, "images of tutelary gods worshipped in Greek cities were anything but static."²³ Even if the major cult statues were too massive to be moved in similar ways,²⁴ processions of images and cult objects were part and parcel of ancient religious life. The golden Artemis in Ephesos, for instance, was reported to join the procession on her feast day down to the sea and lord over the theatrical performances in her honor.²⁵ The Plynteria ritual in Athens involved removing the Athena Polias statue from view while she, her robes, and jewelry were cleaned, presuming to some degree the shame and indignity of being seen naked and aiming at the revivification of the statue. Countless others were anointed with olive oil and perfumed.²⁶ An Apollo in Syria, reported in the second century CE, would move and be ritually raised into the air by priests whenever it would deliver an oracle.²⁷ Meanwhile, a scholiast on Aristophanes's *Plutus* 923 notes that whenever there were altars or statues of a god to be set up, "they boiled peas and gave some of the porridge as a first-fruit offering to the altar or image."²⁸ This and similar food offerings suggest a conviction that the cult image itself or the divine

²³ Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 106.

²⁴ There were, however, other methods of making larger images move. See chapter 3 for the use of magnets in the temple of Serapis in Alexandria. For interplay between smaller and larger statues in e.g., Athenian Dionysiac festivals, see Irene Romano, "Early Greek Cult Images" (PhD Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1980), 70–78.

²⁵ Guy MacLean Rodgers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesos: Foundation Myths of a Roman City* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 156–57. Cf. Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 107; Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 229–33.

²⁶ See, e.g., Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 34; Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, "Images of Athena on the Akropolis," in *Goddess and Polis: The Panathenaic Festival in Ancient Athens*, ed. Jennifer Neils (Hanover, NH: Hood Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, 1992), 118–42, esp. 120–27; Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 111; Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 105; Barasch, *Icon*, 35.

²⁷ (Ps.) Lucian, *De Syria dea* 36–37. According to Lucian, the god would take its own initiative in moving and on one occasion rose into the air independent of the priests. See Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 45–46.

²⁸ Cited in Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 112–13.

presence it housed both desired and could taste and smell the sustenance.²⁹ While there seems to have been little by way of explicitly “animating” rituals—as in Mesopotamian “Mouth Opening” [pīt pî] and “Mouth Washing” [mīs pî] ceremonies that turned the statues into explicitly autogenic instantiations of the gods³⁰—these widespread practices both created and responded to the social agency of these cult objects, and cultivated for them in the eyes of many, both elite and non-elite, the existence of desires, sense perceptions, individual agency, and life.³¹

Rituals such as these blurred the often rather insubstantial line between the god and its image, which enhanced the notion of the cult image as what Christopher Faraone has called a “persuasive object”: if not precisely the divine figure themselves, then the cult image bore a strong

²⁹ On edible offerings, which eventually ceased, see Romano, “Early Greek Cult Images,” 132 and Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 112–13; for parallels in Roman western territories, see Kiernan, esp. 196–221, 278.

³⁰ For these Babylonian rituals, see esp. Christopher Walker and Michael Dick, eds., *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mīs Pî Ritual* (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001); Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, “The Mesopotamian God Image, From Womb to Tomb,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123:1 (Jan.–March 2003): 147–57; and, more broadly, Irene J. Winter, “‘Idols of the King’: Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6:1, Special Issue: Art in Ritual Context (Winter 1992): 13–42. For an accessible introduction to the parallel ancient Egyptian “Mouth Opening,” see David Lorton, “The Theology of Cult Statues in Ancient Egypt,” in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Michael B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 123–210. The closest Greek and Roman equivalents are perhaps the *hidrusis* (installation) and *dedicatio* (dedication) rituals, mentioned e.g., by the Christian apologists Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 22.5 and Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 6.17, but the actual existence of these rituals is a matter of some debate. See Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, “Greek Priests and ‘Cult Statues’: In How Far are They Necessary?” in *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome* (ed. Mylonopoulos), esp. 126–31; Kiernan, *Roman Cult Images*, 16–17; Kristensen, *Making and Breaking the Gods*, 49–51.

³¹ Kiernan, *Roman Cult Images*, 278 puts it well: Like a human being, a Roman idol could accept gifts and monetary payments, smell perfume, taste food, and feel anointing oil, just as if it had a human body. It could wear human clothes and jewelry, and even lived in a house within a local community, enjoying pleasures, honors, and experiences similar to those of elite individuals. Because the idol could accept these pleasures, it was natural that it could also be expected to hear requests, and to respond and intervene in earthly society. By interacting with idols on a human level, worshippers endowed their idols with agency that was also perceivable on a human level, and continuously reaffirmed it. This sense of agency was both what made idol worship make sense, and a critical component of Roman religious life. ...Public sacrifices, the carrying of idols in processions, and ritual bathing, not only affirmed the status of the idol as divine, but were also a form of mass interaction with the divinity.” Though Kiernan speaks here primarily of Roman images, we can see in the pages above that this was not a unique practice nor development. Indeed, Raef (Rachel) Neis, “Religious Lives of Image-Things, *Avodah Zarah*, and Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 17 (2016), 91–121 makes much the same point in her analysis of later rabbinic sources, but reasons from the perspective of image negation and what it suggests about agency. See below, p. 183.

link to the individual deity and could be used to compel or encourage certain behaviors.³²

Petitionary prayers to a given god, for instance, frequently took place in front of their image³³ and votive offerings at the cult site often served both to flatter or honor the deity and remind or thank them for what the petitioner sought assistance with.³⁴ Petitions were sometimes reported to be met with assent or rejection, as indicated by the statue's movement or audible utterance.³⁵ In one instance of object agency, a statue of the athlete Theagenes that had become known for healing petitioners and which was worshipped 'as a god' received a whipping from Theagenes's former rival, Thrasos. The statue subsequently fell upon Thrasos and killed him, a result which elicited its trial for murder and execution by drowning in the sea.³⁶ Conversely, to prevent such negative outcomes—and sometimes for the protection of the deity and the city—cult images were occasionally bound or blindfolded in attempts to prevent the god from fleeing or compel it to act charitably.³⁷

Sometimes, however, the signs of life that statues presented rendered them objects

³² On the image as a “persuasive object,” see Christopher A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 117–22; Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 105.

³³ E.g., Herodotus, *Historiae* I. 31.4, VI. 61; Euripides, *Andromache* 1117. For these and other examples, see Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 105; Barasch, *Icon*, 29–31. Bremmer, “Agency,” 12; Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses*, 136–140; Nigel Spivey, “Bionic Statues,” in *The Greek World*, ed. Anton Powell (London: Routledge, 1995), 347.

³⁴ See Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 31–50 for examples and discussion. From a transhistorical perspective, see Ittai Weinryb, “Votive Materials: Bodies and Beyond,” in *Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place*, ed. Ittai Weinryb (New York: Bard Graduate Center Gallery, 2018), 33–59.

³⁵ E.g., Plutarch, *Vita Coriolani* 38; Strabo, *Geographica* VI.15 reports on a statue of the Trojan Minerva that closed its eyes in tacit approval of the Ionian conquerors of Lagaria, who dragged away Trojan suppliants from her sanctuary. According to Strabo's guides, it was still closing its eyes periodically. See discussion in Barasch, *Icon*, 47 nn. 54–5.

³⁶ Pausanias *Graeciae descriptio* 6.11.6–9; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio* 31.95–99, and even Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 5.34 (see below for full citation). See Spivey, “Bionic Statues,” 354 nn. 2–3; Bremmer, “Agency,” 12; Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 44–45.

³⁷ E.g., Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio* 3.15.9–11, 8.41.6, 9.38.4; Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae* 4 and Plutarch, *Alexander* 24.4 reports that the Tyrians had dreamed Apollo had said he was leaving the city and thus “nailed it down to its pedestal” (καθήσων πρὸς τὴν βᾶσιν); cf. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.8.5. See Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 108, 160–68; Barasch, *Icon*, 37–39; Bremmer, “Agency,” 11–12; Spivey, “Bionic Statues,” 345; Anthony Corbeill, “Weeping Statues, Weeping Gods and Prodigies from Republican to Early-Christian Rome,” in *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. T. Fögen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 299.

through which the gods sought to persuade human beings instead. Ancient historians such as Cassius Dio and Livy report on a number of prodigies and portents featuring statues, which indicated a disruption to the *pax deorum* that would require ritual remedy. The statue of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium was particularly prone to animate signs, apparently, flowing with blood during the Second Punic War and weeping for three days in 181 BCE, while four statues at the grove of Feronia sweat blood for a full day and night.³⁸ A statue of Apollo at Cumae wept in 169 BCE, and another statue of Apollo wept in 130 BCE, an incident interpreted as portending the fall of Greece to the Romans.³⁹ Meanwhile, Cassius Dio reports on an image sweating in evident stress for three days during what was in hindsight a rather rocky year of Pompey's consulship in 52 BCE. A decade later, a statue of Jupiter leaked blood from its thumb and shoulder, which was interpreted as presaging the Roman civil wars that were soon to come.⁴⁰ These extraordinary moments of animation in Roman histories, typically connected to moments of crisis in the Republic (and later the empire), were not restricted, however to secretions of blood, sweat, and tears. Suetonius, for instance, describes a statue of Jupiter that burst into violent laughter when workers, commanded by Caligula, began to take it down.⁴¹ Practices and documented reports of animation suggested that the gulf between material and the divine might not be as uncrossable as was sometimes claimed. The material images already on earth could serve as means to influence the gods above, as well as signs which in their liveliness communicated divine dissension.

³⁸ Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 23.31.15; 40.19.2; 27.4.14. See Corbeil, "Weeping Statues," 301–2 and Bremmer, "Agency," 13–4.

³⁹ Julius Obsequens, *Prodigiorum liber* 28. See Corbeil, "Weeping Statues," 302–3.

⁴⁰ Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana* 40.47.2; Julius Obsequens, *Prodigiorum liber* 70. Cassius Dio also records how the statue of Athena in Athens turned from east to west and spat blood just before Augustus took territory away from the Athenians for supporting Antony (Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana* 54.7.3). Corbeil, "Weeping Statues," 298. For a comprehensive list of prodigies involving statues, see Ludwig Wülker, "Die geschichtliche Entwicklung des Prodigienwesens bei den Römern: Studien zur Geschichte und Überlieferung der Staatsprodigien" (PhD Diss., Universität Leipzig, 1903), esp. 13–5, 19.

⁴¹ Suetonius, *Caligula* 57 interprets this as an indication of Caligula's coming end.

Images *of* statues sometimes explored the line between image and prototype as well, as shown by the famous early fourth-century Amsterdam krater (Allard Pierson Museum 2579). On it is depicted Apollo in statue form inside his temple, next to which is a second figure of Apollo the living god playing the lyre. The two Apollos are depicted by the artist identically in face and body but differently in attributes, suggesting a strong link whereby, as Milette Gaifman has concluded, “the statue captures some of the god’s salient features,” at least, and the “temple and its statue *belong* to the god” like an attribute or even a member of Apollo’s entourage.⁴² While there is no indication here of the statue’s animation, the sensible presence of Apollo that the statue provides expresses a claim that the statue does not merely represent but participates in its archetype.⁴³

Even livelier is the relationship between deities and their cult images that takes place in dreams, one of most common venues for mortals to come into contact with the gods. This makes it all the more interesting that gods often appeared in dreams *as* their cult images. Sometimes in these dreams—those considered to be reliable messages with meaning, and not just flights of fancy or the result of indigestion⁴⁴—the images remained stationary and silent. Aelius Aristides, perhaps the most important extant recorder of his own dreams from antiquity, relates how in one

⁴² Milette Gaifman, “Theologies of Statues in Classical Greek Art,” in *Theologies of Ancient Greek Religion*, ed. Esther Eidinow, et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 263, 269 (emphasis added).

⁴³ Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 114–23. Cf. Spivey, “Bionic Statues,” 352: “If this metaphysical gift were implied on the vase, there would then be no need to apply the rule that here the statue of Apollo shown inside the temple is to be understood as ‘lifeless’ (*apsykhous*), with the ‘living’ (*empsykhous*) god also indicated without the temple. Both figures contain what is understood as Apollo.”

⁴⁴ Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.1–2 distinguishes between these (*ἐνόννια*) and prophetic dreams (*ὄνειροι*); Cicero, *De divinatione* 2.120 is more skeptical of dreams in general (text and trans. in Daniel E. Harris-McCoy, ed. and trans., *Artemidorus’ Oneirocritica: Text, Translation and Commentary* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 46–9, which as a whole updates the critical edition of Roger Pack, ed., *Onirocriticon libri V* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1963]). On these and other ancient naturalistic explanations for dreams, see William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 229–78.

instance he sought to force the head of Asclepius to nod in assent but was unable,⁴⁵ a resistance to mobility on the part of Asclepius that Robin Lane Fox interprets as “presumably like his statue.”⁴⁶ Often enough, however, gods were recognized because of their images, appearing in the same form, and or as statues that in the dream world were as animate as any other being.⁴⁷ Aristides tells of a time when “Athena appeared—the Athena of Phidias in Athens—with her aegis and beauty and magnitude and the whole depicted appearance” (ἡ Ἀθηνᾶ φαίνεται τὴν τε αἰγίδα ἔχουσα καὶ τὸ κάλλος καὶ τὸ μέγεθος καὶ σύμπαν δὴ σχῆμα ἢ Ἀθήνησιν ἢ Φειδίου). He exclaims to those standing with him that “she stood before me and spoke to me” (ἔστήκοι τε αὐτὴ ἀπαντικρὺ καὶ διαλέγοιτο).⁴⁸ Another time, Aristides reports that “Serapis, as he sits in his depicted appearance” (ὁ Σάραπις, ὥσπερ κάθηται τῷ σχήματι), performed a medical procedure on his neck.⁴⁹ A third time, still, he describes a scene at the Temple of Olympian Zeus in which, after an assembly in which he was recognized for his rhetorical prowess, “first, the statue was seen” (πρῶτον μὲν ὄφθη τὸ ἔδος) in a surprising form with three heads and “we worshippers

⁴⁵ Aristides, *Hieroi logoi* 1.71 (text in Bruno Keil, ed., *Aelii Aristidis Smyrnaei quae supersunt omnia*, vol. II [Berlin: Weidmann, 1898], 403–4). I follow the translations of Charles A. Behr, *P. Aelius Aristides. The Complete Works*, vol. 2, (Leiden: Brill, 1981), a revision of his earlier translation and study, Charles A. Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales* (Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1968), with my own revisions where noted. Behr documents places where he has revised Keil’s text in Behr, *Complete Works*, 467–70.

⁴⁶ Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1989), 158.

⁴⁷ For recognition, see *Historia Augusta, Divus Aurelianus* 24.2–9, with discussion in Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 225–28. For moving statues in dreams, cf. Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 2.33: “the gods departing of their own accord and their statues falling down foretell death for the one who sees or for one of his kin (αὐτόματοι δὲ οἱ θεοὶ ἀπαλασσόμενοι καὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα αὐτῶν συμπίπτοντα θάνατον τῷ ἰδόντι ἢ τινὶ τῶν αὐτοῦ προαγορεύει). . . statues of the gods moving signify fears and disturbances for all except those who are afraid and those planning to travel abroad” (κινούμενα δὲ τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἀγάλματα πᾶσι φόβους καὶ ταραχὰς σημαίνει πλὴν τῶν δεδεμένων καὶ τῶν ἀποδηδεῖν προηρημένων) (Harris-McCoy, 208–9, trans. revised). Cf. at 2.35: “it is always better to see the god standing motionless or sitting on his throne and not moving” (ἀεὶ δὲ ἄμεινον ἀτρέμας ἐστῶτα ἢ καθεζόμενον ἐπὶ θρόνου καὶ μὴ κινούμενον τὸν θεὸν ἰδεῖν) (Harris-McCoy, 210–11). For additional analysis, see Abel N. Pena, “Statues en mouvement et formes du portrait dans l’*Oneirocriticon* d’Artémidore de Daldis,” in *Formes du portrait in le monde hellénistique et romain*, Recontres 323, ed. Béatrice Bakhouché (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017), 95–112.

⁴⁸ Aristides, *Hieroi logoi* 2.41–2 (Keil 403–4), Behr, *Complete Works*, 299 revised; Behr translates τὸ σχῆμα as “form” here.

⁴⁹ Aristides, *Hieroi logoi* 3.47 (Keil 424), Behr, *Complete Works*, 316 revised; Behr translates τὸ σχῆμα as “statue; cf. Behr, *Complete Works*, 316: “Serapis in the form of his seated statues.”

stood by it” (οἱ θεραπευταὶ προσειστήκειμεν), and then, “the God, in his own depicted appearance with which he stands depicted, motioned for an exit (νεύει ἔξοδον ὁ θεός, ἔχων ἤδη τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σχῆμα ἐν ᾧπερ ἔστηκεν). As Aristides turned to leave, “the God indicated with his hand for me to remain” (ὁ θεός μοι τῆ χειρὶ προδείκνυσι μένειν).⁵⁰ The combination of identifiable features and actions in these exceptional dreams made genuine for Aristides the relationship between the god and the image that participated in its being, which enabled the worshipper to participate as well. Indeed, another of Aristides’s most famous dream reports suggests as much, describing how he saw a statue (ἀνδριάς) of himself in the sanctuary of Asclepius at Smyrna—that is, until “it seemed...to be a great and fair statue of Asclepius himself” (ἐδόκει...εἶναι αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ μέγας τις καὶ καλός).⁵¹

This array of well-known examples, which encompasses a range of literary genres and creative media, testifies to persistent and pressing attempts to grapple with the impressions of animacy and agency that images of the gods could create in viewers. Even if the statues themselves bore no more than a link to deities or conveyed knowledge about them in some other way, many rituals, prayers, and other attempts to understand and persuade the gods relied on the idea that their immortal power allowed them to receive embodiment in their differently mattered statues and act accordingly; the presence of the gods was revealed through signs of life such as movement, speech, the production of bodily liquids, and the ability to heal diseases marked particular images and even non-representational objects as exceptional.⁵² Individual cults and

⁵⁰Aristides, *Hieroi logoi* 4.48–51 (Keil 438); Behr, *Complete Works*, 328, revised. For additional discussion of these passages, see Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 160–64; Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 260–66; Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 184–204. For additional examples of lively images in dreams, see, Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 32–33.

⁵¹ Aristides, *Hieroi logoi* 1.17 (Keil 380), Behr, *Complete Works*, 280.

⁵² So-called “aniconic” images such as the black stone of Cybele (see Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008], 25–6, 41–2) are perhaps a case-in-point that representational mimesis was not required for signs of life to be observed, though we should not take “aniconism” to be the opposite, necessarily, of “anthropomorphism” (see Milette Gaifman, *Aniconism in Greek*

those who visited them accordingly trumpeted these epiphanic indications in part, no doubt, to enhance their own clout and prestige.

At the same time, however, the frequency of these accounts also suggests that historical authors such as Livy or Cassius Dio could count on such miraculous animations of divine images not to be so exceptional as to be unbelievable. The living statue was unexceptionally exceptional in Greek and Roman culture and seemingly *any* image could come to life even if most did not. The inconsistency of liveliness may well have been what gave the cult image in the ancient Mediterranean its strongest powers of agency. Focusing on a later context but with insights for our period here, Sarah Salih has discussed how the idol—a paradigmatically lively thing for modern theorists of object agency—revealed its nature as an idol both through movement and *lack* of movement because the one who approached (whether to overturn or worship) did not know which to expect. Should it have acted never, it would be a mere object; always, a machine. “Intermittent motility makes [idols] gods.”⁵³ The idol shared this latent animacy with Christian things, which pilgrims and other visitors often hoped would move or show life in their presence. Even when they did not, however, the lack of response could be interpreted not simply as “inanimacy, but as watchfulness, waiting, latency.”⁵⁴ It was this very “flicker[ing] disconcertingly between life and unlife” that made these “paradigms of inert matter” into agents: their makers, it was clear, did not fully control them.⁵⁵ Small wonder, then, that Heraiscus was so

Antiquity [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012] for a thorough review of the issues and evidence). In any case, archaic and otherwise non-anthropomorphic images were at least if not more likely to “strongly affirm the metonymic character of those images for the deities they stand in for” (Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 92; more broadly see 11–19 and 80–89). At the very least, as Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 100–105 argues, distinct image types were often employed differently to negotiate “the relationship between worshipper and deity, materiality and divinity” (105).

⁵³ Sarah Salih, “Idol Theory,” *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, 4:1, Special Issue: *Animating Medieval Art* (2015): 28.

⁵⁴ Salih, “Idol Theory,” 32.

⁵⁵ Salih, “Idol Theory,” 20, with discussion of exceeding maker’s intentions at 33–4.

lauded in Damascius's *Life of Isidore* for having the ability to tell between “sacred statues that were ‘living’ and those that were ‘not living.’”

The Paradox of Lively Idols

Ancient Jewish and Christian readers of the Septuagint found among the psalms and prophetic texts evaluations of “divine images” that presented a framework for “living” nearly identical to that presumed by Heraclitus and Plato, articulated by Aristotle. Such descriptions were perhaps particularly attractive because they were used to great aplomb against the practices of “the nations” (τὰ ἔθνη), which allowed Christians and Jews to use authoritative texts to flatten the diversity of methods for enlivening and grappling with the phenomenological impact of cult objects like those described above. Plainly, the idols of the nations are “made by hands” (χειροποίητα or ἔργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων) and thus cannot see, hear, speak, move, smell, touch, or breathe. These inanimate images are cast in contrast to the “living God” (θεὸς ζῶν) who does whatever he pleases.⁵⁶ Hellenistic Jewish writers like the authors of the *Letter of Jeremiah* and *Wisdom of Solomon*, for instance, built upon these tropes to present Judaism as an intellectually superior religion,⁵⁷ a claim that Philo, in his commentary *On the Decalogue*, reasons that “the forming” (τὸ μορφοῦν) of images and not simply their worship is banned because it causes harm to the human soul by disabling the rational mind. By committing the error of idolatry and

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Ps 135/134 LXX: 15–18 and Ps 113b: 12–16 LXX; Isa 44:9–20; Jer 10:1–10; Habb 2:18–20. On the parodic nature of these polemical writings in their sixth century BCE context, see Michael B. Dick, “Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image,” in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth* (ed. Dick), 1–54 and Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008); see chapter 4 of the current dissertation for in depth analyses of some of these passages. On the biblical legacy, with more attention to the second commandment and other image prohibitions, see Barasch, *Icon*, 13–22; Humphreys, “Introduction” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, 43–47.

⁵⁷ See esp. Wis 13–15 and Ep Jer 6, though in the latter the themes of impotence and lifelessness are prevalent throughout. For discussion of these and related Hellenistic Jewish discussions of images, see Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry in Flavian Rome: (An)Iconic Rhetoric in the Writings of Flavius Josephus* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 45–58 and the extensive literature cited therein.

worshipping material, human-made objects, the individual can no longer properly conceive of God and thus endures a self-imposed state of spiritual blindness. Moreover, because they focus on these material creations, idolaters cannot see that idols (εἰδωλα) are spiritually insubstantial.⁵⁸ “Therefore let no one,” Philo instructs, “with a soul [or: life] worship something soulless [or: lifeless]” (μηδεὶς οὖν τῶν ἐχόντων ψυχὴν ἀψύχῳ προσκυνεῖτω).⁵⁹ It was both a symptom and a cause of madness to confuse lifeless matter for the living God.⁶⁰

Similar arguments featured in some of the earliest writings by converts to the Jesus movement, who show familiarity with the idol polemics of the Septuagint and, often, the materiality critiques internal to majority culture practices of piety. Paul, in Romans 1:20–32, for instance, makes an extended argument about transformative irrationality in line with Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon. He claims that because, long ago, human beings “exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God (ἤλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ) for the likeness of an image of a corruptible human being, and winged creatures and four-footers and serpents (ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἐρπετῶν, 1:23), God therefore handed them over (διὸ παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς)...to impurity (εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν, 1:24), “...to dishonorable passions” (εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας, 1:26), and “to an obsolescent mind (εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, 1:28). The exchange of creature for creator—in an image, no less—both leads to and reveals a

⁵⁸ Philo of Alexandria, *De decalogo* esp. 66–74 (text in Philo, *On the Decalogue. On the Special Laws, Books 1-3 [vol. 7]*, trans. F.H. Colson, LCL 320 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937], 38–45). See Sarah Pearce, “Philo of Alexandria on the Second Commandment,” in *The Image and its Prohibition in Jewish Antiquity*, ed. Sarah Pearce (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 2013), 58–66 for additional analysis.

⁵⁹ Philo of Alexandria, *De decalogo* 76 (Colson, 45); also cited in Pearce, “Philo,” 67.

⁶⁰ Cf. the works of Josephus, who, though in the narrative portions of his extensive *Bellum judaicum* and *Antiquitates judaicae* construes the Jewish past and Jerusalemite resistance to the Romans as rooted in a strict interpretation of the image prohibitions of the second commandment, in the more exegetical sections of his writings suggests that full opposition to images was not a monolithic position among Hellenistic Jews. According to von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry*, 69–78, Josephus restricted the image prohibition to divine images, “a logical outcome of God’s character”: because God is utterly invisible to the senses and because the image must in some way resemble its subject, the depicted image is totally inadequate to the task (see esp. Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 3.91 and *Contra Apionem* 2.190–92).

mind that cannot perceive properly. It went without question that to turn to the new, true life, one had to reject the lifeless idols.⁶¹

This rejection, of course, at times set early Christians at odds with the political and religious authorities of the Roman empire—even if there were shared philosophical outlooks—and the so-called early Christian apologists took it upon themselves in a forensic context to present a considerably more substantial grappling with the paradox of these purportedly living images. In the late second century, near the end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius between 176–180 CE, Athenagoras penned his extended *Plea on Behalf of Christians* (*Legatio*) to the emperors.⁶² In his extended defense of the charge of “atheism” against Christians (4.1–30.6), Athenagoras spends a significant portion of his text explaining why Christians do not venerate images. Christians, he argues, are not like the *hoi polloi*, who, “unable to distinguish what is matter and what is god (διακρίναι οὐ δυνάμενοι, τί μὲν ὕλη, τί δὲ θεός)—and what a gulf there is between them (πόσον δὲ τὸ διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν)—reverently approach idols made from matter (προσίασι τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς ἥλης

⁶¹ In 1 Thess 1: 9 and 1 Cor 12:2, for instance, Paul remarks on the lifelessness of the idols in praising the Thessalonians for how they “turned to God from the idols to be slaves for the living and true God” (πῶς ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ) and in reminding the Corinthians that they used to be “carried off to speechless idols” (πρὸς τὰ εἶδωλα τὰ ἄφωνα...ἀπαγόμενοι). The author of Luke/Acts would deploy a parallel comparison when penning Paul’s famous speech in Athens in Acts 17:22–31 to direct his listeners away from the divine image in “gold, silver, or stone” (χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ, 17:29) toward the God who “gives to all life and breath and all things” (αὐτὸς δίδουσι πᾶσιν ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα, 17:25). The author of the *Didache* 6.3, moreover, in describing the way of life, warns against eating meat sacrificed to idols (cf., e.g., 1 Cor 8), “because the worship [it entails] is of dead gods” (λατρεία γὰρ ἐστὶν θεῶν νεκρῶν); “idolatries” (εἰδωλολατρίαι) are of course characteristic of the way of death (5.1) (text in Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007], 354 and 352, respectively).

⁶² See William R. Schoedel, *Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), xi–xii on the date and title as *Plea* rather than *Embassy*, by which it is also known. In what follows, I focus on the arguments of Athenagoras, but he was far from alone in his strategies. On the arguments of apologists such as Justin, Athenagoras, Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Origen, see Clerc, *Culte des images*, 134–62; Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 39–68; Barasch, *Icon*, 95–140; Robin M. Jensen, *Face to Face: Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 3–30, 69–100; Laura Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. 144–53, 171–212 for Justin and Athenagoras on Images, with analysis on Tatian and Clement thereafter; and most recently Robin M. Jensen, “Figural Images in Christian Thought and Practice before ca. 500,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, (ed. Humphreys), 114–23.

ειδώλους). Are we,” Athenagoras asks, “who do distinguish and separate the uncreated from created, what is from what is not, and the intelligible from the sensible...to go forward and worship the statues on their account?” (δι’ ἐκείνους καὶ ἡμεῖς οἱ διακρίνοντες καὶ χωρίζοντες τὸν ἀγέννητον καὶ τὸ γενητόν, τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ οὐκ ὄν, τὸ νοητὸν καὶ τὸ αἰσθητόν...προσελευσόμεθα καὶ προσκυνήσομεν τὰ ἀγάλματα;).⁶³ Giving several reasons why it is absurd to consider “matter and god the same” (ταὐτὸν ὕλη καὶ θεός), he concludes, “if we were to take the forms of matter as gods (εἰ τὰ εἶδη τῆς ὕλης ἄγοιμεν θεούς), then we would seem to be unperceiving of the true god by equating perishable and corruptible things with the eternal” (ἀναισθητεῖν τοῦ ὄντως θεοῦ δόξομεν, τὰ λυτὰ καὶ φθαρτὰ τῷ ἀιδίῳ ἐξισοῦντες).⁶⁴ Christians cannot regard the statues of the gods with honor and worship first of all, because the ontological distance between matter and divinity renders such a practice utterly nonsensical.

But sometimes the activities of idols had to be taken seriously. Finishing his argument about the lifeless materiality of divine images by observing that the art of image making is so recent that the names of artists who “made” the gods are known (esp. §17.3–5), Athenagoras moves to confront a potential objection. “Now some say that these [divine statues] are *images*, but the *gods* are those for whom the images exist” (Ἐπεὶ τοίνυν φασὶ τινες εἰκόνας μὲν εἶναι ταύτας, θεοὺς δὲ ἐφ’ οἷς αἱ εἰκόνες). It is not precisely that worshippers are confusing god and image, the imagined interlocutor argues—conceding the fact that images were *de facto* inferior to their model; but processions and sacrifices and other pious practices take place before images because “there is no other way (μὴ εἶναι τε ἕτερον τρόπον) to come close to the gods than this (τοῖς θεοῖς ἢ τοῦτον προσελθεῖν). ‘Dangerous are the gods when they appear visibly’” (χαλεποὶ δὲ θεοὶ φαίνεσθαι ἐναργεῖς). To substantiate the point, Athenagoras adds, “they provide the activities of some idols

⁶³ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 15.1 (Schoedel 31, revised).

⁶⁴ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 15.2, 15.4 (Schoedel, 31, revised).

as proof of things being this way” (καὶ τοῦ ταῦθ' οὕτως ἔχειν τεκμήρια παρέχουσιν τὰς ἐνίων εἰδώλων ἐνεργείας).⁶⁵

The citation of *Iliad* 20.131 (χαλεποὶ δὲ θεοὶ φαίνεσθαι ἐναργεῖς) added in support of the interlocutor's objection appears earnest at first, but simultaneously negates the claim for iconic effectiveness: the statues presumably *are* visible manifestations of the gods, meaning that images provide no benefit in this regard since they too, are dangerous. In fact, the phonetically resonant evidence idolaters provide (ἐνεργείας, ἐναργεῖς) gives Athenagoras his opportunity to argue for the danger of these images. Meandering his way through mythological and philosophical explanations about the Greek pantheon, arguing that these gods cannot be the highest God,⁶⁶ Athenagoras returns to the question at hand:

So, by what reason do some of the idols act (τίνι οὖν τῷ λόγῳ ἔνια τῶν εἰδώλων ἐνεργεῖ) unless the gods for whom we set up the statues exist? (εἰ μὴ εἰσὶν θεοί, ἐφ' οἷς ἰδρυόμεθα τὰ ἀγάλματα;). It is not likely that lifeless and motionless images have the power in and of themselves without something moving them (οὐ γὰρ εἰκὸς τὰς ἀψύχους καὶ ἀκινήτους εἰκόνας καθ' ἑαυτὰς ἰσχύειν χωρὶς τοῦ κινουῦντος). Not even *we* deny, of course, that in certain places, cities, and nations some activities occur in the name of statues (τὸ μὲν δὴ κατὰ τόπους καὶ πόλεις καὶ ἔθνη γίγνεσθαι τινας ἐπ' ὀνόματι εἰδώλων ἐνεργείας οὐδ' ἡμεῖς ἀντιλέγομεν). Still, though some have received benefit and others have received grief, we do not think that those which are active in either way are *gods* (οὐ μὴν εἰ ὠφελήθησάν τινες καὶ αὐτῶν ἀλυπήθησαν ἕτεροι, θεοὺς νοοῦμεν τοὺς ἐφ' ἐκάτερα ἐνεργήσαντας).⁶⁷

Rather than gods, Athenagoras argues, those who give simulated life to statues are demons (δαίμονες). Though he has recourse to Psalm 95:5 LXX, where the psalmist declares that “all the gods of the nations are demons” (πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια),⁶⁸ Athenagoras makes the same case from the philosophers themselves. Citing Thales and Plato, Athenagoras underscores how strong a tradition there was of distinguishing God from *daimones* and “heroes,” which are a

⁶⁵ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 18.1 (Schoedel 37, revised).

⁶⁶ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 18.3–22.8.

⁶⁷ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 23.1–2 (Schoedel 55, revised).

⁶⁸ Cf. Deut 32:16-17, Lev 17:7.

“soul-like substance” (οὐσία ψυχικά) and “souls that are separated from human beings” (αἰ κεχωρισμένα ψυχὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων), respectively.⁶⁹ Thus, he concludes, while there are certainly “other powers that are concerned with matter and operate through it” (ἐτέρτας εἶναι δυνάμεις ...περὶ τὴν ὕλην ἐχούσας καὶ δι’ αὐτῆς), the one who was “entrusted with the administration of matter and material things” (τὴν ἐπὶ τῇ ὕλῃ καὶ τοῖς τῆς ὕλης εἶδεσι πεπιστευμένον διοίκησιν) is “the God-opposing [power]” (τὴν ἀντίθεον).⁷⁰

This prince of matter (ὁ δὲ τῆς ὕλης ἄρχων) oversees other angels who fell and both “directs and administers things in a manner opposed to the goodness of God” (ἐναντία τῷ ἀγαθῷ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιτροπεύει καὶ διοικεῖ).⁷¹ Accordingly, “it is these aforementioned demons that drag men toward idols” (οἱ μὲν περὶ τὰ εἰδῶλα αὐτοὺς ἔλκοντες οἱ δαίμονές εἰσιν οἱ προειρημένοι), usurping the names of former human beings and deceiving people into making sacrifices or mutilating themselves because they think that either the statue is divine or that a god caused it to perform healings and give oracles.⁷² The activities (ἐνέργειαι) of the statues, then, are not indications of divine assent or presence, but the result of these demons taking advantage of souls that were especially prone to “irrational and fantastical movements” (αἰ ἄλογοι καὶ ἰνδαλματώδεις κινήσεις). that then “either drag imagined images from the matter...”—a subtle alignment of mental εἰδῶλα with material ones—“...or fashion and become pregnant with them” (εἰδῶλα τὰ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης ἔλκουσι, τὰ δὲ αὐταῖς ἀναπλάττουσιν καὶ κυοῦσιν). A soul that “attaches and mixes itself with the spirit of matter” (τοῦ ὕλικοῦ προσλαβοῦσα καὶ ἐπισυγκραθεῖσα πνεύματος) is especially vulnerable because, when it “looks downward to

⁶⁹ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 23.4 (Schoedel 55, revised); cf. the “demonology” of Maximus of Tyre (e.g., “Oration 8: Socrates’ Damonion [1],” in M.B. Trapp [trans.], *Maximus of Tyre, The Philosophical Orations* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 67–76), which Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 235–38 rightly describes as “a means of reconciling his philosophical commitment to monotheism with the weight of Greek religious tradition” (236).

⁷⁰ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 24.2 (Schoedel 59).

⁷¹ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 25.1 (Schoedel 61).

⁷² Athenagoras, *Legatio* 26.1–5 (quote at 26.1; Schoedel 65, revised).

earthly things” (κάτω πρὸς τὰ ἐπίγεια βλέπουσα) instead of up at those of their maker, it “becomes like mere flesh and blood, no longer pure spirit” (ὡς μόνον αἷμα καὶ σὰρξ, οὐκέτι πνεῦμα καθαρὸν γιγνομένη); moreover, these movements of the soul “give birth to idol-mad illusions” (εἰδολωμανεῖς ἀποτίκτουσι φαντασίας). Without sound teachings to help the soul contemplate its own nature and the truth of God, demons, “since they are deceivers of men” (ἀπατηλοὶ δὲ ἀνθρώπων) “...are able by occupying [the souls of the many] to flood their thoughts with illusions that seem to come from the idols and statues” (φαντασίας αὐτοῖς ὡς ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ ἀγαλμάτων ἐπιβατεύοντες αὐτῶν τοῖς νοήμασιν εἰσερεῖν προσέχουσιν), and then capitalize off the fame that accumulates around them as a result of what souls can do.⁷³ It was a fittingly unethical result for those who sullied their souls with earthly matters to be deceived by these unethical “gods.”⁷⁴ The imagined-interlocutor’s point is thoroughly unwound: if the gods are dangerous when appearing visibly, their images present no fewer hazards.

Athenagoras’s argument presents a complex and interrelated series of explanations for why Christians do not honor or worship cult statues, each of which comes back to the point that they are not in any sense divine. He begins with an ontological argument, emphasizing that the images themselves, made from lifeless matter, are so far separated from the living God that anyone who confuses the two displays the utmost irrationality. However, because sometimes these lifeless material images did display signs of life—activities such as movement, speech, breath, healings, etc.—Athenagoras pivots to a demonological argument, explaining how even the Greek philosophers thought that most of the “gods” were no more than *daimones* and integrating this conclusion into a biblical framework that cast these intermediary deities as evil

⁷³ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 27.1–2 (Schoedel 67, revised).

⁷⁴ On the unethical activities of the ‘gods’, see Athenagoras, *Legatio* 28–30. Much of the argument about statues and demons is paralleled in e.g., Origen’s *Contra Celsum* VII.62–9.

demons. It is these demons, associated with matter despite their own subtle, immaterial substance, that cause the statues to become active—or at least to make weak souls misperceive them as active—so that increasingly materialized souls become idol-mad and see lifeless matter as alive. Stuck in the realm of “opinion” (δόξα), the diseased and disordered soul becomes like the statues and demons of matter it is beguiled by and cannot know God. The soul with no knowledge of the living god recognizes only false, unethical gods and lifeless statues. Ontological and demonological arguments conclude in epistemological, psychological, and ethical explanations.

So how was God, so far separated from matter, to be worshipped and known? Greco-Roman defenders of cult images, often accepting the implicit ontological inferiority of images like Athenagoras’s imagined interlocutor, had some solutions. Already in the late first century, Dio Chrysostom, in his famous *Olympic Oration*, sought to thread the needle between viewing the famous chryselephantine statue of Zeus by Phidias as a “representation” of the deity and as a “direct channel of communication and a conjuring of presence” by presenting the statue (in an elaborate *prosopopoeia* of Phidias himself) as the manifestation of the artist’s conception of divinity. The Zeus is not equated or confused with divinity, but, mediated through the artist’s vision, manifests “the whole of god’s nature and power...insofar as it is possible for a mortal man to frame in his mind and to represent the divine and inimitable nature”⁷⁵ Maximus of Tyre privileged oral speech as a medium because words, like the gods, “were fluid, immaterial entities,” but nonetheless saw texts and especially images as spurs to memory “by which unimaginative mortals can be prompted to a lesser form of religious understanding.” The image

⁷⁵ See esp. Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio 12.70–83* (text and trans. in Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses 12–30*, ed. and trans. J.W. Cohoon, LCL 339 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939], 72–85); quote from Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 233.

itself may not be divine, but it could nevertheless communicate a sort of visionary encounter with the divine by reminding viewers of their deeds.⁷⁶ Moreover, Porphyry wrote a work, unfortunately now preserved only in fragments, in which he allegorized the cult statues, relating an image's attributes to what they revealed about the god(s) and lambasting those who thought the image represented the god "literally."⁷⁷

These explanations, certainly known to someone like Eusebius of Caesarea in the early fourth century, were apparently not sufficient.⁷⁸ Partway through the third book of his work for converts and would-be catechumens, the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, Eusebius returned to the material liabilities of Greco-Roman cult images. Observing that it is not even possible to make an image of all the visible parts of the world, Eusebius asks how someone could create an image of God, who is *invisible* and who made the world. He continues, "And what resemblance can a human body have to the mind of God? (τί δ' ἄν ἔχοι σῶμα ἀνθρώπειον ἐμφορῆς πρὸς τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ νοῦν;)...since the one is incorporeal, uncomposite, and undivided" (ἐπεὶ ὁ μὲν ἀσώματος καὶ ἀσύνθετος καὶ ἀμερῆς). A likeness of a human body, he continues is merely "the work of common artisans (τὸ δὲ βαναύσων ἀνδρῶν ἔργον); it copies the nature of a mortal body (θνητοῦ σώματος φύσιν ἀπομεμίμηται), and it has inscribed a deaf and dumb image of living flesh in lifeless and dead matter" (καὶ ζώσης σαρκὸς ἀψύχῳ καὶ νεκρᾷ ὕλῃ κωφὴν καὶ ἄναυδον εἰκόνα καταγράφεται).⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Maximus of Tyre, *Oratio 2* in Trapp, *Maximus of Tyre*, 15–23. See Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 229–30.

⁷⁷ Porphyry, *Peri agalmatōn*, esp. fragment 1 (text in J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre le philosophe néo-platonicien*, [Leipzig: Teubner, 1913, repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1964]), which argues that the god's powers are rendered susceptible to sense perception in images. Other these and other "philosophizing" defenses of image veneration, see Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 215–52; Clerc, *Culte des images*, 171–258; Ando, *Matter of the Gods*, 32.

⁷⁸ In fact, Eusebius is one of the main sources we have for works like Porphyry's *Peri agalmatōn*, see *Praeparatio Evangelica* 3.7.1, 3.9.1, and 3.11 (throughout).

⁷⁹ Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* III.10.15 (Greek text in Karl Mras, ed., *Eusebius Werke: Achter Band, Die Praeparatio Evangelica*, GCS 43 [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1954], Retrieved from: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/Iris/Cite?2018:001:0>).

Eusebius argues, however, that “the rational and immortal soul” (ψυχὴ μὲν οὖν λογικὴ καὶ ἀθάνατος) at least, “seems to me well described as preserving an image and likeness of God” (εἴ μοι δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι εἰκόνα καὶ ὁμοίωσιν ἀποσφᾶζειν θεοῦ), because it is in essence (οὐσία) “immaterial and incorporeal” (ἄυλος καὶ ἀσώματος) and likewise “capable of virtue and wisdom” (ἀρετῆς οὖσα καὶ σοφίας δεκτικὴ).⁸⁰ But not even the soul is depictable in material form. “If someone could construct a statue of the soul and its form in an image” (εἰ δὴ τις εἴη δυνατὸς ψυχῆς ἄγαλμα καὶ μορφήν ἐν εἰκόνι τεκτίνασθαι), Eusebius reasons, then they *might* be able to make a representation of higher orders. But this is unlikely because not even the human mind is comprehensible (καταληπτὸς) by the senses. Therefore, it would be madness for someone to declare (ἀποφαίνω) that they think “the material image of a human being (τὸ ἀνδρείκελον ξόανον) bears the form and image of the Most High God” (θεοῦ τοῦ ἀνωτάτω μορφήν καὶ εἰκόνα φέρειν). God is separate, Eusebius argues, from “all mortal matter” (πάσης θνητῆς ὕλης). And yet, he continues, evidently rejecting Dio Chrysostom’s argument, this what statues of Zeus suggest. “The figure of visible Zeus in the representation would be an image of a man mortal by nature (τὸ δὲ γε τοῦ ὀρωμένου Διὸς ἐν τῷ δεικίλῳ σχῆμα εἴη ἄν θνητοῦ τὴν φύσιν ἀνδρὸς εἰκόν)—not even having imitated the whole person, but the worse part of him (οὐδὲ τὸν ὅλον ἄνθρωπον, μέρος δε τι τὸ χεῖρον αὐτοῦ μεμιμημένον), because it procures not even a trace of life and soul” (ὅτι μηδὲν ἵχνος ζωῆς καὶ ψυχῆς ἐπάγει).⁸¹

Little in this portion of Eusebius’s *Praeparatio* is particularly innovative—presumably by design—but it is interesting to see how he deploys the psychological argument. Beginning with the commonplace proclamation of the ontological distance between matter and God, Eusebius turns to the parallel distinction between body and soul. Not only is the image useless for

⁸⁰ Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* III.10.16.

⁸¹ Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* III.10.17–18.

representing or knowing the deity, it is a lifeless image of a body which is in and of itself also lifeless. The soul, however, at least presents an ontologically appropriate image of God, though (or perhaps because) it too is invisible, incorporeal, and cannot be portrayed visually by images. It animates the body, showing one way in which it preserves likeness to the living god, but it is only “apart from all perishable material” (ἔξω πάσης θνητῆς ὕλης) that “purified souls in lucid thought and silence” (νῶ διαυγεῖ καὶ σιγῇ ψυχαῖς κεκαθαρμέναις) can imagine and contemplate God.⁸² The soul, though it is itself not subject to depiction by image, both is the image of God and the medium for viewing.

In effect, these different but interrelated argumentative commonplaces about cult statues also crystallized a number of associations with images that would present both problems and opportunities later. Death was connected to the material image, the body and senses, the idol, and to “paganism” writ large. Life, on the other hand, was paired with speech and virtues, the soul and “pure spirit,” as well as the “living God” and Christianity more broadly. The former was false and deceitful, the latter true and reliable. But as we’ll see, both true and false images could show signs of life.

The Paradox of Lifeless Relics

If the body was the “worse part” of the human being during life, one would expect it to be all the more useless and inanimate after death. But for many, the miraculous deeds of the lifeless bodies—even body parts—of saints provided the opportunity to perceive the divine on earth. Although early Christian apologists like Athenagoras had argued that the animation of material

⁸² Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* III.10.18. The demonological plays less of a role in Eusebius’s exposition and argumentation, but ultimately he attributes all the idolatrous activities of “pagans” to “demonic activity” (δαίμονικὴ ἐνέργεια) in III.17.1.

images was false, the result of diseased, fantasizing souls deceived by demons, Christian ritual and cultic practices, including the signs of life exhibited by material mediations of divine power, were on the whole similar. Images and relics, for instance, came to serve as protectors of cities and churches, they heard prayers, and they participated in processions that granted them movement. Miracles happened in their presence, and they often teemed with life by producing liquids in excess of their inanimate abilities.⁸³ Relics may not have represented the divine aesthetically, but they seemed to localize and participate in holiness as paradoxically material media for the saints who were themselves living images. To look *at* them, to be in their presence, was to see more than what they were. Relics were literally lifeless matter, except when they weren't.

In the late fourth century, probably in 396 and possibly influenced by a now lost commentary on Job written by Origen, the Gallic presbyter Vigilantius evidently changed his views on the nature of the resurrection, rejecting the conclusion he had shared with Jerome that it entailed resolutely physical restoration of the body in favor of an evolved or wholly spiritual body.⁸⁴ Accordingly, he also came to reject the notion that the infinitesimally divisible relics of saintly bodies remained inseparable from their souls after death, which, for preachers like Vitricius of Rouen, were also proof of the bodily resurrection.⁸⁵ According to Jerome, who penned a scathing letter criticizing Vigilantius's views in *Letter 109* in 404 and a polemic treatise *Against Vigilantius* two years later, the presbyter had critiqued Christians who lit tapers for relics

⁸³ Christopher R. Sweeny, "Holy Images and Holy Matter: Images in the Performance of Miracles in the Age before Iconoclasm," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 26:1 (Spring 2018): 111–38. On analogous Christian rituals and persuasive practices, see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 47–77; Ando, *Matter of the Gods*, 149–98.

⁸⁴ See Jerome, *Letter* 61, written to Vigilantius in 396 (text and trans. in Amy Hye Oh, "A Commentary on Jerome's *Against Vigilantius*" [PhD Diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2013]), 184–189); discussion in Oh, "Jerome's *Against Vigilantius*," 39–41).

⁸⁵ Oh, "Jerome's *Against Vigilantius*," 41–3. On a parallel response to the controversial status of souls and bodies after death at this time, see C.M. Chin's analysis of Ambrose on the death of the body creating a bilocative non-individuality in "The Bishop's Two Bodies: Ambrose and the Basilicas of Milan," *Church History* 79:3 (Sept. 2010): 541–45.

for participating “in a ritual proper to pagans” (*prope ritum gentilium*). They were not merely offering honor but even “kiss[ing] bits of dust in adoration” (*pulvisculum... osculantes adorant*). Moreover, Vigilantius accused relic-honoring Christians of “deeming [the martyrs] glorified by ignoble waxes [of candles]” (*quos putant de vilissimis cereolis illustrandos*).⁸⁶ In a slightly earlier letter, Jerome complains that Vigilantius even “calls those of us who defend them ‘ashmongers and idolaters who venerate dead men's bones’” (*nos qui eas [reliquias] suscipimus appellare cinerarios et idolatras, qui mortuorum hominum ossa veneremur*).⁸⁷ The substance of Vigilantius’s critique rested on the same foundations as the arguments made by the apologists against material idols: inanimate matter provided no fitting way to venerate living divinity and was in fact a distraction from spiritual worship.⁸⁸

Jerome’s initial reaction is to allege that Vigilantius is the one with a dead-matter problem because he himself engages in lifeless reading practices.

When he says these things, he does not realize that he is a Samaritan and a Jew (*qui haec dicens non se intellegit esse Samaritam et Iudaeum*), people who regard the bodies of the dead as unclean and even suspect that vessels which are in the same house [as dead bodies] are polluted (*qui corpora mortuorum pro inmundis habent et etiam vasa, quae in eadem domo fuerint, pollui suspicantur*), following the letter that kills and not the spirit that gives life” (*sequentes occidentem litteram et non spiritum vivificantem*).⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 4 (text in J.-L. Feiertag, ed., *S. Hieronymi presbyteri opera: opera III, opera polemica 5: Adversus Vigilantium*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 79C [Turnhout: Brepols, 2005], 11). Translations of *Against Vigilantius* are my own. In addition to Oh, “Jerome’s *Against Vigilantius*,” see David G. Hunter, “Vigilantius of Calagurris and Victricius of Rouen: Ascetics, Relics, and Clerics in Late Roman Gaul,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7:3 (Fall 1999), 401–30. The arguments concerning relics and icons developed differently in eastern and western parts of the later Roman Empire, but Jerome wrote *Letter 109* and *Adversus Vigilantium* from Bethlehem in the east to his colleagues back in France and Italy, and many of the arguments he makes are echoed in John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* IV.15 (and, in a different manner, in sixth-century debates about the state of the soul; see chapter 2). As a result, I consider his writings on relics at least broadly representative of the concerns that relics and their veneration raised for Christians across the empire. For the text of *Letter 109*, see Isidorus Hilberg, ed., *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi epistulae, pars II: epistulae LXXI–CXX*, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 55 (Lisipiae: Freytag, 1912), 351–56.

⁸⁷ Jerome, *Letter 109.1* (CSEL 55, p. 351).

⁸⁸ For a nuanced reconstruction of Vigilantius’s career, views, and exegesis, despite being extracted largely from Jerome’s own writings, see Oh, “Jerome’s *Against Vigilantius*,” 19–36.

⁸⁹ Jerome, *Letter 109.1* (CSEL 55, 352). Cf. 2 Cor 3:6.

In the longer response, however, Jerome gets straight to the heart of how some Christians sought to deal with the persistent problems presented by the meeting of matter and spirit; he denies that the saints, whose bodily relics are the subject of discussion, are actually dead. In response to the charge of idolatry, Jerome again contends that Vigilantius is suspicious (*suscipio*) of dead bodies before commanding, “Read the Gospel: ‘The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob: he is not the God of the dead but of the living’” (*Lege Evangelium: Deus Abraham, Deus Isaac, Deus Jacob: non est Deus mortuorum, sed vivorum.*) He continues, “If, therefore, they are alive, then they are not closed up in this ‘fancy prison’ [of an altar or reliquary] as you say” (*Si ergo vivunt honesto iuxta te carcere non claduntur*).⁹⁰ Rather, the saints and martyrs roam with God after they die.⁹¹ Vigilantius, it seems, is requiring corporeal life as a precondition for spiritual agency. “You say in your book that when we live, we are able to pray on behalf of each other (*dicis in libello tuo, quod dum vivimus, mutuo pro nobis orare possumus*); but after we have died, that no prayer can be heard on behalf someone else” (*postquam autem mortui fuerimus, nullius sit pro alio exaudienda oratio*).⁹² Is the implication, he asks, that “after they begin to be with Christ, they will have *less power?*” (*et postquam cum Christo esse coeperint, minus valebunt?*).⁹³

Slyly bringing in the question of Paul’s letters, Jerome draws an unfavorable comparison between Vigilantius and the apostle, demanding to know if Paul “will not even be able to

⁹⁰ Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 5 (CCSL 13). Cf. Matt 22:32.

⁹¹ Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 6 (CCSL 13): “For you say that the souls of the apostles and martyrs have settled either in the bosom of Abraham (Lk 16:22) or in the place of repose (Is 28:12) or ‘underneath the altar of god’ (Rev 6:9) and so they are not able to be present in their own graves and where they wish (*Ais enim vel in sinu Abrahae, vel in loco refrigerii, vel subter aram Dei, animas apostolorum et martyrum consedissee, nec posse de suis tumulis et ubi voluerint adesse praesentes*)....But ‘they follow the lamb wherever he goes’ (Rev 14:4) (*Sequuntur Agnus, quocumque vadit*). If the lamb is everywhere, then so are they who are with the lamb” (*Si Agnus ubique, ergo et hi qui cum Agno sunt*).

⁹² Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 6 (CCSL 14).

⁹³ Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 6 (CCSL 14–5).

mutter” (*mutire non poterit*) after he is with Christ. Are the saints no longer living images when they have died? “Will Vigilantius the living dog be superior to Paul the dead lion?” (*Meliorque erit Vigilantius canis vivens, quam ille [Paul] leo mortuus*), he asks. “I would put this forth rightly on the basis of Ecclesiastes, if I were confessing that Paul is dead in spirit (*Recte hoc de Ecclesiaste proponerem, si Paulum in spiritu mortuum confiterer*). In fact, however, the saints are not called ‘dead’ but ‘sleeping’” (*Denique sancti non appellantur mortui sed dormientes*).⁹⁴ As Jerome’s biblical allusions show, asserting that the saints were only asleep was by no means his innovation. Sleep, for all intents and purposes, was the cousin of death.

In many ways, this was the crux of the disagreement between Jerome and Vigilantius. By rejecting the bodily resurrection, Vigilantius likely saw the saints’ souls as separating from their deceased mortal bodies; the sleep of death was spoken with reference to their souls. Their bodily relics were useless, dead matter. However, partly because Jerome defended the bodily resurrection, the “sleeping” body must have retained a connection to the animate, wakeful soul of the saint. In Jerome’s view, which seems to be commonly shared if not always stated outright, the saints and martyrs had a “paradoxical status as dead and alive at once—that is, as physically dead and so no longer corporeal, but spiritually alive and active as intercessory presences.”⁹⁵ Vigilantius, meanwhile, is alive, but this does not mean that he is not also dead—or at least asleep—in spirit.⁹⁶ One of the key reasons that the veneration of relics, in Jerome’s view, was not idolatrous was because the object of veneration was not, in fact, lifeless.

Still, the appearance of lifelessness was not insignificant. As Eusebius, among others, had

⁹⁴ Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 6 (CCSL 15). Cf. Eccl. 9:4; John 11:11 and 1 Thess 4:13–15.

⁹⁵ Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 175. See her brief discussion of Jerome and Vigilantius at 61–5, 110–11, as well as her analysis of Vitricius of Rouen on Relics at 95–100.

⁹⁶ Jerome cuttingly rechristens Vigilantius as “Dormitantius”—the sleepy one—throughout (*Adversus Vigilantium* 1, 2, 4, 8, 15, and 17) due to his opposition to vigils and candles in honor of relics.

concluded, the human body in and of itself was little better than an idol “because it conveys not a trace of life and soul.” The worship of relics still risked the appearance of confusion between lifeless matter and living prototype like pagans did with idols (so Christians claimed), even if the living prototype could make present the God that they participated in spiritually.⁹⁷ How did the relics themselves—inanimate bones and dust—demonstrate the continued animacy of the saints and their connection to the divine? Jerome’s initial response is to make a distinction. Christians, he argues, “do not cultically revere or worship” (*non colimus et adoramus*) the relics of martyrs but rather “honor” (*honoramus*) them “in order to worship Him whose martyrs they are” (*ut eum, cuius sunt martyres, adoremus*).⁹⁸ The distinction is not fully cogent insofar as Jerome does not explain precisely how honor translates into worship, but it is clear that he is concerned, on one hand, about confusing the object of worship while, on the other hand, also relying on the idea that the saints were “envoys” for the deity combined with the notion of ontologically connected “images” that each participate in the higher reality.⁹⁹ The relic both is and is not the saint, who,

⁹⁷ As Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 7 observes, “to the extent that a wooden statue and a human body part are both part of the material world, the formal ontological argument separating matter from divine holiness holds for the relic as well.”

⁹⁸ Jerome, *Letter 109.1* (CSEL 55, 352). These sorts of distinctions underscore the forensic agonistics at play. Jerome, in effect, appeals to the exact wording of the image prohibitions, emphasizing that he is doing something different and thus not at fault. Intriguingly, this mode of reasoning might have been rejected by Jerome had he lived a century earlier. Origen, in his *Exhortatio ad martyrium* 6 had criticized those who appealed to the two verbs προσκυνέω and λατρεύω in Exod 20:5 to claim that in offering sacrifices to the emperor rather than accepting martyrdom, they were not violating the commandment in full and committing idolatry. See Margaret M. Mitchell, “Christian Martyrdom and the ‘Dialect of the Holy Scriptures’: The Literal, the Allegorical, the Martyrological,” *Biblical Interpretation* 17 (2009): 199–200.

⁹⁹ The role played by the saints as standing in for the deity as images likewise relies upon the role and function of envoys in antiquity; see Margaret M. Mitchell, “New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: The Example of Timothy and Titus,” now in *Paul and the Emergence of Christian Textuality: Early Christian Literary Culture in Context* by Margaret M. Mitchell, WUNT 393 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 89–110 and chapter 3 of this current dissertation, esp. pp. 168–78). The premise of an ontological (not merely formal) connection between image and prototype is perhaps clearest in the commonplaces about the imperial image used, for instance, in trinitarian theological controversies to describe the relationship between the Son and the Father (succinctly described in Motia, *Imitations of Infinity*, 89–98 and Michael Peppard, “Was the Presence of Christ in Statues? The Challenge of Divine Media for a Jewish Roman God” in *The Art of Empire: Christian Art in Its Imperial Context*, eds. Lee M. Jefferson and Robin M. Jensen [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015], 249–51). The imperial portrait both was and was not the emperor but was in any case recognized fully as standing in for the imperial person. Accordingly, as Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu sancto* 18.45, put it in a line that

in turn, through participation both is and is not the deity. The effectiveness of the distinction between honor and worship, then, relies upon the user's attempt to marshal both modes of mimesis at once. The lifeless was not confused with the living because the lifeless matter was not *worshipped* but only given honor. Relics conveyed this honor across the gulf between lifeless matter and living spiritual image. To look at relics was to see the divine mediated materially. By their connection to the living images preserved and presented in the saint's soul, they functioned as images of what was undepictable.

The way Jerome proved this continued connection between lifeless body, living soul, and the divine worship they mediated was to appeal to a proof that Christians had long castigated as a justification for idols. The relics were not idols, he argues, because they worked. While he concedes that the veneration previously offered to idols was much the same as that now offered to the martyrs,¹⁰⁰ Jerome is nevertheless aghast that Vigilantius was associating the “signs and miracles which happen in the basilicas of the martyrs” (*signa atque virtutes, quae basilicis martyrum fiunt*) with the activity and deceit of demons, even though this was an argument against lively idols, as discussed above, and a logical conclusion for the activities of relics if they were nothing more than lifeless dust and bones.¹⁰¹ In response, Jerome flips the demonological

would become oft cited in later image theology, “Honor passes to the prototype” (text in Benoît Pruche, ed., *Sur le Saint-Esprit*, Sources chrétiennes 17, 2nd ed. [Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2002], 406).

¹⁰⁰ Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 7 (CCSL 17): “Do you call people of this sort ‘idolaters’!? I don’t deny it—all of us who believe in Christ have come from the error of idolatry. For we are not born, but rather reborn as Christians. And because we used to revere idols in a cultic manner, should we not now revere God on the grounds that we seem to venerate him with an honor similar to [what we had previously offered to] idols? The former was done for idols, and for that reason should be detested; this is done for martyrs, and for that reason should be accepted.” (*Idolatrias appellas huiusmodi homines? Non diffiteor, omnes nos qui in Christi credimus de idololatriae errore venisse. Non enim nascimur, sed renascimur Christiani. Et quia quondam colebamus idola, nunc Deum colere non debemus, ne simili eum videamur cum idolis honore venerari? Illud fiebat idolis, et idcirco detestandum est: hic fit martyribus, idcirco recipiendum est.*)

¹⁰¹ Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 10 (CCSL 21). Jerome, however, a few lines later (CCSL 22), also shifts the responsibility for this trope from Christians against idols to the “impious” Porphyry and Eunomius, the former who in 270 had written a vicious (and learned) polemic against Christianity, which Jerome himself had sometimes sought to refute. Jerome here clearly seeks to shade Vigilantius’s skepticism of relic veneration as “anti-Christian”

argument, suggesting that it is Vigilantius himself who is possessed and made to act by a demon—all because that demon is tortured by the presence of the relics. “That unclean spirit who presses you to write these things has often been tortured by this ‘ignoble dust’—and indeed is tortured today; while in you he disguises his wounds, in others he confesses” (*Spiritus iste immundus qui haec te cogit scribere, saepe hoc vilissimo tortus est pulvere, immo hodieque torquetur, et qui in te plagas dissimulat, in caeteris confitetur*).¹⁰² Rather than the activities of idols serving as proof of demonic deception, the activities of relics prove their status as true precisely because demons in their torment try to deceive people like Vigilantius into opposing them. As a result, Jerome implies, Vigilantius himself is no more than a lifeless flesh-puppet moved about by a demon who hated and feared the living saints and their paradoxically animate remains. All of this is fitting for an immoral, drunken tavern keeper who is really just jealous that the vigils and honor given to the saints take away from his customers and the “devil’s vigils” (*viligias diaboli*).¹⁰³

Jerome’s various ripostes ultimately get at the same argument: Vigilantius, who accused Jerome and his allies of being “ashmongers and idolaters who venerate dead men’s bones” (*cinerarios et idolatras, qui mortuorum hominum ossa veneremur*),¹⁰⁴ was himself the lifeless one, an idol in a Christian’s clothing. Vigilantius could not perceive the truth the relics made present because of his lifeless hermeneutics causing him to fear dead bodies. He misperceived the sleep of the saints’ bodies as death because he himself was so spiritually sleepy. He argued that the activities of relics were demonic deceit because he himself had been deceived by a

altogether by linking him to a “pagan” and a “heretic.” In some ways, Jerome therefore seems to make relic veneration the pillar without which the entire edifice of Christian culture falls.

¹⁰² Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 10 (CCSL 22).

¹⁰³ Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium* 13 (CCSL 24).

¹⁰⁴ Jerome, *Letter 109.1* (CSEL 55, p. 351).

demon. He opposes the veneration of relics because it changes the souls and moral character of his patrons, revealing the state of his own and his love for earthly things like money rather than the heavenly virtues of the saints. Whereas Athenagoras and Eusebius had used ontological, epistemological, demonological, and psychological/ethical arguments to disparage lifeless matter as a way to know or worship God, here Jerome uses them to defend relics as a privileged way to do just that.

Relics were not regarded as images in precisely the same way as most idols or icons were insofar as they did not typically purport to represent the saint aesthetically or formally—though reliquaries were sometimes a different matter;¹⁰⁵ but the lifeless matter shared by the two (as well as their shared cultic environments) made them vulnerable to many of the same problems, as well as the same solutions. We can see how in the cases of two pre-iconoclastic defenses of images. The author of the *Quaestiones ad Antiochum*, for example, answering why Christians “venerate images and the cross, which are in fact works of craftsmen, just as idols also are” (προσκυνοῦμεν εἰκόνας καὶ σταυρὸν, ἔργα τεκτόνων ὑπάρχοντα, καθὼς καὶ τὰ εἶδωλα τυγχάνουσιν) when “God commanded through the prophets that we not venerate things made by hands” (τοὺς θεοῦ διὰ τῶν προφητῶν ἐπιτρέποντος, μὴ προσκυνεῖν χειροποίητα), insisted that Christians did not “venerate icons as gods...like the pagans do” (Οὐχ ὡς θεοὺς προσκυνοῦμεν τὰς εἰκόνας...ὡς οἱ Ἕλληνας). Rather, they make representations for the “love of the soul” (τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ψυχῆς) for the person represented.¹⁰⁶ Christians, the author argues, know the

¹⁰⁵ See Cynthia Hahn, “What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics,” *Numen* 57.3/4 (2010): 284–316 for an insightful analysis of how reliquaries simultaneously represent and occlude the less visually pleasing object(s) inside, cultivating the reverence needed to make the relics more than lifeless matter.

¹⁰⁶ Ps. Athanasius, *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* 39 (Migne PG 28 621A–B). The broader text dates to the seventh century but the dating of this particular *erotapokrisis* and the *Apologia* of Leontius (see below, n. 109) have been suspected as being interpolations from later iconophiles (see e.g., Brubaker/Haldon, *A History*, 45–6) because they are cited in support of images in eighth- and ninth-century arguments. Manuscripts that include the *Quaest. ad Ant.* do shift the order around and sometimes do not include the entire collection, but, on the whole, the tradition is remarkably stable and there is no indication that question 39 in particular is any more or less likely to be

difference between image and prototype: images are for “remembrance (ὑπόμνησις)...and not any other reason” (καὶ οὐ δι’ ἕτερον τρόπον).¹⁰⁷ When the distinctive personage of the saint had rubbed away, “we burn the one-time image, then, like dead wood” (ὡς ξύλον ἀργὸν λουπὸν τὴν ποτε εἰκόνα καίομεν).¹⁰⁸ Leontius of Neapolis, in his apologetic *Sermon Against the Jews*, argued almost verbatim,¹⁰⁹ adding that when he venerated “the icon of Christ” (τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ Χριστοῦ) he “absolutely did not venerate the nature of the wood and colors (οὐ τὴν φύσιν τῶν ξύλων καὶ χρωμάτων προσκυνῶ [μὴ γένοιτο]), but, when I take hold of the lifeless countenance of Christ, I seem to take hold of and venerate Christ through it” (ἀλλὰ τὸν ἄψυχον χαρακτηῖρα Χριστοῦ κρατῶν δι’ αὐτοῦ Χριστὸν κρατεῖν δοκῶ καὶ προσκυνεῖν).¹¹⁰ The icon was just a representation, they argued, simply a way to love, recall, know, and imitate the person depicted.

included. See Ilse Devos, “The Manuscript Tradition of the *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem*” in *On Good Authority: Tradition, Complication and the Construction of Authority in Literature from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds. Reinhart Ceulemans and Pieter De Leemans (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 43–66; Hans Georg Thümmel, *Die Frühgeschichte der ostkirchlichen Bilderlehre: Texte und Untersuchungen zur Zeit vor dem Bilderstreit* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), 118–27, 246–52.

¹⁰⁷ Ps. Athanasius, *Quaest. ad Ant.* 621D.

¹⁰⁸ Ps. Athanasius, *Quaest. ad Ant.* 621B.

¹⁰⁹ Leontius, *Apologia contra Judaeos* 5 in Vincent Déroche, “L’apologie contre les Juifs de Léontios de Néapolis,” *Travaux et mémoires* 12 (1995): 67.14–19, 69.132–33, conceding similarity between Christian and pagan images, but stressing their different purposes (heightened in florilegial fragment ψ⁷). The textual tradition of this dialogue is full of complications, but the passage on relics, icons, and the cross read at Nicaea II likely preserves the substantial portion of the final (fifth) section of an extended *apologia* (see Déroche, “L’apologie,” 52–61 for discussion). Déroche’s edition includes a critical text of the extended passage from Nicaea II (pp. 66–71), improving the text of Migne (PG 93 1597-1607), as well as critical texts of various florilegial extracts (pp. 79–85), indicating where they differ or preserve passages not included at Nicaea II. Compared to other excerpts, the version at Nicaea II tends to minimize the role of the Jewish interlocutor and cut down on OT citations, but it is regarded as best preserving the order and logic of the argument. I cite from Déroche’s version of the excerpt from Nicaea II but indicate differences in florilegial fragments where they appear.

Brubaker/Haldon, *A History*, 45, 49–50, esp. n. 190, following Speck, have doubted the authenticity of the fifth section (as introduced above, n. 106). Among the several reasons why their argument for interpolation fails to convince, the case is self-contradictory on at least one point. Having argued that the discussion of icons in Leontius’s *Apology* is so similar to later eighth-century defenses that it must not be genuine, they then speculate that the original author’s name of this *Apology* was lost in transmission and came “to be associated with Leontius of Neapolis during the first half of the eighth century...on the grounds of the association of Leontius with similar, genuine dialogues.” In sum, the argument denies Leontian authorship on the grounds that it is too similar to later arguments but suggest that Leontius was ascribed as author due to its strong similarity to texts of Leontian authorship. For a less predetermined discussion of dating and other issues, see Déroche, “L’apologie,” 46–48, and Vincent Déroche, “L’authenticité de l’ ‘Apologie contre les Juifs’ de Léontios de Néapolis,” *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 110:2 (1986): 655–69.

¹¹⁰ Leontius, *Apologia* 5, 67.44–47. Cf. 69.112–16. Florilegial fragment ψ⁴ reads slightly differently here: “when I venerate (προσκυνῶν) the lifeless countenance of Christ...”

But the declaration by Leontius hints that although the inanimacy of the icon was insisted upon, more was sought, and often more was found. The author of *Quaest. ad Ant.* and Leontius both appeal to the miracles these materials produced. The former names icons that gush with myrrh (μύρα ἔβλυσαν) and miraculously bleed (αἷμα παραδόξως ἐξήγαγεν), and then relates them to both icons and relics that cast out demons.¹¹¹ The latter runs through a series of miracles recounted in the Hebrew Bible that (mostly) inanimate objects performed—wood, a plant, a rod, a piece of iron, bones—and concludes that if God in ancient times had “worked wonders by means of so much wood” (ὁ οὖν διὰ τοσούτων ξύλων θαυματουργήσας Θεός) and if he had also done so “through bones (δι’ ὀστέων), then it is quite clear that he can also do it through icons and stones and many other things” (εὐδηλον ὅτι δύναται καὶ δι’ εικόνων καὶ διὰ λίθων καὶ δι’ ἑτέρων πολλῶν).¹¹²

The icon and the relic both were lifeless for these two authors, and each acknowledged the ontological similarities between Christian cult objects and the idols. At the same time, they distinguished icons from idols first by making a distinction in how they were treated—for memory and knowledge rather than “worship,” and then by remarking upon the corporeal signs of life like bleeding, the restoration of bodily health, and the return to spiritual agency through exorcism that they sometimes displayed. Animacy was indicative of spiritual power. Authors like Jerome, Leontius, and the composer of the *Quaest. ad Ant.* each deployed ontological, epistemological, demonological, and psychological/ethical arguments to make the Christian cult images, both icons and relics, into signs of spiritual life that were nevertheless lifeless matter—in no way to be confused with living saint or the God they served. The opponents of these authors

¹¹¹ Ps. Athanasius, *Quaest. ad Ant.* 621C.

¹¹² Leontius, *Apologia* 5, 69.140–41, 145. Florilegial fragment Γ emphasizes that what God can do through icons is “work wonders” (θαυματουργῆσαι).

recognized the similarity between material images they detested and those they venerated, and called them on it. In turn, Christian defenders of these paradoxical living images sought to turn the commonplace critiques in their favor. In this sense, when the Christian icon was discussed among late ancient authors prior to the iconoclast controversy, there were significant lines of continuity between relic and icon, as well with the critiques and valuation of idols.

Neither Leontius nor the author of *Quaest. ad Ant.* directly addresses the question of whether relics and icons of Jesus entailed any additional problems to those of the saints. Both authors seem to assume an *a minore* argument that if the souls of the saints could make lifeless matter animate, then surely so could the Son of God. But the silence of these authors on the issue does not mean that it was wholly beyond question. Already in the fourth century, if it is indeed authentic to Eusebius, the bishop in his famous *Letter to Constantia* rejects Constantine’s sister’s request for an image of Christ to ponder by arguing, first, that to seek out the characteristics and form of his essence would be ridiculous; and second that even the incarnate, mortal form cannot be depicted. Not only is it forbidden by Exodus 20:4 and Deuteronomy 5:8, for instance, but no one would “be able to inscribe by means of dead and lifeless colors and sketches the flashing, gleaming radiance of so much dignity and glory” (τῆς τοσαύτης ἀξίας τε καὶ δόξης τὰς ἀποστιλβούσας, καὶ ἀπαστραπτούσας μαρμαρυγὰς οἷός τε ἂν εἶη καταχαράξαι νεκροῖς καὶ ἀψύχοις χρώμασι καὶ σκιογραφίαις) that the disciples couldn’t bear even in real life. “How can one paint an image of so wondrous and unattainable a form (Πῶς δὲ τῆς οὕτω θαυμαστῆς, καὶ ἀλήπτου μορφῆς...εἰκόνα τις ζωγραφῆσειεν)—if it is at all right to call the divine and spiritual essence ‘form’ (εἶ γε χρῆ μορφήν ἔτι καλεῖν τὴν ἔνθεον καὶ νοερὰν οὐσίαν)—unless like the unbelieving pagans someone represents things that bear no resemblance to the thing itself?” (Ei

μη τοῖς ἀπίστοις ἔθνεσιν ὁμοίως τὰ μηδαμῆ μηδαμῶς εἰκότα ἑαυτῷ τις ἀναζωγραφήσειεν;).¹¹³

Similar doubts to those of Eusebius may in fact have been behind the development of *acheiropoieta* images like the Mandylion, which, in the *Acts of Thaddaeus*, its first narrative depiction, emerges as simultaneously an icon and a relic of Christ that, in principle, affirmed his hard to capture appearance and conveyed his healing power.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Eusebius, *Epistula ad Constantiam* (PG 20, 1545–1549). Stephen Gero, “The True Image of Christ: Eusebius’ Letter to Constantia Reconsidered,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 32:2 (Jan. 1981): 460–70 makes the compelling case for its authenticity and provides a helpful analysis of scholarly doubts regarding Eusebian authorship. Peter Van Nuffelen, “The Life of Constantine: The Image of an Image” in *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations*, ed Aaron Johnson and Jeremy Schott (Washington D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2013), 133–150, moreover, argues that Eusebius here holds a position similar to what he displays in *Vita Constantini*, namely, that images assigned to the human realm are approximations of higher truths, and not fictions, but admissible only if they stand in a relation of truth to their model; in contrast, Zeus, e.g., does not correspond to the mind of the world.

¹¹⁴ Text in Andrew Palmer, “The *Logos* of the Mandylion: Folktale or Sacred Narrative? A New Edition of *The Acts of Thaddaeus* with a Commentary,” in *Edessa in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit: Religion, Kultur und Politik zwischen Ost und West. Beiträge des internationalen Edessa-Symposiums in Halle an der Saale, 14–17 Juli 2005*, eds. Lutz Greisiger, Claudia Rammelt, and Jürgen Tubach (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2009), 171–75. As with many apocrypha, the date of the narrative is unclear, but Palmer (147) tentatively suggests a composition in the third decade of the seventh century due to several suggestive parallels between the actions of Thaddaeus in *Acts Thad.* and the career of Heraclius in the 620s, pushing back the sixth century estimates of Lipsius and Tischendorf. In the account, Abgar wishes to know what Jesus looks like and consequently pens his famous letter to Jesus, and sends it off through Ananias, instructing him also “to precisely record Christ: what he looked like, his age, his hair, and generally everything” (ἱστορεῖσαι τὸν Χριστὸν ἀκριβῶς ποίας ιδέας ἐστίν, τὴν τε ἡλικίαν καὶ τρίχα καὶ ἀπλῶς πάντα, 2.10). In position of the letter and his instructions to help Abgar visualize Jesus, Ananias sets off, delivers the letter, and sits down to fulfill the command. Ananias is described as “carefully gazing at Christ” (ἦν ἐπιμελῶς ἀτενίζων), but, intriguingly, is “unable to comprehend him” (οὐκ ἠδύνατο καταλαβέσθαι, 3.1). Observing Ananias’s struggles, Christ takes a “four-fold cloth (ράκκος τετράδιπλον) and, after washing himself, he wiped his face off with the cloth (καὶ νηγάμενος ἀπεμάξατο τὴν ὄψιν αὐτοῦ, 3.1–2). Remarkably, “Once his image had been imprinted on the linen” (ἐντυπωθείσης δὲ τῆς εἰκότος ἐν τῇ σινδόνι) Christ gives it to Ananias and tells him to take back a message (3.4).

Broadly on *acheiropoieta*, see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 49–57, Brubaker/Haldon, *A History*, 55–6; Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 24–7. Focused mostly on later sources and problems, but helpful in its review of the conceptual conundrums that not-made-by-hand images presented, is Herbert Kessler and Gerhard Wolf, eds., *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a colloquium held at the Bibliotheca Heriziana, Rome and the Villa Spellman, Florence* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1998), especially Averil Cameron, “The Mandylion and Byzantine Iconoclasm,” 33–54. The work of Ernst von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende*, TU 18 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1899) remains critical for the study of *acheiropoieta*, especially for his collection of sources, while Kitzinger, “Cult of Images, esp. 112–15 provides a starting point for contextualizing these image-relics. See chapter 2, however, for analysis of some questionable assumptions in their work. For two *acheiropoieta* traditions less frequently discussed, see the introductions and translations of Bradley N. Rice, “The Story of Joseph of Arimathea,” in *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 2, ed. Tony Burke (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 160–187 and Paul C. Dilley, “A Homily on the Building of the First Church of the Virgin,” 188–207 in the same volume.

But this sort of answer was evidently not satisfying to everyone, and questions about the very depictability of Christ would emerge as a major issue in the Byzantine Iconoclast Controversy.¹¹⁵ In the final section of this chapter, therefore, I turn to some of the principal texts written during this eighth and ninth century period of wrangling over images to examine how Christian icons—most crucially those of Jesus—were critiqued and justified. Although the narratives I analyze in the following chapters pre-date the Iconoclast Controversy, no other discourse around images has been as influential on the scholarly interpretation of narratives featuring living images. Accordingly, it will be useful to analyze these iconoclashes not only to continue tracing out how Christians grappled with the paradox of living images through ontological, epistemological, demonological, and psychological/ethical arguments, but also to pave the way for chapter 2 where I examine how the terms set by later debates between iconophiles and iconoclasts have served as a scholarly litmus test for whether or not an image was regarded as alive in narrative works.

The Paradox of Lifeless Icons

The language of idolatry haunts navigations of the mimetic paradox across the texts of period of Byzantine Iconoclasm. John of Damascus's initial textual broadside, the first of his *Three Treatises on Images*, marks the suspicion of idolatry as the primary problem and

¹¹⁵ For careful studies of the array of theological issues raised during these debates, see now Andrew Louth, "The Theological Argument about Images in the 8th Century," in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm* (ed. Humphreys), 401–24, and Ken Parry, "The Theological Argument about Images in the 9th Century," 425–63 in the same volume. Of particular importance was Constantine V's attempt (echoed later) to shift the issue from idolatry to heresy, forcing icon supporters to choose between Nestorianism and Monophysitism by depicting Jesus and either mixing or unduly separating Christ's natures. But even this was consistently related to questions of mimesis, the "true image," and how veneration operates given the distinctions between image and prototype. Thus, what follows is by no means a comprehensive analysis of all the theological issues at play in the major texts of the Iconoclast Controversy, but a selective discussion of how the lifeless image was thought to bridge the gap (or fail to) between matter and divinity without unduly mixing image and prototype.

demonstrates his knowledge of the troublesome Deuteronomic prohibitions against images.¹¹⁶ John seeks to resolve these problems first with scriptural hermeneutics, advancing the well-worn spirit/letter distinction from 2 Cor 3:6 to conclude that these prohibitions were given only because the Jews kept sliding into idolatry.¹¹⁷ Christians, who can perceive with the spirit that “gives life” (ζωοποιεί), need not fear images because they can tell the difference between image and prototype. Second, he makes a distinction to prove his point, separating the “veneration that constitutes worship” (ἡ τῆς λατρείας προσκύνησις) from that “offered in honor” (ἡ ἐκ τιμῆς προσαγομένη), the former being exclusively reserved for God, as a way to maintain the distance between God as creator and everything else as created.¹¹⁸ Third, in a move that will prove influential, John then connects the hermeneutical argument to Christ’s incarnation. Because God was seen in the flesh and used matter to enact salvation, matter could be treated with reverence so long as the one offering the veneration venerated “the fashioner of matter” (τὸν τῆς ὕλης δημιουργόν) and not the matter itself.¹¹⁹ Insofar as God was perceived with the senses “by means of participation in our flesh and blood” (μεθέξει σαρκός τε καὶ αἵματος ἡμῶν),¹²⁰ the gulf between God and matter had been crossed in such significant ways that matter could serve as a way to offer worship to God. God incarnate in Jesus was God visible, God depictable, and God depicted. And if God could be depicted, then so could the saints.

¹¹⁶ John of Damascus, *De sacris imaginibus oratio* I.2 and I.4, citing passages from Deuteronomy 5–6. However, as Louth, “Theological Argument about Images in the 8th Century,” 410 points out, John’s citations work to avoid biblical language that contested the distinction between veneration and worship that he will propose. Each of John’s treatises addresses these issues in slightly different ways. Mostly for the sake of concision, I base my analysis primarily on the first treatise; see Louth, “Theological Argument about Images in the 8th Century,” 408, 412–15 for the primary differences in context, structure, and argumentative approach among the three.

¹¹⁷ John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* I.5.

¹¹⁸ John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* I.8, I.14–16.

¹¹⁹ John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* I.16.

¹²⁰ John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* I.4.

It is not precisely clear whose arguments elicited John’s orations, but the clearest articulation of Iconoclast theology comes from the Council of Hieria in 754—which condemned John explicitly—where the creation and veneration of icons were explicitly associated with “pagan idolatry.”

If someone pursues the practice of setting up forms of all the saints, even though they bring no profit in lifeless and speechless icons made from material colors (Εἰ τις τὰς τῶν ἀπάντων ἁγίων ιδέας ἐν εἰκόσιν ἀψύχοις καὶ ἀναύδοις ἐξ ὑλικῶν χρωμάτων ἀναστηλοῦν ἐπιτηδεύει μηδεμίαν ὄνησιν φερούσας)—for the idea is vain and an invention of demonic craft...let them be anathema! (ματαῖα γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἐπίνοια καὶ διαβολικῆς μεθοδείας εὔρεσις...ἀνάθεμα).¹²¹

At other points in the *Horos* of Hieria, at least insofar as it was preserved in the Conciliar *Acts* of Nicaea II in 787, this “demonic craft” is said to have been introduced “by pagan opponents” (ἐξ ἀντικειμένων Ἑλλήνων) and to consist of nothing but “inglorious and dead matter” (ἀδόξω καὶ νεκρᾷ ὕλη).¹²² Christ, they argue, “stopped us from the destructive teaching of demons (ἐπέστησεν ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς φθοροποιοῦ τῶν δαιμόνων διδασκαλίας), that is, from the error and worship of idols (ἤγουν τῆς τῶν εἰδώλων πλάνης τε καὶ λατρείας), and he handed down the worship *in spirit and truth*” (καὶ τὴν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ προσκύνησιν παραδέδωκεν).¹²³ The proper worship—in spirit and truth—was dependent upon a different kind of mimesis than painted icons could provide. Just before the anathema in the passage above, the bishops at Hieria provided the alternative to the inanimate mimesis of icons: “[if someone does] not instead paint within himself the virtues of these saints as certain ‘living icons’ with what is made known in writings about them (καὶ οὐχὶ δὴ μᾶλλον τὰς τούτων ἀρετὰς διὰ τῶν ἐν γραφαῖς περὶ αὐτῶν δηλουμένων οἷόν τινας ἐμψύχους εἰκόνας ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀναζωγραφεῖ), and if someone is not roused

¹²¹ Erich Lamberg, ed., *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Concilii Actiones VI-VII* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 770.

¹²² Lamberg, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 6), 686, 690.

¹²³ Lamberg, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 6), 616. Called “the error of images” (τῶν εἰκόνων πλάνης) at Lamberg, 752. Cf. John 4:23.

to zeal for being like them from this process, as our inspired fathers said, let them be Anathema!” (καὶ πρὸς τὸν ὅμοιον αὐτοῖς ἐκ τούτου διεγείρεται ζήλον, καθὼς οἱ ἔνθεοι ἡμῶν ἔφησαν πατέρες, ἀνάθεμα).¹²⁴

We can observe here how the iconoclasts at Hieria in these densely packed passages employed the same commonplace arguments made against idols and in defense of relics. Icons are ontologically insufficient to depict the saints or God because of their lifelessness. The practice of venerating them was introduced by demons and pagans and constitutes an error that should have been stopped by Christ’s own teaching of spiritual worship. Finally, combining the epistemological with the psychological/ethical argument and relying upon the long-established commonplaces for the superiority of word over image and “living memorials” over material ones,¹²⁵ the appropriate image was the one painted in the soul that allowed “viewers” to perceive the goodness and activity of God, learned through the activities of the saints and writings about them.

Despite his support for image veneration, John of Damascus had actually concurred with the basic distinction between icons of the body and icons of the soul. In response to what he presented as the Iconoclast position—that inanimate icons cannot depict Christ because Christ is God and God is uncircumscribable, invisible, and formless—John had agreed, posing a rhetorical question: “If it is impossible to make an image of the soul (Εἰ γὰρ ψυχὴν εἰκονίσαι ἀμήχανον), then how much more so to make an image of God, who gave the soul its immateriality? (πόσῳ μᾶλλον θεὸν τὸν καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ δόντα τὸ ἄυλον;).¹²⁶ Moreover, in *On Images* I.24, for example, he had engaged and dismissed the idea that the abuses of idolatrous “pagans,” who dedicated their

¹²⁴ Lamberz, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 6), 770.

¹²⁵ See above, p. 35 n. 111. In turn, during the ninth century, iconophiles will argue for the superiority of image over word on the grounds that sight was the highest of the senses. See Parry, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 9th Century,” 438.

¹²⁶ John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* I.4.

images to demons and called them gods, should disqualify the pious practice of dedicating images to the true God incarnate and his servants and friends. These images, in fact, drive off the demons.¹²⁷ Similarly, in *De imaginibus* I.26, John interprets the language of Psalms 113 and 134 LXX as particular to non-Christian images: “although Scripture says ‘the idols of the nations are silver and gold, works of human hands’ (εἰ καὶ λέγει ἡ γραφή· Τὰ εἰδῶλα τῶν ἐθνῶν ἀργύριον καὶ χρυσίον, ἔργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων), nevertheless it does not prevent one from offering veneration by means of inanimate things or the works of human hands, but only by images of demons” (ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ οὐ τὸ μὴ προσκυνεῖν ἀψύχοις ἢ ἔργοις χειρῶν κωλύει, ἀλλὰ ταῖς δαιμόνων εἰκόσιν).¹²⁸

What is especially important to note is that even for iconophiles, the icon, like the idol, was theorized as in fact lifeless. It was a basic definitional point that the decrees of Nicaea II sought to affirm: “For it is quite clear to everyone that ‘icon’ is one thing and ‘prototype’ another (ἀρίδηλον γὰρ πᾶσιν ὑπάρχει ὅτι ἄλλο ἐστὶν εἰκὼν καὶ ἄλλο πρωτότυπον); the one is inanimate, the other animate” (τοῦτο μὲν ἔμψυχον, ἐκεῖνο δὲ ἄψυχον).¹²⁹ To consider the icon alive and the saint, for example, as fully present, “dangerously flirted with idolatry” and would have asserted the very thing “defenders of icons sought to disprove.”¹³⁰ Thus, explanation of how these dead, speechless, unmoving Christian images could facilitate access to the divine was still needed.

John had appealed to the mediating function of images with his emphasis on the incarnation and his appropriation of Basil of Caesarea’s *On the Holy Spirit*—“For the honor offered to the image

¹²⁷ John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* I.24.

¹²⁸ John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* I.26. John’s use of the dative for ἀψύχοις ἢ ἔργοις and ταῖς δαιμόνων εἰκόσιν neatly encapsulates the blurry line between icon and prototype he is trying to tread: is veneration offered *to* these objects or *by means of* them? Grammatically, both are possible (cf. Matt 2:2 and John 4:23 for well-known examples of προσκύνησις offered to a dative object), but I have chosen to translate here according to John’s model of honor ascending to the prototype. The honor given to the right recipient, even if manifested in lifeless matter, can still ascend; that offered to deceitful, greedy prototypes cannot.

¹²⁹ Lamberz, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 6), 668. Cf. John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* III.16.

¹³⁰ Katherine Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 83.

transcends to the prototype,' just as the divine Basil says" (ἡ γὰρ τῆς εἰκόνοσ τιμὴ πρὸς τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει, φησὶν ὁ θεῖος Βασίλειος)¹³¹—arguing that the gulf between God and matter was not so grand after all. But is crucial to observe that both the problems and the argumentative solutions did not fundamentally change with the explicit discussion around whether or not Christian images were idolatrous.

This is not to say that there were not innovations or disagreements about what constituted an image of God. The iconoclast Emperor Constantine V (r. 741–75) apparently went even farther than most bishops were willing to follow, diverging from the view that saw the soul as preserving an image of God to insist that the *only* true image of God must completely share in his essence (ὁμοούσιος), being not just alive but the source of life. The material icon was of course far from being consubstantial with God and, moreover, there was no rite or prayer of sanctification to elevate it.¹³² As such, the material image could be no more than a deceptive

¹³¹ John of Damascus, *De imaginibus* I.21; cf. Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu sancti* 18.45 (see above p. 77–8 n. 99, but with slightly different translation because iconophiles seem to have slightly altered the reading). Cf. *De imaginibus* I.35, I.41 II.38, II.47 III. 48. Louth, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 8th Century,” 416–17, observes that this argument about honor passing to the prototype—and especially the fuller context of the imperial image analogy in which the image of the emperor/Christ is said to be the emperor/Christ—should mean that the image of Christ can receive worship and not simply the veneration of honor insofar as it *is* Christ, but John does not go in this direction.

¹³² Cf. Lamberz, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 6), 676, where the bishops at Nicaea II cite an iconophile position: “But the poor reputation of icons (falsely named)...does not have a holy prayer sanctifying it in order that it might be transformed from this common thing to a holy thing, and rather remains common and dishonorable, as the painter produced it. (Ἡ δὲ τῶν ψευδωνύμων εἰκόνων κακωνυμία...ἔχει οὔτε εὐχὴν ἱερὰ ἀγιάζουσιν αὐτήν, ἵνα ἐκ τούτου πρὸς τὸ ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ κοινοῦ μετενεχθῆ, ἀλλὰ μένει κοινὴ καὶ ἄτιμος ὡς ἀπήρτισεν αὐτήν ὁ ζωγράφος). Cf. Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, II.480–82 (including rebuttal); Louth, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 8th Century,” 418–22. The arguments of Constantine V’s *Peuseis* are known primarily through their refutation in Nikephorus’s *Antirrhetici tres adversus Constantinum Corprononymum*. See Parry, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 9th Century,” 441–51. There is considerable debate regarding whether Constantine also excluded relics: the cult of relics and their placement in altars was affirmed at the Council of Hieria in 754, but iconophile texts frequently claim that Constantine V sought to ban the cult and destroy relics. See Brubaker/Haldon, *A History*, 38–41; John Wortley, “Iconoclasm and Leipsanoclasm: Leo III, Constantine V and the Relics,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982): 253–79; Marie-France Auzépy, “Les Isauriens et l’espace sacré: L’église et les reliques,” in *Le sacré et son inscription dans l’espace à Byzance et en Occident*, ed. Michel Kaplan (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2001), 13–24. Recently, Dirk Krausmüller, “The Problem of the Holy: Iconoclasm, Saints, Relics, and Monks,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, (ed. Humphreys), 464–93, has made a strong case for thinking that Constantine V in fact was antagonistic to the cult of saints in general, but that his opposition intensified in the years after Hieria.

painting, the inanimate work of human hands, and the purview of demons. Rather than the icon, Christ indicated that the best way to remember him was through his *τύπος* in the Eucharist. In making the argument that the Eucharist was the true, not-made-by-human-hand image of Christ, Constantine and those who followed him were putting forth “an uncontroversial affirmation of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist...using traditional, hallowed language.”¹³³

Iconophiles at Nicaea II, however, turned the claim on its head. They argued, in turn, that presence in the Eucharist meant that every feature was identical with Christ, including the body, which meant that it was not an image: “[Christ] does not say ‘Take, eat the *image* of my body’” (καὶ οὐκ εἶπε· λάβετε, φάγετε τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ σώματός μου).¹³⁴ Shortly later, they reiterate, “Accordingly, it is clearly demonstrated that nowhere do they say—not the Lord, the apostles, or the fathers—that the bloodless sacrifice offered by the priest is an image, rather they say that it is the body itself and the blood itself” (οὐκοῦν σαφῶς ἀποδέκεται ὅτι οὐδαμοῦ οὔτε ὁ κύριος οὔτε ἀπόστολοι ἢ πατέρες εἰκόνα εἶπον τὴν διὰ τοῦ ἱερέως προσφερομένην ἀναίμακτον θυσίαν, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ σῶμα καὶ αὐτὸ αἷμα).¹³⁵ Characterizing the Eucharist as an image, as the iconoclasts did, might still imply real presence, but not full identity as desired. Conversely, the Eucharist could not substitute for a material image because in its full, consubstantial presence it ceased to be an image. While the Iconophiles seem to have stopped short of suggesting that to call the Eucharist an image is idolatrous, they effectively argued that to give it image status was deceptive.

The situation was somewhat different in the second major period of Byzantine Iconoclasm from 815–843 as the debate shifted away from the sheer presence of images toward

¹³³ Louth, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 9th Century,” 420.

¹³⁴ Lamberz, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 6), 674.

¹³⁵ Lamberz *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 6), 674; cf. 676: “Even if it is an image of the body, then it is impossible that it is the divine body itself” (καὶ εἰ εἰκὼν τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν, οὐκ ἐνδέχεται εἶναι αὐτὸ θεῖον σῶμα).

how they should be treated. At the Council of Hagia Sophia in 815, the outright charge of idolatry against icon makers and venerators was dropped “because there is a distinction between one kind of evil and another” (ἔστι γὰρ καὶ κακοῦ πρὸς κακὸν ἢ διάκρισις),¹³⁶ evidently a response to iconophile arguments that the content of the image distinguishes it from idols. Conversely, even as the epistemological argument took precedence over the ontological and demonological, the identification of problems was largely the same. The entire Horos of Hieria is accepted wholesale at the Council of Hagia Sophia, and the icon is still considered “unvenerable and useless” (ἀπροσκύνητόν τε καὶ ἄχρηστον),¹³⁷ even actively harmful insofar as “the things that are fit for God are being offered to the inanimate matter of icons” (τὰ τῷ Θεῷ πρέποντα τῇ ἀψύχῳ ὕλῃ τῶν εἰκόνων προσάγεσθαι).¹³⁸ The relationship between what the icon is (wood, paint, etc.; specifically *inanimate* matter) and its inability to bear a relationship to holy figures—let alone be “filled with divine grace” (θείας χάριτος ἐμπλέους) or render them present to the “simple folk” (ἀφελεῖς)¹³⁹ who venerated icons in error—was reaffirmed.

Thus, iconophile defenders of images in the ninth century like Theodore the Studite and Patriarch Nikephoros still took up the charge of idolatry first and foremost. Theodore conceded that icons were potentially in danger of becoming idols, but only if they attempted to depict God’s limitless nature or other subjects that had never appeared to the eyes. Nikephoros, in turn, drew on earlier distinctions, stressing that icons had real, actual, and historical prototypes, while the prototypes of idols were simply imaginary.¹⁴⁰ As Barber and Parry have analyzed, in order to

¹³⁶ Paul J. Alexander, “The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and its Definition (Horos),” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953): 41, fr. 16 on p. 60. Translation of portions of the Horos can be found in Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 168–9.

¹³⁷ Fr. 16 in Alexander, “Council of St. Sophia,” 60.

¹³⁸ Fr. 9 in Alexander, “Council of St. Sophia,” 59.

¹³⁹ Fr. 10 in Alexander, “Council of St. Sophia,” 59.

¹⁴⁰ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* I.16 (PG 99 348A-B); Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* I.28 (PG 100 277A-C). See Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 49–51; Parry, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 9th Century,” 435, 440, 446–47. Though there were multiple and not mutually exclusive ways to define an idol or the

emphasize what they saw as the historical reality of the prototypes of icons, Theodore and Nikephoros used Aristotelian logical categories more explicitly than had their predecessors in order to describe the image as united to the prototype depicted in it by relation. The existence of a prototype implied the possibility of an image, they argued, and an image had to be an image *of* a prototype. Consequently, they remained connected through an “accidental” or even “hypostatic” identity, rather than by an “essential” one.¹⁴¹

Moreover, for Theodore in particular, there seem to have been three phases in his thought about this dynamic of identity and distinction: identity through a shared name (ὁμωνυμία); a shared form (μορφή), likeness (ὁμοίωμα), appearance (σχῆμα), and countenance (χαρακτήρ); and finally through the likeness of hypostasis—a formulation that apparently tried to assuage any concerns that the artist would do a bad job at conveying the actual likeness of the person. These characteristics were considered primarily as accidental features that allowed homonymy and “relative participation,” although it seems that a certain ontological sense of form did persist. Even so, the truthful relation between images did not depend on lifelikeness conceived in terms of naturalism, but rather the fact that they depicted prototypes who themselves were deified, spiritually living images of God.¹⁴² By emphasizing the ways that what the icon shared with its

act of idolatry, the thread of idol discourse that emphasized the absence of an idol’s prototype was long and intertwined within the history of Christian thought, perhaps based to some extent on Paul’s claim in 1 Cor 8:4 that “an idol is nothing in the world” (οὐδὲν εἶδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ). See Ken Parry, “Image-Making,” in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, ed. John Anthony McGuckin (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 128–31; Irven M. Resnick, “Idols and Images: Early Definitions and Controversies,” *Sobernost* 7 (1985): 35–51; Suzanne Saïd, “Deux noms de l’image en grec ancien: idole et icône,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 131.2 (1987): 309–30.

¹⁴¹ Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 115–23; Parry, *Depicting the Word*, 58–63. Parry, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 9th Century,” 435–7. On the deployment of Aristotelian categories, see especially Ken Parry, “Aristotle and the Icon: The Use of the Categories by Byzantine Iconophile Writers,” in *Aristotle’s Categories in the Byzantine, Arabic and Latin Traditions*, eds. Sten Ebbesen, John Marenbon, and Paul Thom (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2013), 35–57; Christophe Erismann, “Venerating Likeness: Byzantine Iconophile Thinkers on Aristotelian Relatives and their Simultaneity,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24 (2016): 405–25.

¹⁴² Parry, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 9th Century,” 428–32, 437. On the concept of “homonymy” (ὁμωνυμία) in particular, see Christophe Erismann, “The Depicted Man: The Byzantine Afterlife of

saintly or divine prototype was essentially distinct from the matter itself—and thus transferrable—later iconophiles like Theodore and Nikephorus argued that the living content of the image could be embodied and encountered in different materials.¹⁴³ They made explicit that a “living image” need not refer so much to *what* the image (material or spiritual) could do as to *who* it depicted, effectively denying that being alive, either in an Aristotelian sense or as a soul, was a necessary, constitutive factor for the “true image” itself.

This answer to the problem of iconic materiality was one that sought to navigate the image between poles of living and dead by articulating the premise of “partial presence,” to adapt Antonova’s term.¹⁴⁴ The living prototype was present, yet also absent, in the image in form and name and appearance, but not in substance or any way that would allow the viewer to confuse the lifeless matter of the image with its subject. As a passed-down and thus verified testimony of a worthy and holy model, moreover, the icon was “intended to provoke imitation on the part of those looking” in a way quite similar to how Christian narratives and histories effected imitation among those listening.¹⁴⁵ The deeds and character of the prototype could thus

Aristotle’s Logical Doctrine of Homonyms,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 59 (2019): 311–39. For analysis of one way Theodore constructed his argument about homonymy, see below, pp. 267–72.

¹⁴³ One of the best examples of this concept can be found in Theodore’s *Epistula ad Platonem ipsius patrem de cultu sacrarum imaginum* (Letter 57). Near the end of the letter, he explains the separation of Christ’s image from the matter in which it is represented by arguing, “Now it seems to me that [the relation of the prototype and icon] is like the example of the image in the mirror. There, too, the face of the one looking is depicted, as it were, and the likeness remains external to the matter. Even if he seems to greet his own image there, yet he does not address the matter since he is not present *because* of it, but rather his likeness is represented *in* it. Therefore, it adheres to the matter; naturally when the mirror itself is removed, the appearance departs with it, given that it does not have anything in common with the matter of the mirror. It is just like this, then, in the case of the matter belonging to icons” (PG 99 504CD: Καὶ μοι δοκεῖ τῷ ἐν κοτόπτρῳ παραδείγματι εἰκέναι· κάκει γὰρ οἶονεὶ διαγράφεται τοῦ ὄρωντος τὸ πρόσωπον· καὶ μένει ἔξω τῆς ὕλης τὸ ὁμοίωμα· κἂν δόξειεν ἀσπάσασθαι τὴν ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνα ἐκεῖσε, οὐ τὴν ὕλην προσεπτύξατο· ὅτι μηδὲ δι’ αὐτὴν πρόσεισιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπεικονισθὲν αὐτοῦ ὁμοίωμα· διὸ καὶ προσέφω τῇ ὕλῃ· ἀμέλει μεταστάντος αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἐσόπτρου, συναπέστη αὐτῷ ἅμα καὶ τὸ ἴνδαλμα, ὡς μὴ κοινωνοῦντι τῇ τοῦ ἐσόπτρου ὕλῃ· ὡσπερ οὖν καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς εἰκονικῆς ὕλης·). Translation mine. Cf. Thomas Cattoi, *Theodore the Studite: Writings on Iconoclasm*, Ancient Christian Writers 69 (New York/Manwah, NJ: The Newman Press, 2015), 138, whose translation emphasizes in a way helpful, but less literal, the idea that “greeting” one’s image entails a certain conception of the image as separable.

¹⁴⁴ Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 74–82.

¹⁴⁵ Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 134–135.

be encountered and experienced in the process of venerating an image by inspiring remembrance and because the image participated through form, likeness, and homonymy in the person whose life presented a living image of the divine. Accordingly, the image of the saint was likewise of living deeds, even while the image itself remained lifeless.

In many ways, it was the coherence and power of the ontological, demonological, epistemological and psychological arguments advanced by the iconoclasts that stimulated these careful philosophical defenses of icon veneration. The attack made by iconoclasts at Hieria and Hagia Sophia had enlisted the well-established critique of visual images as, at best, useless because their lifeless materiality could not bridge the gap between image and a living, spiritual, or divine prototype. Worse still, these images were prone to deceiving their viewers into adoration of the icon itself, which meant idolatrously confusing image and prototype, matter and spirit, lifeless and living. This is the charge that “partial presence” was meant to defend, but, ironically, the partial quality of this presence is exactly what accounts of lively images seemed to iconoclasts to challenge. The defenders of image veneration consistently supported their claims by citing not only previous generations of church fathers (whose statements were frequently of questionable relevance) but also excerpts from hagiographical texts that contained “reports of miracles due to icons.”¹⁴⁶ These miraculous accounts were ostensibly intended to demonstrate both historical precedent for icon veneration and divine approval for the practices—why else would God work miracles with them? However, the practices and miracles described have often raised questions for scholars as they did for iconoclasts, especially because, as Emperor Michael II indicates in his letter to Louis the Pious in 824, iconophile supporters were naming icons as

¹⁴⁶ Marie-France Auzépy, “The Iconophile Intermission and Second Iconoclasm,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, ed. Humphreys, 379. Paul van den Ven, “La patristique et l’hagiographie au Council de Nicée de 787,” *Byzantion* 25–27 (1955–57): 355–59 lists 22 different hagiographical references in the Acts of Nicaea II; cf. Lamberz, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum*, 1008–40.

godparents for children and engaging in other inordinate practices.¹⁴⁷ According to Michael II, action was needed because the images were being treated like living saints and Christ in the flesh. Do miracle stories suggest a belief that the image and saint were not separated by many Christians after all? Does the iconophile celebration of these miracle stories indicate that they failed to recognize the lifeless materiality of images?

Conclusions: The Paradox of Living Images

In this chapter I have aimed to show how four types of arguments are common both to defense and condemnation of “cult images” across representative Christian arguments about pagan statues and aniconic objects of cult, relics of the saints, and Christian icons in a period of more than 800 years. In defending Christians from the charge of atheism because they would not worship at the statues of the gods of the Roman Empire, Athenagoras embarked on an extended tour of reasons why the statues are not gods, beginning with the fact that they are statues—lifeless matter—and accordingly so far separated from the living and true God that it is absurd even to associate them with the utter immateriality of the divine. This ontological argument required nuance, however, because, as Athenagoras concedes, sometimes the statues did seem to be active—an apparent truth witnessed by the centuries of creative grappling with the phenomenological effect of statues and cult objects more broadly in the ancient Mediterranean. Hence, he describes in detail how the “gods” purportedly represented by cult statues are really

¹⁴⁷ As discussed by Vladimir Baranov, “Constructing the Underground Community: The Letters of Theodore the Studite and the Letter of Emperors Michael II and Theophilus to Louis the Pious,” *Scrinium* 6 (2010): 230–59, the complaint probably had merit. The Letter is edited as Michael II, *Epistula ad Ludovicum Imperatorem*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Leges III, Concilia II.2*, ed. Albert Werminghoff (Hannover/Leipzig, 1908, repr. 1979), 475–480. Partial translation in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 157–158. On the context of this letter in the Iconoclast Controversy, see Auzépy, “Iconophile Intermission,” 391; Parry, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 9th Century,” 426; Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* 260–63; and Thomas F.X. Noble, “Images, Iconoclasm, and the West,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm* (ed. Humphreys), 530–70 (esp. 569–70).

demons who have taken on the names and fame of human beings, deceiving worshippers into false knowledge about God, engaging in ethically despicable behavior and preying on confused and overly materialized souls to amplify their imaginations and make them think that the lifeless matter teemed with signs of life.

In making this argument, Athenagoras sought to align Christian practices and beliefs with those of educated, philosophical monotheists in the empire, appealing to the lineage of Greek philosophers who likewise understood there to be a highest god above all others. At the same time, however, he also revealed some of the many anxious similarities Christians had with their religious rivals, whence Christian authors had to finesse their “self-differentiation from the ancient culture[s] out of which [Christianity] emerged and against which it defined itself.”¹⁴⁸ This anxiety would appear acutely in the dispute between Jerome and Vigilantius at the turn of the fifth century. Deploying an ontological argument, Vigilantius mocked those who venerated relics as irrational lovers of lifeless ash and bone who thought that by lighting candles made from cheap wax they could honor those whom Christ had glorified already. Jerome countered by smearing Vigilantius as one who, in turn, confused what he saw for idolatry because of his lifeless hermeneutics, fear of dead bodies, poor ethics, and, above all, because he was controlled by a demon. The activities of relics were not the result of demonic machinations but rather the reason demons opposed the veneration of relics; among the many movements and miracles relics performed, they, like the saints they made present, were known for casting out demons and causing them pain. This showed, for Jerome, that the saints’ relics were not mere lifeless matter, but a material manifestation of the spiritual image of God that the saint presented in their soul, mediating between the things below and the things above. The saints were not dead, but sleeping; they were not worshipped, but

¹⁴⁸ Jaś Elsner, “Beyond Compare: Pagan Saint and Christian God in Late Antiquity,” *Critical Inquiry* 35:3 (Spring 2009): 655-56.

honored. If Vigilantius looked with the right knowledge and a healthy, uncorrupted soul, he would recognize that what is truly alive and what is lifeless are not always how they seem. Instead, Vigilantius himself becomes an example of this fact.

Early defenses of icon veneration in the *Quaest. ad Ant.* and Leontius's *Apologiae contra Judaeos* treat images and touch relics and bodily relics in much the same way: as spurs to memory of the holy figure and their deeds that thereby conveyed knowledge of the subject and, through them, of God. These two authors ceded that the similarity between icon veneration and the worship of idols was a topic worth addressing, but used this resemblance as an opportunity to distinguish between Christians and their religious rivals. Ps. Athanasius supports his claim that Christians did not worship icons as gods like the pagans do by going so far as to appeal to the Hebrews of old who venerated material tokens as a way to remember their desired loved ones and honor the God who ordered the making of the tablets of the law and the cherubim that overlooked the mercy seat.¹⁴⁹ Leontius makes a similar, greatly expanded argument, even using this “history” of icon veneration to charge his purportedly Jewish interlocutor with abandoning ancestral tradition and the divine commandment to love God “with your whole heart” (ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου).¹⁵⁰ Both authors relied on the miraculous exorcisms and quasi-embodied activities of icons to testify to their true relationship with the saints and with God, concluding that this transgression of ontological distance between God and matter made true and reliable the memory of and knowledge about saints and God that they conveyed; as in Jerome's argument, these lively activities were manifestly not the result of demonic intervention, but the bane of it.

In spite of these early defenses, iconoclasts in the eighth century once again disparaged the lifeless matter from which icons were created, dismissing their appropriateness for honoring the

¹⁴⁹ Ps. Athanasius, *Quaest. ad Ant.* 39 (Migne PG 28 621A–B).

¹⁵⁰ Leontius, *Apologia* 5 (Déroche, “L’apologie,” 70.171).

saints—praising instead the “living images” presented in narrative lives and related literature—and rejecting the ability of icons to represent the divine, even in its unique human form in the person of Jesus Christ, as John of Damascus had argued. The idea that one could do so without splitting Christ’s natures or illicitly mixing them was the result of demonic machinations and their invention of painting—a trade fittingly characteristic of unethical and disreputable craftsmen who seek like the demons to deceive those who look at art. In their counterarguments, John of Damascus and the later bishops at Nicaea II did not contest that icons were made from lifeless matter. They did, however, seek to distinguish them from idols by arguing that the offering of honor through matter itself was not forbidden so much as those images of the deceptive pagan gods, who were of course demons. They worked, it seems, in similar ways, conveying knowledge of the depicted subjects and the spur to imitate those whom the images represented, which was why icons were laudable and idols so dangerous. In the later phase of the Iconoclast Controversy, the ontological status of icons and constant possibility of confusing image with prototype led to the nuanced articulation of precisely how icons mediated through shared form—ultimately shared hypostasis—that enabled the attribution of homonymy. In effect, this was an attempt to clarify the epistemological case, in turn built on ontological and ethical arguments, that icons were an appropriate and active way to approach and imitate God and the saints, transforming one’s own soul in the process.

Across each of these historical moments, from second century apologies for not worshipping statues, through the defense of relics (and attendant invective against one of their critics) in the fifth century and the disputes over icons in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, the details and specific challenges changed. Nevertheless, the critiques and responses were generally worked out—with exceptions and additions, no doubt—by appeal to the overlapping ontological, epistemological, demonological, and psychological/ethical explanations that formed

an argumentative *koinē* in the late ancient Mediterranean. These argumentative commonplaces created a set of expectations around discussions of material worship that individual authors would seek to navigate, sometimes affirming, sometimes modifying, sometimes reversing altogether in attempts to catch their purported interlocutors in a rhetorical trap and win the argument. Matter was in and of itself lifeless, but the ramifications of this ontological statement could range widely according to the needs and skills of the one arguing.

Yet, the explicitly forensic strategies featured in apologetic, invective, and conciliar (in effect, apologetic and invective declarations) texts analyzed in this chapter were not the only ways of navigating the paradox of living images—as indeed the majority-culture attempts to grapple with the phenomenological effect of cult images surveyed at the beginning of this chapter show. Nor was arguing about the legitimacy of material veneration necessarily the only reason to do so. In the analyses that follow, audience expectations set by the argumentative commonplaces regarding material images are confirmed, contested, reversed, and evaded through narratological means, revealing some of the dynamic ends to which thinking with images was undertaken. This been obscured, I will argue, by florilegal taking of narrative evidence for granted. I begin with three narratives from the sixth century in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, the interpretation of which exemplifies the opportunities for reassessment that come with treating the image as a cognitive tool.

2. Icons or Idols?

Saintly and Cultic Activities in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*

About halfway through what must have been a rather long day of reading aloud passages from patristic and hagiographical sources at the Second Council of Nicaea in October 787, Theodosius, “the most God-beloved deacon, monk, and notary” (ὁ θεοφιλέστατος διάκονος μοναχὸς καὶ νοτάριος) read aloud three excerpts from the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* to demonstrate the venerable use of material images among earlier generations in holy spaces.¹ In their earlier context as part of a Constantinopolitan miracle collection dating to the sixth century, the basic purpose of these miracle stories was to narrate the actions of Cosmas and Damian for petitioners suffering from disease and illness, while also raising the profile of the cult site in Constantinople.² The cult of these two brothers and healers, said to have been martyred under Diocletian in 287, was likely entrenched in Constantinople already by the end of the 5th century, when Paulina, the mother of Emperor Leontius (484–88), dedicated a church to them in the Blachernae region of the city to the northwest. This site was subsequently expanded and

¹ Lamberz, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 4), 384; see “Introduction,” pp. 21–3, above.

² Ludwig Deubner, ed., *Kosmas und Damian: Texte und Einleitung* (Leipzig and Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1907). On the date, see below, nn. 10 and 40. There were at least three cults of Cosmas and Damian, the so-called “Roman,” “Asian,” and “Arabian,” the last of which is the subject of the standard miracle collections I discuss in this chapter. On the different *Lives*, see Martin van Esbroeck, “La diffusion orientale de la légende des saints Cosme et Damien,” in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés IV^e–XII^e siècles. Actes du colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris. (2–5 mai 1979)* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), 61–77. A.-J. Festugière, who has translated Deubner’s collection into French (*Sainte Thècle, Saints Côme et Damien, Saints Cyr et Jean [extraits], Saint Georges* [Paris: Éditions A. et J. Picard, 1971]), claimed that the miracle collections properly belong to the Roman pair, but Idlikó Csepregi, “The Miracles of Saints Cosmas and Damian: Characteristics of Dream Healing,” *Annual of Medieval Studies at the CEU* 8 (2002): 91–92, nn. 14–16 (following Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 81) has convincingly argued for continuing to identify the miracles with the Arabian pair that took root in Constantinople. For more on the complicated relationship of these cults and the literature associated with them, see Phil Booth, “Orthodox and Heretic in the Early Byzantine Cult(s) of Cosmas and Damian,” in *An Age of Saints?: Power, Conflict, and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, eds. Phil Booth, Matthew Dal Santo, and Peter Sarris, Brill’s Series on the Early Middle Ages 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 114–15, especially nn. 3–4.

remodeled by Justinian in the mid-sixth century, and, shortly thereafter, Justin II founded an alternate cult site within the imperial palace area (ἐν τοῖς βασιλικοῦ) in the southeast. This latter location became the primary shrine and incubation site³ for would-be suppliants, especially once the Blachernae site was pillaged by Avars in the 620s. What role did the mention of icons excerpted from literary sources by the iconophile bishops at Nicaea II play in the cult, and what can the analysis of these miracle narratives—*Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15—reveal about the relationship between divinity and matter for the author of these accounts? What does the process of excerpting, and the specific choices made in each case, obscure or reformulate?

Based on evidence from the miracle collections, patients, both rich and poor, who sought a cure would sleep in the church, known as the *Kosmideion*, usually at the encouragement of friends or an invitation from the saints themselves in a dream. Operations sometimes took place nearby (as in Miracle 30) or even in the church itself (implied by Miracle 28), though the texts are coy about the relationship between the cult site and medical physicians, who are often framed in these accounts as hapless or even antagonistic to the process of healing. The highlight of the cult ritual was the Saturday Night Vigil, referred to as the *pannychis* (παννυχίς), when supplicants would come forward to receive the *kērōtē* (κηρωτή) dispensed by the church priests and report successful cures or encounters they had had with Cosmas and Damian (e.g., Miracles

³ Procopius, *De aedificiis* I.6.5–8; see Booth, “Orthodox and Heretic,” 114–16 with additional bibliography. On Christian “incubation” and the continuity with ancient (e.g., Asclepian) incubation shrines, see Robert Wiśniewski, “Looking for Dreams and Talking with Martyrs: The Internal Roots of Christian Incubation,” *Studia Patristica* 63 (2013): 203–8; Fritz Graf, *Roman Festivals in the Greek East: From the Early Empire to the Middle Byzantine Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 241–67; and especially Gil H. Renberg, *Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World*, vol. 2, Religions in the Greco-Roman World 184 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 745–807, esp. 793, who argues (*pace* Idlikó Csepregi, “Who is Behind Incubation Stories? Hagiographers of Byzantine Dream-Healing Miracles,” in *Dreams, Healing, and Medicine in Greece: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Steven M. Oberhelm [London: Routledge, 2013,] 162) that it is fine to call “sleeping in a shrine and asking generally for aid or a cure” “incubation,” but there are decided differences from the established ritual activity and structure of an Asclepeion that do not carry over to Christian shrines. It may be misleading, therefore, to suggest that Christian and traditional incubation were “essentially the same” or that the former evolved directly from the latter. Dreams occurred and healings took place as the result of dream actions, he argues, but rarely were dreams *solicited*, let alone the oracular dreams common in traditional incubation cults.

10, 20, 26, and 30).⁴ The *kērōtē* itself was made either from candle wax or lamp oil (or a combination thereof) that had been blessed and pressed into some form of distributable token or salve, and, in most of the miracle stories, it serves as a constitutive ingredient in the full healing of supplicants when applied to a wound or ingested. It is also likely that the written miracle stories were collected and composed to be read aloud during the Saturday Night Vigil, providing a morale boost for the sometimes-long-suffering patients at the shrine. Oral recitations, as Csepregi concludes, afforded a “template for the pilgrim experience in the form of a narrative code or way of describing the circumstances of dreaming” both immediately after their hoped-for healing and again when back home for the edification of others.⁵ Indeed, the common thread across many stories of miraculous healing in the sixth and seventh centuries was a narrative structure that knit together recovery with resurrection.⁶

As I showed briefly in the Introduction to this dissertation, the scholarly analysis of *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 has exemplified what I call the florilegium style of reading narrative. By selecting only snippets of these accounts, scholars have by and large seen in the material images featured in *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 a mirror for their positions about idolatry and icons, viewed primarily in terms of the conflation of image and prototype, lifeless and living, interpretations which have resulted in an effective continuation of normative debates over the propriety of religious images, as I will show below. *Cos. Dam.* 15, in particular, has persistently fascinated scholars interested in image theory in the centuries prior to the Iconoclast Controversy. This

⁴ Csepregi, “Characteristics of Dream Healing,” 93–99. At 98, Csepregi observes that this vigil, including the distribution of *kērōtē*, likewise took place at the church of John the Baptist Prodomos, where the healing cult of Saint Artemius was focused (*Miracula Artemii* 25), and that the *kērōtē* was apparently a “rather disgusting remedy.”

⁵ Csepregi, “Who Is Behind Incubation Stories?” 164.

⁶ Phil Booth, “Saints and Soteriology in Sophronius Sophista’s *Miracles of Cyrus and John*,” in *The Church, the Afterlife and the Fate of the Soul*, eds. Tony Claydon and Peter Clarke, *Studies in Church History* 45 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 53.

narrative tells the tale of a faithful woman who had been rescued from various illnesses by the saints and who always visited their shrine in gratitude, paying them their due with honor. But she wasn't satisfied with keeping them in her mind, the narrator claims, so she painted them on an entire wall of her house. One night, sick with internal pains, she crawls down from bed and goes to the wall where the saints were painted. She scrapes some of the plaster from the wall painting, mixes it with water and drinks it, her pains immediately vanishing with the ἐπιφοίτησις—visitation, manifestation, even intervention—of the saints. Thrilled, she goes to the shrine of the saints in Constantinople to tell everyone about the cure she had received.⁷

The woman's consumption of material from the painted wall image has garnered especially close attention. Her actions as portrayed in *Cos. Dam.* 15 were by no means unique in late ancient religious practice. Indeed, the imbibing and intimate touching of matter made sacred by association with holy figures was a surprisingly common practice—a manifestation of the tension between imitating and becoming that Finbarr Barry Flood has described as “a desire to collapse a distinction between emulator and emulated that is central to the operation of mimesis as re-presentation.”⁸ On its face, ingestion of the image—an integrative action so marked by desire to be close to the saints that it seeks to make them a part of oneself—seems to cross the line from veneration to a belief that the very matter of the representation somehow contains the saints, that it somehow *is* the saints themselves, a conclusion that seems to exemplify the very fears iconoclasts had about idolatry. Although this miracle tale was apparently considered uncontroversial when read at Nicaea II by the iconophile supporters, the iconoclast emperor Michael II in 824 complained to Louis the Pious about what he considered inordinate icon

⁷ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137–38. For closer textual analysis and Greek, see below.

⁸ Finbarr Barry Flood, “Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation, and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam,” in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promeey (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 459–93; quote at 463.

practices: people were taking icons of saints as godparents and even scraping and mixing in the paint from icons with Eucharistic bread and wine.⁹

Narrative analysis of *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15, however, shows that the icon and the saint are not quite conflated by the author of these stories, but rather strategically portrayed as different images in distinct realities brought together by a third object, namely the *kērōtē*.¹⁰ In this chapter, I seek to demonstrate how florilegal reading and the context of Nicaea II have led not only to incomplete descriptions of these fascinating narratives but also to interpretations of the place of images in *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 that have been overdetermined by the legacy of bitter disputes over idolatry. My argument unfolds by first turning to the recent re-placement of the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* into the midst of sixth-century disputes over the state of the soul. This theological and cultic context, evident especially in *Cos. Dam.* 13, as I will show, not only helps affirm the likelihood of a date of composition for *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15 in concert with that of the early collections in the sixth century rather than the Iconoclast Controversy, it also provides a key for identifying the various roles images play within these miracle stories.

⁹ See above chapter 1, p. 94. *Cos. Dam.* 15 is used both by Flood, “Bodies and Becoming,” 464–65 and Vasileios Marinis, “Piety, Barbarism, and the Senses in Byzantium,” in *Sensational Religion* (ed. Promey), 327–28 to substantiate the claims made in Michael II’s letter.

¹⁰ The question of authorship is even more vexed than usual for hagiographical literature insofar as the *Miracula Cosmae et Damiani* were revised and expanded several times, perhaps around 700 and 900 (Brubaker, “Icons Before Iconoclasm?” 1219), and certainly in fourteenth century by Maximus the Deacon. In addition, each of the 36 manuscripts used by Deubner contains a different cluster of lives, passions, and miracle stories (Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 23–47; Csepregi, “Who is Behind Incubation Stories,” 170). Hence, given the uncertain compilation process, it is possible that *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15 each had different authors. However, Miracles 1–30 in Deubner’s edition of the *Miracula Cosmae et Damiani* all likely date to and began circulating in the mid-sixth century in conjunction with the support the cult received from Justinian and Justin II (we know, for instance, that the miracles of Cosmas and Damian were in circulation by the 610s when miracles 2 and 24 are mentioned in Sophronius’s *Miracula Cyri et Joannis*; see Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 82–83; Booth, “Orthodox and Heretic,” 117). Given the uncertainty about single or multiple authorship of the *Miracula Cosmae et Damiani*, for the purposes of the analysis below I assume a single implied author (whom I will refer to as “the author) without making any claims about the identity of the actual human author(s) except that they were active in the cult activity of the saints and evidently conversant in contemporary theological issues of Constantinople.

After identifying some of the chief concerns of the miracle collection as a whole and examining the role of dreams within “non-rationalist” views of post-mortem saintly activity—a crucial element in the cult of Cosmas and Damian—I offer for the first time narrative readings of all three miracle stories excerpted at Nicaea II so that we can see how these accounts each reflect differently upon the role of material images in the activities of the cult and the miracles that connected divine to mundane.¹¹ Finally, at the end of the chapter, I return to the notion of “florilegal reading” laid out in the introduction with an analysis of how the image miracle in *Cos. Dam. 15* has served scholarly arguments about lively materiality in antiquity. Despite the persistent preoccupation throughout Late Antiquity with the problems of mimesis and material holiness, I conclude, the historiographical myopia on the miraculous moments in *Cos. Dam. 13* and *15* has blinded scholars to the extent to which—for the author of these miracle accounts—the material image was less a problem than part of the solution.

Alive or Angelic? The Postmortem Soul in the Sixth Century

The stakes of articulating a philosophically coherent and doctrinally consistent position on the state of postmortem souls can be glimpsed in the florilegal work of sixth-century Tritheist, Stephen Gobar, which presented contrary opinions on issues ranging from dates of Christmas and Easter to matters of the soul, purification in hell, and resurrection bodies.¹²

¹¹ Broadly on the rationalist/anti-rationalist tension, see John Haldon, “Supplementary Essay. The Miracles of Artemios and Contemporary Attitudes: Context and Significance,” in *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium*, trans. and comm. Virgil S. Crisafulli and John W. Nesbitt, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 33–73.

¹² This work of Stephen Gobar in its extant form, outlined and criticized by patriarch Photios in the ninth century in his *Bibliotheca* (René Henry, ed., *Photios. Bibliothèque*, Tome 5: Codices 230–241 [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1967], 67–79 [Bekker pp. 287b–291b]), is apparently not given a title. Adolf von Harnack, “The ‘Sic et Non’ of Stephanus Gobarus,” *Harvard Theological Review* 16:3 (July 1923): 205–34 christens it the “Sic et Non,” after Abelard’s own work of similar character (see especially Harnack, “Stephanus Gobarus,” 227), a title which characterizes the apparent thesis/antithesis procedure of Stephen’s work, but is without any external attestation. On

According to what is preserved of this work by Photios of Constantinople, Stephen dedicated a chapter to the opinions “That the souls of human beings are spiritual bodies and have been given shape in accordance with appearance of the external body (Ὅτι σώματά εἰσι νοερά αἱ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχαί, καὶ διατετυπωμένοι κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον ἔξωθεν τοῦ σώματος σχῆμα); and from the contrary position, that the soul is incorporeal and not subject to bodily shapes” (καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου, ὅτι ἀσώματός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή καὶ σωματικοῖς οὐκ ὑπόκειται τύποις).¹³

It is difficult to determine precisely what Stephen’s own position was or how he articulated it, but the controversy he witnesses points to what have been called the “non-rationalist” and “rationalist” perspectives on the soul in late antiquity. The “rationalist” view, the concerns of which are characterized reasonably well by John Philoponus, sought to integrate the Platonic model of the immortal soul with the Aristotelian notion of the soul as the “completion” (ἐντελέχεια) of the body, “which actualizes the body such that it is a living body,”¹⁴—meaning that the soul was properly inseparable from the body and, as a whole, mortal.¹⁵ For Philoponus, there were at least two other intellectual commitments in addition to Neoplatonic synthesis: a knowledge of medical advances that underscored in a new way the interconnection of cognition

liturgical dating disputes, see Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 68 (Bekker p. 287b.38–288a.7); on resurrection bodies, 68–9 (288a.9–20); on purification in hell, 70 (288b.17–22).

¹³ Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 73 (Bekker p. 289b.24–8). See additional discussion in Dal Santo, “Incubation,” 41 and n. 50 and Nicholas Constan, “An Apology for the Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity: Eustratius Presbyter of Constantinople *On the State of Souls After Death* (CPG 7522),” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10:2 (Summer 2002): 280–81.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *De anima* II.1. See Uwe Michael Lang, *John Philoponus and the Controversies over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century: A Study and Translation of the Arbiter* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 135. On the relationship between Stephen Gobar and Philoponus, see Harnack, “Stephanus Gobarus,” 218–19.

¹⁵ Aristotle himself allowed for the immortality and separability of the rational soul (or “the intellect”) since it was not properly the completion of anything bodily, but as Lang, *Philoponus*, 138 rightly describes, Neoplatonist commentators were on the whole still concerned that this only partial separability of soul from body would entail a loss of identity.

and the body,¹⁶ on the one hand, and Christian teaching on the soul and the afterlife, which demanded the possibility of postmortem rewards and punishment, on the other.¹⁷

Many rationalists, it seems, punted on solving these tensions in the short term, deferring the matter of posthumous punishments to the general resurrection.¹⁸ Stephen Gobar's text, for instance, preserves the position (not so different from that of Vigilantius) "that after death the soul does not depart from either the body or the tomb" (ὅτι μετὰ θάνατον ἡ ψυχὴ οὔτε τοῦ σώματος οὔτε τοῦ τάφου χωρίζεται). In consequence, as the antitheses near the end of his work attest, although some believed that "the soul of everyone who has died gains great advantages (πάντος τεθνεῶντος ψυχὴ ὠφελεῖται μέγιστα) through prayers, offerings, and alms carried out on

¹⁶ More broadly on medical advances and psychological theory in Philoponus, see Robert B. Todd, "Philosophy and Medicine in John Philoponus's Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 103–10; Constan, "Apology for the Cult of Saints," 279–80. Philoponus shows his concern with medical knowledge in *In de anima* 5.34–6.10 and 18.34–19.16 (numbering according to pages in Michael Hayduck, ed., *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis de anima libros commentaria*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 15 [Berlin: Reimer, 1897], retrieved from: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/Iris/Cite?4015:008:0>; see translation in Philip J. van der Eijk [trans.], *Philoponus: On Aristotle's "On the Soul 1.1–2"* [Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005], 19–20, 34–5).

¹⁷ As Philoponus, *In de anima* 18.1–2, 6, reasons, "Yet if the soul is incorporeal, then it is impossible for it be affected; how then is it punished? (ἀλλ' εἰ ἀσώματος ἡ ψυχὴ, ἀδύνατον αὐτὴν παθεῖν. πῶς οὖν κολάζεται;) ...Because, in and of itself, the incorporeal is not affected by anything" (ἐπεὶ αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἀσώματον ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἄν πάθοι [van den Eijk, *Philoponus*, 33, revised]). Though van den Eijk, *Philoponus*, 124 n.184 observes that this is also part of the Platonic heritage, I am persuaded that the concern with punishment was more immediately conditioned by Christian eschatology as argued by Dal Santo, "Incubation," 41 and, in a different vein, by Leslie S.B. MacCoull, "A New Look at the Career of John Philoponus," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3:1 (Spring 1995): 47–60. This context is perhaps even more likely if we understand πάσχω to connote "suffer" rather than in the sheerly affectational and experiential sense. Philoponus's response to the problem of postmortem punishment was to argue that both Aristotle and Plato had actually conceived of only the rational (ἡ λογικὴ) soul as immortal and separable from the body (12.11–12) and deduce the existence and features of a *pneumatic* body (τὸ πνευματικὸν σῶμα), which serves as the vehicle (ὄχημα) and substrate (ὑποκείμενον) of the non-rational soul (17.20). This pneumatic body, "being immoderately pulled apart and squished together by immoderate cooling or burning, causes pain to the soul by sympathetic affection" (διακρινόμενον ἀμέτρως ἢ συγκρινόμενον ὑπὸ ψύξεως ἢ καύσεως ἀμέτρου ἀλγύνει τὴν ψυχὴν διὰ τὴν συμπάθειαν [van den Eijk, *Philoponus*, 33, revised]), just as how, in the current life, the soul experiences pain and pleasure when the present body does, (18.3–6). On this account, the experiences of the pneumatic body hence account for postmortem punishment in response to a poorly lived life.

¹⁸ This was not necessarily a novel position, as demonstrated by the survey of views during Late Antiquity on judgment in the afterlife in Vasileios Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium: The Fate of the Soul in Theology, Liturgy, and Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 15–27, but it was relatively uncommon. A more typical position, as described by Marinis, was an initial judgment of souls, either at the deathbed or in the air by stopping at series of "tollhouses" (τελώνια), at which points demons who represented various sins would grope at or test the soul to see if they could drag it down to hell. Whether the soul ascended further or was brought down for punishment, this was typically considered an "intermediate state" in which the soul would reside until the final judgment.

that person’s behalf” (διὰ τῶν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐπιτελουμένων εὐχῶν καὶ προσφερῶν καὶ ἐλεημοσυνῶν), there was also plenty of evidence among the fathers that souls of the deceased did “not benefit in this way” (οὐχ οὕτω).¹⁹ This was a view that “non-rationalist” defenders of Christian cultic and liturgical activity could not fully abide. As Nicholas Conostas observes, the denial of the separability and visibility of the soul challenged the corollary presumption that the dead—especially the holy dead—“could involve themselves in the affairs of the living, or intercede on their behalf in heaven, or be affected by the intentions and activities of the church on earth.”²⁰ In addition, as Matthew J. Dal Santo has argued, the Christological disputes that created a theologically fractious empire in the fifth and sixth centuries also led to the “emperors’ increasingly public manipulation of intercessory cults” like those of Artemios, Cyrus and John, and Cosmas and Damian, “to exalt the imperial office.”²¹ If, as many rationalists held, the soul was asleep after the death of the body and would remain so until the general resurrection, this

¹⁹ Henry, *Bibliothèque*, 79 (Bekker p. 291b.34–37); cf. Conostas, “An Apology for the Cult of Saints,” 281. Philoponus’s pneumatic body, described above in note 38, did not exactly encourage cultic practices of care for the dead, nor did his proposal offer philosophical backing for widespread accounts of visions of the saints and the activities of their relics, the phenomena at the practical center of the antitheses Gobar describes. To be sure, the pneumatically embodied soul could receive benefit after the death of the solid body, but this was not through prayers. Rather, by experiencing punishments, the soul turned inward away from “desire” (ἐπιθυμία) and “spirit” (θυμός), toward rational contemplation of both its own activities and the divine, thus gradually casting off these activities by which it has been “willingly bound” (ἐκοῦσα συνεδέθη, 18.23) to the realm of becoming, and thus shedding the *pneuma* altogether. Building on further Neoplatonist reasoning, Philoponus speculates that, once purified, the soul gained a “luminous or astral” body (ἀγνοειδὲς ἢ ἀστροειδὲς) that would keep alive and moving about as a cosmic entity (18.26–30). But this was not a visible body in any regard. Indeed, even the pneumatic body was typically imperceptible by the bodily senses (19.20) and thus not an explanation for visions of the saints. Exceptions pertained only to the “shadowy appearances” that sometimes “appear around tombs” (ἐν τοῖς τάφοις τὰ σκιοειδῆ φαίνονται φάσματα, 19.18–19), the result of an “unhealthy regimen” in life through which “the *pneuma* is thickened” and “the soul is dragged down around the emotions” (τοῦ πνεύματος παχυνθέντος ἐκ μοχθηρᾶς διαίτης κατασπᾶσθαι περὶ τὰ πάθη τὴν ψυχὴν, 19.23–4). The pneumatic body sometimes even takes on a “human-like shape” (τὸ ἀνδρείκελον σχῆμα) because it has been pressed together by the solid body “as happens in the case of ice: for it is formed together with the vessels in which it is frozen” (ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ κρυστάλλου συμβαίνει· συνδιατυπῶνται γὰρ τοῖς ἐν οἷς πήγνυται ἀγγείοις, 20.4–5). But this occurs only in the case of unholy—decidedly gluttonous—souls.

²⁰ Conostas, “An Apology for the Cult of the Saints,” 271.

²¹ Matthew J. Dal Santo, “The God Protected Empire? Skepticism Towards the Cult of the Saints in Early Byzantium,” in *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict, and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, eds. Phil Booth, Matthew Dal Santo, and Peter Sarris (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 148.

was a challenge to the validity of the cult of saints that likewise contested “the emperors’ exalted politico-religious claims.”²² What were in one regard arcane philosophical disputations, therefore, also cut to the heart of imperial power and Christian cultic practice. The stakes were clear from both above and below.

Embroidered in these disputes was Eustratius of Constantinople, a late-sixth century presbyter and hagiographer whose mentor, Eutychius, had been the architect behind the condemnations of “Origenism” at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 (which had relied upon the posthumous activity of souls to excommunicate deceased church fathers), composed his *On the State of Souls after Death (De statu animarum post mortem)*.²³ This lengthy treatise, which largely argues by appeal to patristic and hagiographical excerpts, engages a number of issues that are important for exploring late ancient Christian views on the relationship between

²² Dal Santo, “God Protected Empire,” 148. Cf. Booth, “Saints and Soteriology,” 62: “The post-Justinianic crisis of empire precipitated a broad cultural shift in religious sensibilities and a subsequent devolution in established paradigms of spiritual authority which refocused attention from terrestrial to celestial authority, and from mediation of public ritual and hierarchy to the direct revelation of heavenly intercessors and their iconography.” Accordingly, even if Philoponus’s theory in adapted form had been attractive to the defenders of saint’s cults, his identity as an Alexandrian Miaphysite (even condemned as a Tritheist), would likely have rendered his argument unpalatable to church leaders in Constantinople, the center of opposition to Alexandrian Christology. While the Christological elements are not especially pronounced in *In de anima*—certainly not in comparison to some of his later contributions such as the *Arbiter*—significant portions of Philoponus’s discussion nevertheless hinge on the possibility of “mixing” two natures, and his understanding of the relationship between the composite soul-body was deeply implicated in his view of the relationship between Christ’s divine and human natures. See MacCoull, “A New Look,” 51–2; Lang, *Philoponus*, 145–57. For a translation from the Syriac of the *Arbiter*, see Lang, *Philoponus*, 175–217. On rationalist views regarding the resurrection and posthumous saintly activity, see Gilbert Dagron, “L’ombre d’un doute: l’hagiographie en question, VI^e–XI^e siècle,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992): 59–68; Dirk Krausmüller, “God or Angels as Impersonators of Saints: A Belief and its Contexts in the ‘Refutation’ of Eustratius of Constantinople and in the Writings of Anastasius of Sinai,” *Gouden Hoorn* 6:2 (Winter 1998–99): (<https://goudenhoorn.com/2014/05/13/god-or-angels-as-impersonators-of-saints-a-belief-and-its-contexts-in-the-refutation-of-eustratius-of-constantinople-and-in-the-writings-of-anastasius-of-sinai/>); Dirk Krausmüller, “‘At the Resurrection We Will Not Recognize One Another’: Radical Devaluation of Social Relations in the Lost Model of Anastasius’ and Pseudo-Athanasius’ *Questions and Answers*,” *Byzantion* 83 (2013): 207–27.

²³ Eustratius of Constantinople, *On the State of Souls after Death* = Eustratii Presbyteri Constantinopolitani: *De statu animarum post mortem*, ed. Peter van Deun, Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca 60 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006). I relied upon the rough and ready translation of Louis Demos, “The Cult of the Saints and its Christological Foundations in Eustratius of Constantinople’s *De statu animarum post mortem*” (PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2010), 158–293 to find my way around this lengthy text, adapting his translations where needed. Regarding the date to around 590 (and the influence of Eutychius), see Dal Santo, “God Protected Empire,” 134–142 and Demos, “Cult of the Saints,” 58–90.

spirit and matter, living and dead, as well as for understanding some of the theological issues that *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15 weigh in on through narrative.

Eustratius’s central concern is to establish the reality and truthfulness of saintly visions and miracles, both of which relied upon the notion that the saint’s soul persisted in a living, wakeful, and active state after the death of the body. Intriguingly, his opponents do not deny the fact *that* miraculous occurrences take place at the tombs and relics of the saints. Rather, “certain people...who wish to philosophize about human souls” (τινὲς τῶν...φιλοσοφεῖν ἐθελόντων περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν) argue that “after the departure from this life and the withdrawal of souls from bodies (μετὰ τὴν τοῦ βίου τοῦδε μετάστασιν καὶ τὴν τῶν ψυχῶν ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων ἀναχώρησιν), the souls themselves, whether holy ones or those that exist in some other way, remain inactive” (ἀνερέργητοι μένουσι καὶ αὐταὶ αἱ ψυχαί, εἴτε ἅγιοι, εἴτε ἄλλως πῶς ὑπάρχουσιν).²⁴ These so-called philosophers, Eustratius complains, argue that “even if the souls of the saints appear to some people” (κἄν οὖν φαίνονταί τισιν αἱ τῶν ἁγίων ψυχαί), it is not actually the saints in their essence (οὐσία) or individual existence (ὑπαρξίς ἰδίᾳ) that appear. The visionary bodies of the saints are actually “a certain divine power taking on the form” (δύναμις δε τις θεία σχηματιζομένη) of the dead with the result that “it portrays the souls of the saints being active” (ψυχὰς ἁγίων ἐνεργούσας δείνυσιν).²⁵ The souls of the saints, these opponents argue, reside somewhere after death that renders them unable “to become manifest to those in this life” (ἐν τῷδε τῷ βίῳ τισὶν ἐμφανίζεῖν) or affect the material world.²⁶

The bulk of Eustratius’s lengthy response takes the form of citing passages that prove the postmortem life of the saints through their activities and arguing by appeal to the details of

²⁴ Eustratius, *De statu* 5.50–5 (cited by page and line[s] in Van Deun’s edition; line numbers are continuous).

²⁵ Eustratius, *De statu* 5.55–8.

²⁶ Eustratius, *De statu* 5.60 (Demos 161, revised).

patristic testimony that demonstrate the specific, enhypostatic identity of the saints as the agents in visions and miracles performed with their relics.²⁷ Eustratius points to Abel, for instance, “the voice” of whose “blood is crying out” (Φωνή αἵματος...βοᾶ) from the ground after his murder in Gen 4:10. Noting that the Paul of Hebrews in 11:4 describes Abel as “still speaking” (ἔτι λαλεῖ) even though he has died (ἀποθανών),²⁸ Eustratius asks, “If the soul is not active after the separation from its own body, then how was it crying out?” (Εἰ οὐκ ἐνεργεῖ μετὰ τὸν χωρισμὸν τοῦ ἑαυτῆς σώματος ἢ ψυχῆ, πῶς ἐβόα;). He counters that “the cry is not sent up from a dead body, but from a living one” (ἢ βοή οὐκ ἀπὸ νεκροῦ, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ ζῶντος ἀναπέμπεται) and reasons that Paul ascribed the “died” to the body but the “still speaking” to the soul. “‘Speaking’ after death” (τὸ λαλεῖν μετὰ θάνατον), therefore, is a sign of a body that is both “active” (ἐνεργοῦντος) and “living” (ζῶντος), which, he concludes, are effectively equal terms.²⁹

Demonstrating that the saints acted of their own accord, however, often through the lifeless bits of bone and dust that remained on earth as relics, was less straightforward. To make his case, Eustratius turns his attention to the specific wording of patristic and hagiographic

²⁷ The work is divided into three sections, each tackling a related issue. The first (3.9–83.2004) responds to the challenge above that visions of the saints are not actually of the saints themselves; the second (83.2005–96.2341), answers how it is that saints in visions appear with various clothing and accoutrement (see below, 114 n. 37); and the third (96.2341–113.2726) assures readers that prayers and liturgies for the dead are in fact efficacious, on the grounds that the saints are active and can intercede for them. For more on specific liturgies and the theological presuppositions therein, see Marinis, *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium*, 83–134.

²⁸ Eustratius, *De statu* 8.140–41, 144.

²⁹ Eustratius, *De statu* 8.147–9.157 (Demos 165–67, revised). Eustratius’s knitting together of “activity” and “life” is commonplace throughout the work: cf. e.g., 14.285–95 and especially his interpretation of the vision of Gamaliel that appears to the priest Lukianos in the fifth-century *Passion and Discovery of Saint Stephen the Protomartyr* (BHG 1649) (Eustratius, *De statu* 81.1957–83.2000 [Demos, 254–58]). In the account, Gamaliel appears to Lukianos, identifying himself when asked, asking how long “we will be confined” (ἐγκεκλείσμεθα), and complaining that his and Stephen’s relics reside in a place where at one moment “they are drenched” (βρέχονται), while at another they “get sunburns” (ἠλιόκαυστα γίνονται). Later, when the graves are discovered, Eustratius relates, “a great earthquake occurred with the result that the bodily remains (τὸ λείψανον) of saint Stephen became unruly and revived” (σκιρτῆσαι καὶ ἀναθάλλαι). These and other examples, Eustratius concludes, “teach that the activities and personal visits of the martyrs really happen” (τῶν μαρτύρων διδάσκουσα τὰς ἐνεργείας εἶναι καὶ τὰς παρουσίας).

testimony. Discussing a passage from Gregory Nazianzus’s *Against Julian*,³⁰ for example, Eustratius homes in on Gregory’s language when describing the power of the saints, emphasizing how Gregory lauds them, “saying ‘whose epiphanic appearances and whose foretellings’” (ειπὼν ἽΩν αἱ ἐπιφάνειαι καὶ ὧν αἱ προρρήσεις) they are. “Accordingly, he adds that not only are their souls active in and of themselves (προστέθηκε γ’ οὖν ὡς μὴ μόνον τὰς ψυχὰς καθ’ ἑαυτὰς ἐνεργεῖν), but, when being caressed or honored, their bodies are also able to show the same grace and activity as the souls” (ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ σώματα τὴν ἴσην ταῖς ψυχαῖς χάριν τὲ καὶ ἐνεργεῖαν ἐπαφώμενα ἢ τιμώμενα δώδεωκα δύνασθαι).³¹ Rather than being an impediment to encountering the saints, Eustratius interprets Gregory as saying that the material tokens particular to individual saints prove not only their continued life, but also that it was really and reliably the saints themselves who acted of their own individual agency.

Otherwise, Eustratius concluded, God would be a liar. As he reasons near the end of the first (and longest) section of the work, “If,” as his opponents argue, “the power of God alone (Εἰ δὲ...μόνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ δύναμις) executes the activities and healings (τὰς ἐνεργείας καὶ τὰς ἰάσεις ποιεῖ), assuming an appearance with reference to the *forms* of his holy martyrs and other holy people and servants” (σχηματιζομένη πρὸς τὰς εἰδέας τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁσίων καὶ θεραπόντων αὐτοῦ),³² then consequently “the epiphanic appearances of the saints occur falsely (ψευδῶς αἱ τῶν ἁγίων ἐμφάνειαι...γίνονται), just like those people in theatres who take

³⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Contra Iulianum imperatorem 1* (orat. 4), §69 (text in Jean Bernardi, ed., *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 4–5, Contre Julien*, Sources chrétiennes 309 (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1983), 178.

³¹ Eustratius, *De statu* 60.1441–45 (Demos, 228).

³² As Constatas, “Apology for the Cult of Saints,” 273 n. 13 observes, Eustratius uses *σχηματίζω* at several points throughout the treatise, including here, possibly in reference to 2 Cor 11:13–15 (“For these kinds of people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves (μετασχηματιζόμενοι) as apostles of Christ—and no wonder, for Satan disguises himself (μετασχηματίζεται) as an angel of light. So it would be no great surprise if his servants also disguised themselves (μετασχηματίζονται) as servants of justice”) to raise the specter of demonic inspiration behind in his opponents’ position.

on the guise of others” (καθάπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις ἄλλοι ὄντες ἐτέρων ὑποδύονται πρόσωπα).³³ Is the God of truth sending messengers under false pretenses? No, Eustratius avers. “For if someone wishes to appear as that which he is not, he strays outside the truth” (Εἰ γὰρ ὁ μὴ ἐστίν, τίς ἐκεῖνο θέλει φαίνεσθαι, τῆς ἀληθείας ἔξω βαίνει).³⁴ An epiphanic appearance of a saint, he asserts is “truly a vision” (ὄντως οὐσα ὄπτασία) and “happens for the sake of both spiritual and bodily benefit” (ὠφελείας... ἕνεκεν ψυχικῆς τὲ καὶ σωματικῆς).³⁵

While idolatry as a theological issue is not raised, the debate is surprisingly legible in the terms of idolatry because the core debate revolves around the binaries of life and death, truth and falsehood. At root was a question about how the image of someone dead related to the prototype, and whether it was true or false. Just as in the case of Athenagoras, discussed in chapter 1, the living images of the pagans did not, in fact, bear a true relationship to their divine prototypes, as the lively abilities they displayed might suggest, but were in fact doubly deceptive. In the argument of Eustratius, the presence of actors that were angelic rather than demonic did not

³³ Eustratius, *De statu* 69.1659–63, 67–9. To be sure, like his opponents, Eustratius is concerned with preserving the primary responsibility for miracles to God though, as Conostas puts it, “the seamless coordination of divine, angelic, and human activity is a theme that Eustratius develops throughout the apology” (Conostas, “Apology for the Cult of Saints,” 275). But in the Neo-Chalcedonian theological context of the sixth century that sought various strategies of articulating the relationship between human and divine in Christ that preserved Jesus’s hypostatic particularity, it was likewise important to underscore the specific reality of the *Christomimetai*, whose souls were distinct, colorful, and still living images of God. Perhaps counterintuitively, it was through their epiphanic appearances and activities that occurred “with reference to individual nature (κατ’ οὐσίαν ἰδίαν) (Eustratius, *De statu* 53.1278) that the saints thus imitated Christ, both assimilating to and remaining distinct from the divine. As Booth, “Saints and Soteriology,” 61–2 rightly concludes, “the differentiation [between saints and angels] can be seen to avoid a monenergizing position which would subordinate saintly activity to that of the divine. ... Through voluntarily aspiring to Christlike obedience, therefore, the individual ascends toward the same synergy of human and divine energies, that is, toward the posthumous existence enjoyed by the saints.” This near reversal of the anthropological model of soul and body to explain the hypostatic union of Christ (as with John Philoponus above) meant that one of the primary ways saints now became images of god was through their enhypostatitic particularity in a kind of “Christological mimesis” (see Demos, “The Cult of the Saints,” 91–156).

³⁴ Eustratius, *De statu* 69.1674–5. As proof, Eustratius, *De statu* 69.1672–4 draws a line between his opponents’ claim that the divine powers appear in a form other than their own and the disreputable work of stage actors who perform καθ’ ὑπόκρισιν, bringing the comparison back to the “hypocrites” of Matthew 6:2–5, who make sure that their acts of virtue are seen by human beings, earning them praise. Their activities take place under the disguise of piety, he argues, just as the actors who dispense culture and, in Eustratius’s characterization of his opponents, apparitions of “the saints.”

³⁵ Eustratius, *De statu* 70.1679, 1682–83 (Demos, 239–40).

obviate the mimetic difficulties at play. If the visions and miracles of the postmortem saints were not really the saints themselves, then, even if angelic or divine powers were the source of saintly simulacra, prayer to and on behalf of the dead and the veneration of relics constituted prayer to and on behalf of dead and useless things. The implication remains unstated, but, given the long history of Christian skepticism regarding images, mimesis, and deception, we can perceive in Eustratius a concern that Christian cultic practices would ultimately be little more use than “pagan idolatry.”

Thus, Eustratius insists, visions are to be understood as advertised. Having summarized the *Martyrdom of Basil of Amaseia* (BHG 239) by John of Nicomedia, he declares “It is manifest that the Lord appeared and appears as Lord, and the angel as the angel, and the saint as the saint” (δεδήλωται γὰρ ὅτι ὁ κύριος ὡς κύριος ἐφάνη καὶ φαίνεται, καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος ὡς ἄγγελος, καὶ ὁ ἅγιος ὡς ἅγιος).³⁶ And these images are true; they are not false representations. Indeed, anticipating an objection to the reality of saintly visions on the grounds that the visions often include various props and dress,³⁷ Eustratius makes a surprising appeal to the commonplace analogy between painted image and soul. In a way similar to how incorporeal angels “impress visions” (τὰς ὁράσεις τυποῦσι), he argues, “souls create impressions that are not physical in nature but are nevertheless true (αἱ ψυχαὶ τὰς τυπώσεις οὐ φυσικὰς μὲν, ἀληθινὰς δὲ ὁμῶς ποιοῦσιν). For just as a painter creates things that exist from many colors (ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ ζωγράφος ἐκ πολλῶν χρωμάτων ποιεῖ μὲν πράγματα ὑφεστῶτα), certainly he does not create things that are alive by nature or other things (οὐ μὴν φύσει ζῶα ἢ ἄλλα τινά); so too do

³⁶ Eustratius, *De statu* 76.1845–46 (Demos, 248).

³⁷ See Eustratius, *De statu* 83.2006–8: “How do the incorporeal souls of the saints sometimes bring along a set of armor and other appearances or horses or some other identifying tokens, given that they are now naked and incorporeal?” (Πῶς αἱ ἀσώματοι ψυχὰι τῶν ἁγίων πανοπλίαν ἔσθ’ ὅτε μὲν καὶ ἐτέρων σχημάτων ἢ ἵππων ἢ ἄλλων τινῶν συμβόλων ἐπιφέρονται, γυμναὶ καὶ ἀσώματοι νῦν τυγχάνουσαι;). On this passage in particular, see Dal Santo, “Incubation,” 40–42.

incorporeal rational beings have the power to create impressions for a little while” (οὕτω καὶ τὰ ἀσώματα λογικὰ δύναμιν ἔχει πρὸς ὀλίγον τυπώσεις ποιεῖν).³⁸ Rather than appeal to the soul as an image painted with virtues for imitation, Eustratius compares the saintly soul to a painter who creates an image for *viewing* and those who receive visions to the *viewer*.

The analogy between incorporeal vision and painted image brings us back to the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* because, although the mention of image veneration in especially *Cos. Dam. 13* is one of the key reasons why Brubaker questioned the sixth-century date of *Cos. Dam. 13* and *15* in her argument for a late emergence of a “cult of icons,”³⁹ Dal Santo has argued convincingly that the icon here points to theological and cultic concerns characteristic of the sixth century that aimed to rebut the “rationalist-inspired arguments against the plausibility” of saintly apparitions.⁴⁰ As I will analyze in detail below, in this miracle story, a man named

³⁸ Eustratius, *De statu* 83.2011–15 (Demos, 257).

³⁹ Brubaker, “Icons Before Iconoclasm?” 1219, 1224, 1239 (surprisingly, the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* do not at all feature in Brubaker and Haldon, *A History*). Brubaker tries to have it both ways with *Cosmas and Damian*, acknowledging that the collection dates to the “sixth or seventh” century, but also ascribing to it heavy interpolation. In this way, for her argument, the “two wonderworking icons” (1219) in *Cos. Dam. 13* and *15* are either later interpolations or, if in *13* the icon is not considered as playing “an active role” (1239), then it is evidence that the icon had not achieved its cult image status yet.

⁴⁰ Matthew J. Dal Santo, “Text, Image, and the ‘Visionary Body’ in Early Byzantine Hagiography: Incubation and the Rise of the Christian Image Cult,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4:1 (Spring 2011): 47. Not only does the clear correspondence between *The Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* and sixth-to-seventh century debates surrounding the state of the postmortem soul obviate any need to assume iconophile interpolation, we should also note the existence of an alternative, “Egyptian” collection of the *Miracles* with an anti-Chalcedonian strain most at home in the theological contexts of the fifth-to-seventh centuries (Ernestus Rupprecht, ed., *Cosmae et Damiani sanctorum medicorum vitam et miracula e codice londinensi* [Berlin: Junker und Dunnhaupt Verlag, 1935]). Indeed, Booth, “Orthodox and Heretic,” 128 has argued that the comparative lack of doctrinal statements in Deubner’s collection—and indeed the inclusivity on display in several miracles wherein “heretics” and even “pagans” are welcomed into the cult space of Cosmas and Damian—suggests an attempt on the part of the authors of the *Miracula* to orient a “diverse clientele towards an imperial, ‘orthodox’ consensus brokered by the saints,” similar in character to Zeno’s failed *Henotikon*. In addition, several of the miracles in Rupprecht’s collection place the cult site ἐν Βλαχέρναις, suggesting that the purported occurrence of the miracles, if not the composition of the narratives recording them, took place before 569, when Justin II established the new shrine in the palace grounds (see *Cos. Dam. 7, 17, 18, 20*; noted by Booth, “Orthodox and Heretic,” 118 n.15). Together, these pieces of evidence convince me to accept a sixth-century composition date for *Cos. Dam. 30, 13, and 15* as well. While Deubner and Rupprecht’s collections diverge in both content and style, many of the miracle stories are substantially similar, including *Cos. Dam. 30* and *13*, and I have not yet discovered any obvious ways in which the role given to icons differs in the Egyptian collection. Hence, for the sake of clarity in this already long chapter, I analyze only the “Constantinopolitan” collection of Deubner.

Constantine is sent for military duties to Laodicea where he takes a wife. She falls ill, and the man, at a loss for how to help while abroad, tells her that if they were in Constantinople, he would take *kērōtē* from the saints and she would recover. That evening, Cosmas and Damian appear to her in a dream and, when she wakes up, she asks her husband to describe the saints for her. Suddenly he remembers that he has an icon of them that he carries everywhere, which he shows to her, and his wife affirms that these were her visitors before offering veneration (προσκυνέω) to the image.⁴¹ In short, the pairing of vision and icon in *Cos. Dam. 13* “confirmed the stability of the saints’ visionary bodies post-mortem” and demonstrated “the trumpeted correspondence between the saints’ appearance in post-mortem apparitions and that of their images.”⁴²

However, while the icon in *Cos. Dam. 13* affirms the identity and appearance of the saints for Constantine’s wife, a narrative move which Dal Santo rightly interprets as emphasizing their activity and presence in reality and not in “illusion,”⁴³ we see in Eustratius’s argument that the visions themselves—even though they are to be understood as *of* the saints themselves—are *not*, on the contrary, identical with the saint. The vision, like the icon made by a painter, is an image produced by the saint’s soul. This was the case with waking visions, which, like the visit of the angels to Abraham and Sarah in Gen 18: 1–15, should be called “neither an illusion nor something physical” (οὔτε φαντασίαν ... οὔτε φυσικά); and especially so in dreams like that of

⁴¹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 132–34

⁴² Dal Santo, “Incubation,” 47.

⁴³ Near the end of *Cos. Dam. 13*, after a visit of the saints not discussed in any detail by scholars so far as I know, the narrator interjects to assert that these visits prove that the saints follow those who call on them “not only in activity (ἐν ἐναργείᾳ) but also in presence” (ἐν παρουσίᾳ). Compare the interjections in *Cos. Dam. 12* and *3*, which insist that the saints’ presence and appearance could not be considered an “illusion” (or a “product of the imagination”: φαντασία—see next note), rebutting the same explanation for saintly apparitions as Eustratius does (for *Cos. Dam. 12* and *3*, see Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 131.90, 132.118–20; 106.34–5; see also Dal Santo, “God Protected Empire,” 141–42 for discussion of these and other examples in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*).

Gregory Thaumaturgus's vision of Mary and John in Gregory Nyssa's *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus*, complete with details which Eustratius insists "took place not in illusion but in enhyposstatic realities" (ἄπερ οὐκ ἐπὶ φαντασίας, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ἐνυποστάτων πραγμάτων γίνεσθαι), rendering the reality of this vision doubtless for "those who wish to receive the visible intellectual apprehensions of true visions" (τοῖς θέλουσι δέξασθαι τῶν ἀληθῶν ὄψεων τὰς ἐμφανεῖς θεωρίας).⁴⁴ These paradoxically sensible images for the non-sensible parts of the soul were real and true even if not identical to the saint in either body or in soul.

This conception of dream images was more or less consonant with centuries of Greek and Roman discussions of dreams. In antiquity, as Dodds famously observed, one did not so much "have" a dream as "see" a dream.⁴⁵ Dreams, moreover, were understood as a liminal, slippery space where ontological distinctions could collapse and combine, and accordingly they served as a key site for literary and philosophical exploration of the relationship between divine and terrestrial realms.⁴⁶ Sometimes deities would appear in dreams *as* their images, which suggested and reinstated an effective equivalence between deity and cult image, especially when the images moved and spoke and showed other signs of life.⁴⁷ It is notable, then, as I will show, that in the narratives that feature images Cosmas and Damian never appear in dreams as their icon but only in the same appearance and clothing, a decision on the part of the author that serves the dual purpose of asserting their enhyposstatic identity without suggesting that the saints who

⁴⁴ Eustratius, *De statu* 83.2016–20; 36.880–37.890. I translate φαντασία here as "illusion" to capture the concern with deception present throughout the treatise, but we should note that self-deception appears to be most in view: an illusion caused by the imaginative faculty of the soul that would render visions meaningless and "unreal."

⁴⁵ E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 105; repeated in Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 17 and Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 254 with additional bibliography on terminology for dream perception.

⁴⁶ Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 255–89.

⁴⁷ See above, pp. 57–9.

appeared were anything less than true and living representations.⁴⁸ At the same time, this characterization choice suggests that the author of *Cos. Dam.* 13, at least, did not see the icon itself as animate but a material, inert and unfeeling, lifeless counterpart to the living, dematerialized visual aspect of the saints in dreams who spoke, moved, touched, and heard as part of the dreamscape.⁴⁹ Miller puts it well in her discussion of *Cos. Dam.* 13: “...there is likeness, but not identity, since a painting and a dream image are not the same.”⁵⁰ The visions of the saints in dreams remained incorporeal, part of another reality; their icons were material, part of the world in which supplicants to the shrine of Cosmas and Damian suffered all too corporeal maladies.

⁴⁸ Although Artemidorus, who famously asserted in his *Oneirocritica* 2.39 that, as Robert J. White (trans.), *Artemidorus: The Interpretation of Dreams* (Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1975), 123 famously translated, “the statues of the gods have the same meaning as the gods themselves” (κοινὸν δὲ λόγον ἔχουσιν οἱ θεοὶ καὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα αὐτῶν), this did not completely preclude hierarchies between a deity and its image. Throughout this section, Artemidorus incorporates a number of distinctions in significance, both between materialities of statues (e.g., gold, ivory, amber; clay, plaster, paint in 2.30), and between the gods and their statues. For example, although he states in 2.35 that “it makes no difference whether one sees the goddess [Artemis] as we imagine her to be or her statue” (οὐδὲν <δὲ> διαφέρει τὴν θεὸν ἰδεῖν ὅποιαν ὑπειλήφαμεν ἢ ἄγαλμα αὐτῆς), remarking that they have τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, Artemidorus nevertheless adds that “observing the gods themselves signifies that the good or bad things will come to pass more quickly than when their statues are observed” (θαπτον δὲ καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ σημαίνουσιν αὐτοὶ οἱ θεοὶ ὁρώμενοι ἢ περὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα αὐτῶν) (Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus’ Oneirocritica*, 212–13). Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 29, Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 283, Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 158 [unquoted but as description], and others all cite this standard translation of White, but, on this point, compare the more recent work of Harris-McCoy, 229 who translates κοινὸν δὲ λόγον ἔχουσιν in *Oneirocritica* 2.39 as “have a similar logic,” a difference in interpretation that renders my point here clear (also cf. Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 283 for similar caution in concluding that for Artemidorus there was no distinction). This unstable equivalence persists in later, explicitly Christian books on dream interpretation as well. Achmet’s likely ninth-century Dream Book, for example, contains a chapter “On Holy Icons” (ch. 150) which makes similar distinctions. For example, “If someone sees an icon of the apostles, prophets, or saints: if the person is an emperor, then he will receive a hint of the greatest victory and the victory will be more measured. For he did not see them [the saints et al.] themselves, but the icon; hence the victory is lesser” (ἐὰν ἴδῃ τις εἰκόνα ἀποστόλων ἢ προφητῶν ἢ ἀγίων, εἰ μὲν ἔστι βασιλεὺς, μῆνυμα νίκης μεγίστης δέξεται καὶ ἡ νίκα μετρωτέρα ἔσται· οὐ γὰρ εἶδεν αὐτούς, ἀλλὰ τὴν εἰκόνα· διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἐλάττων ἡ νίκη) (text in Franciscus Drexler, ed., *Achmetis Oneirocriticon* [Teubner: Lipsiae, 1925], 106.13. For more on the *Achmetis Oneirocriticon*, see Maria Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and Its Arabic Sources*, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 36 [Leiden: Brill, 2002]. On Byzantine dream books more broadly and their relationship to Greco-Roman literature on dreams in antiquity [such as Artemidorus], see Steven M. Oberhelman, *Dreambooks in Byzantium: Six Oneirocritica in Translation, with Commentary and Introduction* [Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008]).

⁴⁹ On the dreamworld as populated by “dematerialized images” and the ways that dreams in antiquity set off “hermeneutical dilemmas...parallel to those raised by sacred images,” see especially Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 255–89, quote on 258.

⁵⁰ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 159.

As I turn now to a closer analysis of *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15, with attention to techniques of pacing, space, focalization, and the creation of ironic misunderstanding that the author uses to commemorate the deeds of two saints and those they healed, it is important to keep in mind that the activities of Cosmas and Damian were sufficient proof of life, as it were, but also that the active saints as they appeared in dreams nevertheless remained incorporeal images produced by incorporeal souls for incorporeal souls. To be sure, for Eustratius and other “non-rationalists” the incorporeal soul still retained an intimate connection to its corporeal remains, which responded to caresses and honor and jumped with excitement and healed those who approached them. The dead were not dead, and paradoxically their lifeless remains were proof of life. But the cult of Cosmas and Damian at Constantinople never had nor even claimed to have the relics of these two healing saints.⁵¹ How, in these narratives, do the impressions created by incorporeal saintly souls have physical effects? Are readers to assume that the image itself takes on the role of material agent in mediating the healing power of the saints? Is the analogy Eustratius draws between vision and painted image more than an analogy in *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15?

I begin with analysis of *Cos. Dam.* 30, which, to my knowledge, has never been discussed in the context of late ancient images despite also having been read aloud—in excerpt form, like *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15—at Nicaea II.⁵² By adding *Cos. Dam.* 30 to the comparison and then reading the accounts of *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 in full, we can observe that the icon is not the miraculous agent nor even the most important material token. Rather, while scholars have

⁵¹ Csepregi, “Characteristics of Dream Images,” 116.

⁵² Csepregi, “Characteristics of Dream Images,” 99–100 constitutes the lone, partial exception, mentioning *Cos. Dam.* 30 in passing in the context of the likeness of the saints (and again with reference to the attitudes toward doctors on display in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* at 109–10), but her discussion is minimal and serves only to affirm that these miracles were important for iconophiles.

construed the icon in *Cos. Dam.* 13 through the lens of *Cos. Dam.* 15 to the misinterpretation of both, my analysis shows how the icon in these three narratives is consistently subordinated to the *kērōtē*, Cosmas and Damian’s special cultic attribute. The effect of this relegation is to affirm the power, presence, and activity of the saints in both corporeal and incorporeal realms while recommending that, though icon and dream image could serve as effective means for approaching a holy subject outside the cult site, the saints’ shrine in Constantinople which controlled and distribute the *kērōtē* is where these two images came together.

Incorporeal Images of Life

Miracle 30

From the start, the author of *Cos. Dam.* 30 stages a complex and not fully predictable play between sight and touch, spirit and body that complicates the tropes of recognition and presence in material images put forth in 13 and 15.⁵³ The account opens with a description of the multiple surgeries over a fifteen-year span endured by a man with a fistula in his hip. Despite his consistent suffering and the operations meant to treat it, the narrator remarks, “the disease grew ever worse (πλέον ηὔξησε τὸ νόσημα).⁵⁴ It reached a point where “he was conquered by it (κυριεύεσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ), and no human hand could be found capable of aiding his suffering (καὶ μὴ εὐρίσκεσθαι ἀνθρώπου χεῖρα δυναμένην βοηθῆσαι τῷ πάθει).⁵⁵ At the counsel of many, the man decides “to go to the sanctified shrine of the healing saints of God, Cosmas and Damian” (καταλαβεῖν τὸν τῶν ἁγίων τοῦ θεοῦ θεραπόντων Κοσμᾶ καὶ Δαμιανοῦ ἡγιασμένον οἶκον), and receives a dream vision concurrent with—perhaps even caused by—his wish

⁵³ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 173–76.

⁵⁴ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 173.4.

⁵⁵ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 174. 1–2.

(βουλόμενος). Maintaining an omniscient perspective, the narrator tells readers that the man “views (θεωρεῖ) the saints saying to him in his sleep (τοὺς ἁγίους καθ’ ὕπνον λέγοντας αὐτῷ), ‘Come to us and you will be healed’” (δεῦρο πρὸς ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἰαθήσῃ).⁵⁶

The language of vision (θεωρέω) as the verb by which speech (λέγω) is apprehended is perhaps puzzling at first, but some clarity can be gained by recalling that the entire, synesthetic dream experience was something to be “viewed,” if not exactly with the bodily senses. Indeed, while theories on how the soul and dream visions met varied in Late Antiquity, among the more prominent views was one that envisioned “the dreaming soul as a rational and immortal traveler.”⁵⁷ Representative of this position was Athanasius of Alexandria in *Contra gentes* 31–34.⁵⁸ As part of an extended argument against idolatry, Athanasius turns to dreams to explain why worshipping images is irrational because God can be better known through the likeness of the rational and immortal human soul.⁵⁹ Distinctive to the human being, he argues, is the ability “to consider things external to oneself, and reason through things not actually present” (τὰ ἔξωθεν ἑαυτοῦ λογίσεσθαι καὶ ἐνθυμεῖσθαι τὰ μὴ παρόντα), as well as exercise reflection and judgment.⁶⁰ The soul even goes places and learns things that would be impossible while regularly embodied:

For even though when the soul has entered the body it is also bound to it, it is not restrained and limited by the smallness of the body (εἰ γὰρ καὶ ὅτε τῷ σώματι ἐπιβέβηκε καὶ συνδέεται τούτῳ, οὐ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος σμικρότητα συστέλλεται καὶ

⁵⁶ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 174.11–2.

⁵⁷ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 66.

⁵⁸ Text in Robert W. Thomson, ed. and trans., *Athanasius. Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 84–94; translations are my own.

⁵⁹ The focus on how “the idolatry practiced by the Greeks is completely full of godlessness” (ἡ παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν εἰδωλολατρεία πάσης ἀθεότητος οὐσα μυστή) (Athanasius, *Contra gentes* 29.41) occupies the first major portion of the treatise; the second movement is more constructive, but nevertheless still targeted at idolaters. Those who “as if lifeless (themselves) have a superstitious fear for lifeless things (ὡς ἄψυχοι ἐν ἀψύχοις ἔχοντες τὴν δεισιδαιμονίαν) (34.4–5) and who “represent god in things visible and mortal” (τὸν Θεὸν ἐν τοῖς βλεπομένοις καὶ θνητοῖς ἀπεικάζουσιν), he argues, require correction and training in order for their souls to “view as if in a mirror the image of the father” (ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ θεωρεῖ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ Πατρὸς) (34.10, 34.25. Cf. 2 Cor 3:18).

⁶⁰ Athanasius, *Contra gentes* 31.5–7; cf. 31.38–43.

συμμετρεῖται). Rather, oftentimes, when the body is lying on a bed and not moving, but rather sleeping as if in death (ἀλλὰ πολλάκις, ἐπὶ κλίνης τούτου κειμένου καὶ μὴ κινουμένου, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν θανάτῳ κοιμωμένου), the soul stays awake in accordance with its own power and goes beyond the nature of the body (αὕτη κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῆς δύναμιν γρηγορεῖ, καὶ ὑπερεκβαίνει τὴν τοῦ σώματος φύσιν). And, as if in fact departing the body while remaining in it (καὶ ὡσπερ ἀποδημοῦσα τούτου, μένουσα ἐν τῷ σώματι), it envisions for itself and views things beyond the earth (τὰ ὑπὲρ γῆν φαντάζεται καὶ θεωρεῖ)—oftentimes even meeting with the saints and angels outside of their earthly bodies and it approaches them boldly due to its purity of mind (πολλάκις δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἔξω τῶν γῆϊνων σωμάτων ἀγίοις καὶ ἀγγέλοις συναντᾷ, καὶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀφικνεῖται τῇ νοῦ θαρροῦσα καθαρότητι). ...For if [the soul] was living life outside the body even while bound to a body, by how much more will it live even after the death of the body (εἰ γὰρ καὶ συνδεθεῖσα σώματι τὴν ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος ζωὴν ἔζη, πολλῶ πλεον καὶ μετὰ θάνατον τοῦ σώματος ζήσεται)?⁶¹

In this extended passage, which Eustratius will cite at length some 270 years later as proof for the continued life of the saints and their true appearances in these visions (and hence, which may have been influential for the author of *Cos. Dam* 30, 13, and 15 as well), it is not only the saints who are incorporeal but the dreamer too. Having ascended intellectually to a space, as it were, accessible only to the higher parts of the soul, the dreamer is able to meet with angels and saints, spiritual being to spiritual being. Decidedly corporeal and sensible activities, such as speech, hearing, and touch are in the dream paradoxically incorporeal and “seen” by the soul.

These synesthetic features of dreams provide the basis for many of the central ironies in *Cos. Dam.* 30. While, in having the dream, the man’s soul has already “met the saints,” he heeds their instructions and takes his body with him to their shrine in Constantinople as well. He spends a period of time beseeching them for aid but not receiving another dream visitation (ἐπίσκεψις). Thus, he departs the central shrine for an area in the courtyard adjacent to it, where he makes still more “unceasing petitions” (δεήσεις ἐκτενεῖς) and returns to his bed “having wept bitterly for many hours” (κλαύσας πικρῶς ἐπὶ ὥρας πολλάς).⁶² Notably, in the courtyard his

⁶¹ Athanasius, *Contra gentes* 33.20–7, 30–1.

⁶² Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 174.16–22.

prayers and petitions occur while he conspicuously “looks at” (βλέπω) an “icon of the Savior (εικόνα τοῦ σωτῆρος)...on which was depicted the Holy Theotokos Mary and the healing saints of Christ, Cosmas and Damian (γέγραπται δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ ἢ τε ἁγία Μαρία ἡ θεοτόκος καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι θεράποντες τοῦ Χριστοῦ Κοσμάς καὶ Δαμιανός), along with another important man named Leontius” (καὶ τις τῶν μεγάλων ἀνδρῶν, Λεόντιος τοῦνομα).⁶³ The image is otherwise unremarked upon, but that night the man again “views” (θεωρέω) Cosmas and Damian “coming to him with the blessed virgin in between them and saying to them, ‘Look, this is the man who is sick (ιδὲ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ νοσῶν): Come swiftly to his aid’” (βοηθήσατε αὐτῷ διὰ τάχους). The lexical parallel that the author draws between the man being able to find no one capable of aiding him and Mary’s directives here (βοηθέω) instructs the reader to see that while no *human* hand can cure the man, the spiritual hands of the saints may be of assistance.

The excerpt read at Nicaea II breaks off here, the connection between image and prototype thus established for readers; but what happens next in *Cos. Dam.* 30 immediately casts into doubt the notion that images in these narratives are necessarily meant to affirm identity between icon and saint: the man fails to recognize the saints. The text states that, though the man “heard clearly the words that were spoken” (ἤκουσε δὲ τῶν ῥημάτων τρανῶς λεγομένων ὁ ἄνθρωπος)⁶⁴—an indication of the reliability of the revelatory vision—when Cosmas and Damian take the man to the surgery wing of the nearby pilgrims’ hostel, he resists. As they place him on the operating table, the narrator describes how the man “was trying to prevent them” (ἐκώλυεν) “because he thought that his usual physicians had taken him for surgery again” (τοῦ δὲ νομίσαντος τοὺς συνήθεις ἰατροὺς πάλιν ἐπὶ χειρουργίαν αὐτὸν ἄγειν), swearing that...because he had taken refuge with the saints, he also no longer had need of surgery”

⁶³ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 174. 17–21.

⁶⁴ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 174.26–7.

(ὄμνυς...διὰ τὸ τοῖς ἀγίοις προσπεφηνέναι καὶ μηκέτι χρεῖαν ἔχειν χειρουργίας).⁶⁵ Nevertheless, they hold him down and perform the operation, making a large incision in the man's hip while the man shouts (βοῶντα) in pain, yet another sign of the truth of this dream meeting.

After removing the source of the disease and cleaning the wound, “they wrapped the site with closely wound bandages (κατησφαλίσαντο δεσμοῖς πυκνοτέροις τὸν τόπον) but applied nothing further to it” (μηδὲν αὐτῷ ἐπίθεντες).⁶⁶ At this point, the author builds still more on the dramatic irony created by misrecognition, with the narrative audience knowing the identity of the saints, but the man apparently more confused than ever. Neither supposing that his surgeons are Cosmas and Damian nor, apparently, thinking that they are his usual doctors, the man, speaking for the first time in his own voice rather than the narrator's description, instructs the saints that they should cover the incision with honey “because the [medical] craft prescribes it” (ἐπειδὴ οὕτως ἡ τέχνη βούλεται), as he has learned from his many surgeries over the years. Incredulous, the saints ask, “Are *you* teaching *us*, how to do medicine?” (σὺ ἡμᾶς διδάσκεις ἰατρεύειν;) and instruct him to deal with this method of treatment.⁶⁷

The scene drips with absurdity and it is easy to imagine listeners in the shrine laughing as this account was read out live from the Saturday Night Vigil. The humor, of course, comes from the upset expectations surrounding the connection between the lifeless and living images, the play between surgical and miraculous medical interventions, and the comical presumption of the supplicant that he knew better than these famous healers of Christ. Despite looking at the image that same day, when he views the living apparitions of Mary, Cosmas, and Damian, hears Mary's voice clearly, and experiences the touch of the saints, the man fails to make a connection. In fact,

⁶⁵ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 174.33–175.35.

⁶⁶ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 175.44–45.

⁶⁷ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 175.48–50.

they are almost too corporeal for a vision. They speak, they touch, they get cranky, and even perform surgery. In turn, Cosmas and Damian appear to recognize the man only because Mary identifies him for them. While the specificity of their actions underscores the distinctive reality of their presence and medical intervention, the icon disappears from the story and its presence early in the scene seems more to emphasize the distance between saintly intervention and the physical world than erase it.

Indeed, when the man wakes up, the tangibility of their actions in the dream world is rendered all the more questionable. The narrator speaks directly to the audience for a moment, “See, then, the power of the saints” (καὶ ὄρα λοιπὸν τῶν ἁγίων τὴν δύναμιν),⁶⁸ deploying yet a third verb of vision (θεωρέω, βλέπω, now ὁράω) and likening the cognition of the narrative message to a visual experience. Strikingly, the author connects the audience’s perception of the narrative to the man’s perception of his bandages in the morning, using the same verb, ὁράω. “After he woke up, he saw the surgical site bandaged” (διωπνισθεὶς γὰρ ἑώρα δεσμοὺς ἔχοντα τὸν τόπον). And, perhaps like the audience’s experience again, the bandages are not subject to touch. The text continues, “but feeling around the site and making an investigation (ψηλαφῶν δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ πολυπραγμονῶν), he found nothing laying upon it (οὐδὲν εὔρισκεν ἐπικείμενον); rather, he was grasping the bare site” (ἀλλὰ γυμνὸν ἐκράτει τὸν τόπον).⁶⁹ The bandages are there, but they also are not there, or at least not perceptible by human hand, the success of the saints’ surgery held in similar tension. Were these bandages an illusion, the result of an incorporeal intervention?

After a few days of waiting patiently with these spiritually existent bandages, the Saturday Night Vigil arrives, and the narrator suddenly gets more specific about time. Around

⁶⁸ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 175.51–2.

⁶⁹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 175.52–4.

the sixth hour of the night, the *kērōtē* is being distributed to the people, but the man decides not to risk aggravating his wound by rising and coming forward. Instead, at about the ninth hour, “seized by sleep” (ὕπνω κατενεχθείς), “he views the saints” (θεωρεῖ τοὺς ἁγίους) once again and observes that they have “brought to him a towel full of *kērōtē*, removed his bandages, and applied the cloth for him” (ἐνέγκαντας αὐτῷ ῥάκιον πεπληρωμένον τῆς κηρωτῆς καὶ ἄραντας μὲν τοὺς δεσμούς, ἐπιθέντας δὲ αὐτῷ τὸ παννίον). While in the waking world the man cannot feel the effects of the saints’ actions, back in the dream world their tangible interventions are brought to the fore. The narrator describes, “He was experiencing a fear-inducing sensation in the surgical site once the cloth had been applied” (ἐπιτεθέν δὲ φοβερὰν αἴσθησιν ἐνεποίει τῷ τόπῳ) as it drew down the illness from his entire body. “The surgical site collected so much pus up to the first hour of the day that it was only possible to clean the site after it discharged some two or three handfuls” (καὶ τοσαύτην συνήγαγεν ἕως πρώτης ὥρας τῆς ἡμέρας ὁ τόπος σαπρίαν, ὡς δις καὶ τρις τὴν χεῖρα πληρώσαντα οὕτως δύνηθῆναι καθᾶραι τὸν τόπον).⁷⁰

In this later vision, there is no indication that the man does not recognize the saints. Rather, the parallel distributions of *kērōtē*, one in the vigil at the cult site and the other by the saints in the dream vision, and the introduction of temporal markers into the dream suggest the convergence of dreaming and waking states. The author presses this integration still further. Whereas before the disjunction between sight and touch only applied to the wakeful state, now the man “views again the towel with the *kērōtē* being applied (θεωρεῖ πάλιν τὸ μὲν ῥάκιον μετὰ τῆς κηρωτῆς ἐπικείμενον), but it was not susceptible to touch” (τῇ δὲ ἀφῆ μὴ ὑποπίπτον). The surgical site, even in the dream, “felt bare” (γυμνὸν ψηλαφᾶσθαι).⁷¹ The dreaming state is now like the waking state in precisely the same ways that had rendered the reality of the saints’

⁷⁰ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 175.57–176.65.

⁷¹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 176.67.

activities ambiguous. The *kērōtē*, the primary material symbol and material cure provided by the cult of Cosmas and Damian is the only element of this cure in the dream that the man can feel. In contrast to the earlier vision, where everything about the saints seemed all too corporeal for an incorporeal vision, here the material elements aside from the *kērōtē* are paradoxically immaterial.

All of these narrative features—ironic misrecognition, the gradual convergence of waking and dream perception, the slowing down of time—keep in tension questions regarding the reliability and epistemology of the saintly visions. How does one know that the effects and activities are real and not deceptive? What can the incorporeal dead do for the corporeally suffering? On one level, the author seeks to avoid these questions by emphasizing the facticity of the healing. Was the man cured? Then it was the saints. At the same time, however, the author answers these questions by portraying the saints’ success at exactly the moment of narrative convergence between dream image and waking reality. “This is why,” the narrator explains, “after he had used a continual dose of the *kērōtē* of the saints (ὅθεν τῆ ἐπιμονῆ τῆς κηρωτῆς τῶν ἁγίων χρησάμενος), he thus overcame the suffering through the mercy of God and the visitation of the saints” (οὕτως διὰ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ εὐσπλαγχνίας καὶ τῆς τῶν ἁγίων ἐπισκέψεως περιεγένετο τοῦ πάθους).⁷²

The narratological use of the icon in *Cos. Dam. 30* is one that deliberately upsets expectations about what images can do. In contrast to dominant interpretations of *Cos. Dam. 15*, for instance, the icon in *Cos. Dam. 30* in no way suggests that icon and saint are confused, because the man neither recognizes the saints nor do they, until instructed, recognize him. But Mary is also in the icon, and she hears his prayers made before the image and recognizes the man. The icon reveals the appearance of Mary at the same time as it apparently obscures the

⁷² Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 176.67–9.

identities of Cosmas and Damian; the icon provides a privileged place for communication with the saints, but there is clearly something lost in translation. Thus, the author emphasizes the ontological and epistemological distance between image and prototype while simultaneously undercutting it. The question of their visionary status is similarly confounding, even as it is simultaneously reassuring. As deceased saints, their souls are proclaimed to be living and visible in dreams. And we can see the problem of their relationship to the waking, corporeal world vividly: in dreams, where the man's soul rises beyond its bodily activities and constraints, it meets the saints in spiritual bodies where they can be seen, heard, felt, and encountered in sometimes excruciating truth. The narrative makes a strong argument for their real activities and presence—once that runs counter to the suggestion, also combated by Eustratius, that these epiphanic manifestations were mere angelic simulacra. But when the man wakes, the author raises the problem of visual deception once again: the bandages are visible but intangible. The liveliness of the visions of Cosmas and Damian in the dream underscores their true relationship to the saints themselves, but the intangibility of their activities in the waking world gives pause.

Hence, following the logic and sequence of the narrative, we can distinguish the importance of the *kērōtē*. During the cultic ritual of the Saturday Night Vigil, this lifeless matter is dispensed as a material extension of saintly power and presence, but its connection to the saints is ambiguous. It is not a relic, as it is not produced by the saints in any discernible manner, nor has it touched them or come from their bodies. Nor does it bear their image. Through the dream narrative, however, the author plots the convergence of the waking and dream worlds precisely at the time and place when *kērōtē* is dispensed, and the healing of the man occurs only when he has used it in conjunction with both the mercy of God and the visitation of the saints. The lifeless matter restores the man with the fistula to his health, the narrative suggests, because

the paradoxically living/dead saints also distribute it in dreams. In this way, the waking world is presented as the image of the dreaming world, where the spiritual corpus meets and is treated by the saints.

Miracle 13

The triad of icon, dream image, and *kērōtē* is again entangled in *Cos. Dam.* 13, though with an added element: distance from the cult shrine.⁷³ The narrative opens by describing how a military man named Constantine, who, “because of military service, had been sent abroad from this Christ-loving and imperial city [sc. Constantinople] so-well suited to him” (ἐκδεδημηκέναι ταύτης τῆς φιλοχρίστου καὶ βασιλίδος πόλεως τῆς προσούσης αὐτῷ στρατείας χάριν), a problem because he was a man “most faithful and did not ever cease from devotion to the saints” (πιστότατον καὶ μὴ ἀπολιμπανόμενον τῆς τῶν ἁγίων προσεδρίας).⁷⁴ This opening line identifies distance as the central problem to be overcome in the narrative, but fortunately Constantine is described by the narrator as the sort of man “who on each of his trips abroad (ὅστις ἐν ἐκάστη αὐτοῦ ξενιτείᾳ) would faithfully carry the impression of the saints in an image for his personal security” (κατὰ πίστιν ἐπέφερετο τὸ ἐκτύπωμα τῶν ἁγίων ἐν εἰκόνι πρὸς ἀσφάλειαν ἰδίαν).⁷⁵ The pleonastic “impression...in an icon” (τὸ ἐκτύπωμα...ἐν εἰκόνι) here is interesting in comparison to the mental impressions caused by the saints in their visionary bodies, as well as the visionary bandages and *kērōtē*, in *Cos. Dam.* 30. But whereas the icon figured in the plot of *Cos. Dam.* 30 as almost an obfuscating device, here the author shifts the emphasis so that the icon seems to

⁷³ *Cos. Dam.* 13 is not the only miracle where the saints appear and heal a suppliant outside of the cult site, though it is distinctive among the early miracles for the amount of distance from the shrine. See Csepregi, “Characteristics of Dream Healing,” 95–6.

⁷⁴ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 132.2.

⁷⁵ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 132.4–6.

capture the saints' visionary forms and allows Constantine quite literally to carry the saints with him.

The combination of distance and icon, however, also opens up in this plot a tension between sight and hearing. Once in Laodicea, where he was sent, Constantine completes his tasks and eventually takes a wife. She soon falls ill. With “an abscess in the left side of her jaw (ἐν τῇ σιαγόνι αὐτῆς τῆ ἐξ εὐωνύμων ἀπόστημα), she was terribly beset by pains and caused immeasurable troubles for her husband” (καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀλγηδόνων δεινῶς φερομένη τῷ ἀνδρὶ οὐ μετρίου κόπους ἐνεποίει).⁷⁶ Constantine tries to console his wife by telling her about Cosmas and Damian, but, rather ironically considering his constant remembrance for devotion, “forgets that he was carrying the saints around in a painting, as was his custom” (ἐπιλαθόμενος δε, ὅτι κατὰ τὸ εἶωθὸς αὐτῷ τούτους ἐν γραφῇ ἐπεφέρετο).⁷⁷ Thus, he whines. “What shall I do for you? I am a foreigner here (τί σοι ποιήσω; ἐπὶ ξένης εἰμί). If I was in *my* city, then I would procure the *kērōtē* of my lords, the saints Cosmas and Damian, and immediately it would both stop your anguish and treat the disease!” (εἰ γὰρ ἤμην ἐν τῇ πόλει μου, ἐλάμβανον τῆς κηρωτῆς τῶν δεσποτῶν μου, τῶν ἁγίων Κοσμᾶ καὶ Δαμιανοῦ, καὶ εὐθέως καὶ τοὺς πόνους ἔπαυεν καὶ τὸ νόσημα ἐθεράπευεν).⁷⁸

Constantine's aporia raises for the reader the question of what exactly the role of the icon is for this author. Though the text makes it a point to relate that Constantine has forgotten it, his

⁷⁶ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 133.9–12.

⁷⁷ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 133.13–4. The lexical choice of γραφή suggests to me that the image he carries is indeed a small painting, *pace* Dal Santo, “Incubation,” 43, who suggests that, due to τὸ ἐκτύπωμα elsewhere, Constantine may be envisioned as carrying a pilgrim token with an image of the saints stamped on it. While possible, as my translation indicates, I interpret ἐκτύπωμα as referring to their impressed depiction, as it were, which is described as identical—or at least identifiable—between icon and the mental impression created in his wife's visions just as their σχῆμα is.

⁷⁸ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 133.14–7. In some manuscripts, including the best manuscripts for the Acts of Nicaea II, read “and *they* [i.e. the saints] would put an end (ἔπαυον) to her pains and *they* would heal (ἐθεράπευον) her disease immediately.” See Lamberz, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 4), 388.

hypothetical plan would in any case only have involved the *kērōtē*. In fact, the woman and the audience here occupy parallel positions: readers have heard about this icon but do not see it; likewise, Constantine’s wife hears about the saints but is deprived of seeing them. Yet, hearing is enough to stoke belief. The narrator relates that the faithful woman (πιστή) “marveled at the immediacy of the saints’ healing” (θαυμάσασα πρὸς τὸ σύντομον τῆς τῶν ἁγίων ἰάσεως) her husband had promised, and that she “fell silent” (ἠσύχασεν), praying—because she “was wounded by desire for the saints by simply hearing” (τρωθεῖσα ἐκ μόνης τῆς ἀκοῆς τοῦ πρὸς τοῦς ἁγίους πόθου)—that she would get to visit and venerate (προσκυνέω) at their shrine in Constantinople.⁷⁹

The value given to hearing over sight evokes the Johannine Jesus telling Thomas that “blessed are those who have believed without having seen” (μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες, John 20:29), but the author tips the scales back toward sight almost immediately by scripting for the woman a dream vision of the saints. That night, “after she had been brought down by sleep (ὕπνῳ κατενεχθεῖσα), she sees these great and fear-inducing doctors and healers of Christ, Cosmas and Damian (ὄρα τοὺς μεγάλους τούτους καὶ φοβεροὺς ἰατροὺς καὶ θεράποντας τοῦ Χριστοῦ Κοσμᾶν καὶ Δαμιανόν), with the appearance in which they were depicted” (ἐν ᾧ ἐκτυποῦνται σχήματι). In her dream vision, she sees them “standing next to her bed” (ἐστῶτας πρὸς τῇ κλίνῃ αὐτῆς), asking her why she causes so much trouble for her husband with her ailment and offering reassurance that “we are here with you” (ὧδέ ἐσμεν μεθ’ ὑμῶν).⁸⁰ Where is here? Whereas in *Cos. Dam.* 30, the man is in the saints’ shrine, here the saints appear in the woman’s home while she is in bed, present in vivid detail with specific questions, the great

⁷⁹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 133.20–1.

⁸⁰ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 133.21–26.

distance from the cult site evidently causing no issue for their activity and spiritual presence. At the same time, however, the “here” of the dream is not necessarily the physical world.

Upon waking, she presses her husband to describe the appearances (τὰ σχήματα) of the saints, “how they are portrayed or in what fashion their manifestation comes to the sick” (πῶς ἱστοροῦνται ἢ ἐν ποίᾳ τάξει ἢ αὐτῶν πρὸς τοὺς ἀσθεντοῦντας γίνεται παράστασις), seeking verbal affirmation for her visual experience. He details for her their “appearance (τὸ σχῆμα), and, having narrated their spiritual benefactions too” (διηγησαμένου δὲ καὶ τὰ αὐτῶν χαρίσματα) she affirms in turn their appearances (τὰ σχήματα) and reports what they said to her “in the vision” (ἐν τῇ ὀπτασίᾳ).⁸¹ Finally, neatly reversing the claim of Leontius of Neapolis, for instance, that icons are meant to stimulate the memory of a saint and their deeds,⁸² Constantine “is reminded by the narration (ἔλθων εἰς ἀνάμνησιν ἐκ τοῦ διηγήματος) that he in fact “had the impressions of the saints in an icon in his breast pocket” (εἶχεν ἐν τῷ ὑπομασχάλῳ αὐτοῦ τὰ τῶν ἁγίων ἐν εἰκόνι ἐκτυπώματα), and he immediately takes it out to show to his wife. “She, having gazed at it, offered veneration and knew that the saints lived with them there truly, in accordance with their statement” (ἡ δὲ θεασαμένη προσεκύνησεν καὶ ἔγνω, ὅτι ὄντως σὺν αὐτοῖς ἐκεῖσε διῆγον οἱ ἅγιοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν φωνήν): we are here with you.⁸³

The excerpt read at Nicaea II ends here, and it is easy enough to see why. The visual correspondence between image and (dream) prototype is established and the account provides the iconophiles with venerable support for the practice of venerating icons. Moreover, the narrative to this point plots the action such that sight and hearing neatly confirm each other, a move more or less in step with the iconophile attempt to integrate lifeless material images within

⁸¹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 133.28–32.

⁸² Leontius, *Apologia* 5 (Déroche, “L’Apologie,” 67.14–19, 69.132–33); cf. Ps. Athanasius, *Quaest. ad Ant.* 621D. See above, pp. 79–82

⁸³ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 133.33–134.1.

the broader economy of appropriate epiphanic images that included encomiastic lives and the soul. Constantine’s wife hears about the saints and believes in their power, then receives a vision during which they affirm their presence, which she confirms via her husband’s description but most of all her viewing of their icon—which her husband, in turn, only remembers he possesses upon hearing a description of their appearances. Moreover, the text maintains a distance between material image and visionary image: as in *Cos. Dam.* 30, the author of *Cos. Dam.* 13 selects distinct verbs for the seeing of dream images (ὄραω) and of the icon (θεάομαι).

If one stops reading at this point, as the bishops at Nicaea II did, then it is also reasonable to conclude with Dal Santo that the “narrative’s purpose is clearly to underline the concordant witnesses to the saints’ form in both their apparition and icon”⁸⁴ or with Miller, who identifies in *Cos. Dam.* 13 “a portrayal of an icon as an image that is participatory in what it represents” though “the means by which the saint and object relate is left unspecified.”⁸⁵ The rest of the narrative, however, renders the clarity of Dal Santo’s perceived purpose in doubt—and in fact specifies the point at which saint and icon relate—by placing both hearing and sight in a subordinate and complementary role to touch in the matter of the woman’s healing. In addition, as in *Cos. Dam.* 30, the distance between these realms is undercut by an additional vision.

When “another night came” (ἐπιλαβομένης ἑτέρας νυκτός), the saints, “appearing to her in the same guise” (φανέντες αὐτῇ ἐν τῇ ὁμοίᾳ θέᾳ),⁸⁶ call into question the faith by hearing—so lauded earlier in the account—of Constantine’s wife. They interrogate her, asking, “Have we not told you that ‘we are here with you?’ Why do you suffer?” (οὐκ εἰρήκαμέν σοι, ὅτι ἐνταῦθα μεθ’ ὑμῶν ἐσμεν; τί πονεῖς;). She begins telling them about her abscess, “as if they didn’t know” (ὥς

⁸⁴ Dal Santo, “Incubation,” 43.

⁸⁵ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 159.

⁸⁶ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 134.1–2.

δῆθεν ἀγνοοῦσιν), until Cosmas and Damian demonstrate their penchant for wordplay, almost gaslighting her and asserting, “you have no mishap, just a gap” (οὐδὲν κακὸν ἔχεις, μόνον χάνον). Suddenly, one of the saints thrusts his finger in her mouth, causing blood and a foul smell to pour out so that “she was restored to health” (ὕγιης ἀπεκατέστη) and found by her husband “freed from all suffering” (τοῦ παντὸς πάθους ἀπαλλαγεῖσαν).⁸⁷ The tactility of the cure again underscores its reality, but, despite her restoration to health, the saints are not done with her. In yet a third dream, which the narrator emphasizes took place “in order that the saints might not only *be* present but also confirm it” (ἵνα...μὴ μόνον παραστήσωσιν οἱ ἅγιοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ βεβαιώσωσιν), Cosmas and Damian tell the woman, “you have under your pillow a portion of *kērōtē*” (κατὰ τὸ προσκεφάλαιόν σου μέρος τῆς κηρωτῆς); daub yourself with this every night when you go to bed (καὶ ἐκ ταύτης ἐν ἐκάστη ἐσπέρα καθευδοῦσα ἀλείφου), and you will be troubled by no further ‘mishaps’” (καὶ οὐδὲν σοι τῶν κακῶν τοῦ λοιποῦ ἐνοχλήσει).⁸⁸ Hearing

⁸⁷ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 134.40–47.

⁸⁸ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 134.48–52. The second mention of *kērōtē* here constitutes a prime example of how the reception of this miracle story at Nicaea II and beyond has overdetermined the significance of icons in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*. In his important translation of the *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, for instance, Price (vol. 1, 309) mistranslates the *kērōtē* in Constantine’s lament (133.15) as “wax image,” which neither makes sense in the immediate context—the narrator states that Constantine had forgotten about the icon, not that he didn’t have it or had lost it somewhere—nor in the context of the whole, since, as we’ll see below, the *kērōtē* qua salve has a role to play in this account as well. By interpreting the salve as the icon Constantine carries, however (perhaps considering κηρωτή a synonym for κήρωμα, which can mean “waxed board or tablet” [LSJ 3]), the effect of Price’s translation is to make the icon, which enacts no miracles in *Cos. Dam.* 13 into a wonderworking, living icon. While Price does not provide any discussion of his translation or the content of *Cos. Dam.* 13 at this point, he may have derived his interpretation from Gary Vikan’s influential essay, “Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 73 n. 45 (reprinted as chapter IX in Gary Vikan, *Sacred Images and Sacred Power in Byzantium* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003]), who claims—incorrectly—that “Miracle 13 of Sts. Cosmas and Damian...tells the story of a member of the military who is sent to Laodicea, taking with him an ‘icon,’ which is apparently identical with the blessed wax salve later used to treat his sick wife.” As we see, however, there is no reason to think that the *kērōtē* the saints leave under her pillow has anything to do with the icon, but rather is related to the *kērōtē* that Constantine would take from the shrine of Cosmas and Damian in Constantinople.

Vikan, for his part, points as the source for his claim to Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 148 (a key site for Kitzinger’s claims that icon and prototype are collapsed in *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15), though Kitzinger here makes no mention of the *kērōtē*, only that in *Cos. Dam.* 13 the icon “begins to work on [the woman’s] behalf” without her making any attempt “to secure divine assistance through the icon. ...The story dramatizes the objective power of the icon which is shown to be effective regardless of the faithful’s consciousness.” Again, though, it is unclear whether or how the icon here is an agent in her cure unless one presupposes that the purpose of *Cos. Dam.* 13 is to justify icons. Kitzinger’s discussion here, however, is the source of Henry Maguire’s claim (“Magic and the Christian

about them is good, seeing their image is good, but what actually confirms the presence and activity of the saints, as well as her healthy state, is touch, both the fingers of the saints and the application of distributed *kērōtē*, which is miraculously transmitted from dream to waking reality.

Hence, as in *Cos. Dam.* 30, in this miracle story the most effective cure is neither icon nor spiritual vision, but the *kērōtē* brought spiritually and genuinely into the corporeal world. But despite the similar entanglement of image, saint, and *kērōtē* in *Cos. Dam.* 13, the role given to the icon is distinct. In Miracle 30, the viewing of the icon underscores the lack of recognition of the saints on the part of the man with the fistula, while here in Miracle 13 the icon confirms their identity for the woman. There, the effect was to unsettle the ontological boundaries between waking world and dream world through dramatic irony; here, the mention, forgetting, and remembering of the icon stimulates a productive vacillation between priority given to sight and hearing, each of which is subordinated in importance, ultimately, to touch. With this demotion established by the events of the narrative, the narrator breaks through, addressing the audience directly as φιλόχριστοι, to explain how these events prove that the saints “follow everywhere those who call upon them in faith” (τῆ πίστει τῶν ἐπικαλουμένων αὐτοῦς...ἀκολοθοῦντες

Image,” in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire [Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995], 67 n. 52) that “the portable image...began to operate on behalf of its owner *before* he was aware of the icon’s presence,” a claim which confuses the characters of Constantine and his wife. If Vikan’s source is Kitzinger, then his conflation of icon and *kērōtē* more likely comes from Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 107 n. 89, where he claims that in Miracle 13 “an application of an ointment made from a κηρωτή is prescribed by the saints as a prophylactic treatment. From the context it would seem that this κηρωτή is identical with an image of the Saints mentioned earlier in the story as an amulet owned by the patient’s husband.” This, as we have seen, however, is not at all obvious from the context. To his credit, Kitzinger notes that κηρωτή “does not always imply an image,” referring to other miracles of Cosmas and Damian, but immediately cites *Cos. Dam.* 15 as “a clear case of the material substance of an image serving as a medicine.” As I will show below, Kitzinger is right to suggest a connection between the *kērōtē* and the wall image in *Cos. Dam.* 15, but this does not mean that the icon in *Cos. Dam.* 13 bears that same connection. The only two exceptions to this trend I have seen are Csepregi, “Characteristics of Dream Healing,” 99, who notes in passing that the image and the *kērōtē* are different objects, but her learned work does not seem to have penetrated discussions about Christian image piety in Late Antiquity; and Sweeney, “Holy Images and Holy Matter,” 133 n. 101 who observes rightly that the icon in *Cos. Dam.* 13 does not produce the miracle as in 15.

πανταχοῦ) in both “activity” (ἐνέργεια) and in “presence” (παρουσία).⁸⁹ But where Constantine and his wife go at the end of the account is both a surprise, given her successful healing, and yet entirely predictable. They return to Constantinople, the “Christ loving” (φιλόχριστος) city and the “medical tent” (ἡ ἰατρικὴ σκηνή) of Cosmas and Damian that is their shrine, “glorifying our Lord Jesus Christ, who provided his rich mercies to the race of humankind through these two, his wondrous saints and healers, Cosmas and Damian” (δοξάζουσα τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν πλούσια τὰ ἐλέη αὐτοῦ παρεσχηκότα τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων διὰ τούτων τῶν θαυμαστῶν ἁγίων καὶ θεραπόντων αὐτοῦ Κοσμα καὶ ΔαμIANOῦ).⁹⁰ Though the narrative opens with an emphasis on Constantine’s distance from the cult site and the city that bears his name, in the end, having seen, heard, and felt the saints, Constantine and his wife return as walking, talking proof of the saints’ widespread activity and presence to the place where the *kērōtē* is more typically distributed.

Miracle 15

We can return, finally, to the analysis of *Cos. Dam. 15*—the shortest of the three narratives read at Nicaea II—which features the woman healed “with the visitation of the saints,” which happens, in turn, precisely when she consumes the matter from the wall painting. While this miraculous moment of healing has typically been the lens through which *Cos. Dam. 13* is interpreted and serves as evidently the clearest instance of the three miracle stories featuring images to feature an actually miraculous image, when we analyze more than just the healing episode, we can see that even the author of *Cos. Dam. 15* also subordinates image to *kērōtē*. The author constructs a relationship between inanimate image, animate saintly visits, and *kērōtē*

⁸⁹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 134.53–5.

⁹⁰ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 134.57–60.

surprisingly similar to *Cos. Dam.* 30 and 13 in two primary ways: by plotting the narrative as an inversion of the normal cultic activity and by characterizing the woman as an image of biblical exemplars. Thus, even her extraordinary and unsanctioned actions become integrated into the operations of the Constantinopolitan cult site.

In contrast to the two prior narratives, the narrator does not immediately dive into description of the main character, her illness, and her actions. Rather, from the start, the narrator of *Cos. Dam.* 15 seeds the themes of the story with reference to the triad of Pauline theological virtues: faith, hope, and love. “Most wise Paul, the pillar and teacher of the church (cf. 1 Tim 3:15), put it well, shouting (καλῶς ὁ σοφώτατος Παῦλος, ὁ στύλος καὶ διδάσκαλος τῆς ἐκκλησίας, βοᾷ ὅτι), *Hope is not put to shame because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts*” (ἡ ἐλπίς οὐ καταισχύνει τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκεχυμένης ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν, cf. Rom 5:5).⁹¹ When the story itself begins, however, what stands out is how *Cos. Dam.* 15 inverts the usual order of operations. For instance, the central figure, a “faithful woman” (πιστὴ γύνῃ), is described as having been “delivered from painful illnesses at different times” (ἐκ χαλεπῶν ἀσθενειῶν ῥυσθεῖσα διαφόρως) by the saints and, as a result, she “used to make an act of remembrance of her thanksgiving for them that she kept unforgotten by appearing frequently in this, their marvelous shrine (ἀνεπίληστον τὴν μνήμην τῆς πρὸς αὐτοὺς εὐχαριστίας ἐποιεῖτο, συχνότερον ἐν τῷ θαυμαστῷ αὐτῶν τούτῳ οἴκῳ παραγινομένη) and by paying off the debt of honor she owed them” (καὶ τὸ χρέως τῆς τιμῆς αὐτοῖς ἀποτινύουσα).⁹² A hint of playfulness appears already in the description of the woman owing a debt and paying it to two healing saints who famously did not accept payment for their services (being known by the epithet

⁹¹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.1–3.

⁹² Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.4–7.

ἀνάργυροι—without silver),⁹³ an irony which the narrator heightens in the following sentences: “...but, in a word, she just couldn’t be satisfied by keeping the great and wondrous saints Cosmas and Damian in her mind each day” (ἀπλῶς καθ’ ἐκάστην τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ θαυμαστοὺς ἁγίους Κοσμάων καὶ Δαμιανὸν ἔχουσα ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ οὐκ ἐκορέννυτο).⁹⁴ It is unclear whether by “keeping in her mind” the narrator means merely the process of remembrance or if she is constantly receiving mental impressions via dream visions, but her solution is to cultivate the analogous experience of dream visions through sensible means. “Rather, she also painted them [the saints] on an entire wall of *her* house” (ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς πάντα τὸν τοῖχον τοῦ οἴκου αὐτῆς τούτους ἀνέγραψεν).⁹⁵ While at the beginning she was “frequently appearing” (συχνότερον... παραγινομένη) in their house (οἶκος), her desire to see the saints leads her to paint them in them on an entire wall of her own.

To this point, the presence of an image and, perhaps, the notion of the saints coming to the woman’s house are not all that out of step with *Cos. Dam.* 13, but the narrator amplifies the irregularity of this miracle story still further. Whereas typically the supplicant falls asleep and “sees the saints coming,” here the woman is notably sleepless and goes to them. “It happened one night,” the narrator continues, “that this woman was confined in her own house, sick with with unyielding pains in her insides (ταύτην συνέβη ὑπὸ τῶν ἔσωθεν ἀσθενήσασαν πόνοις ἀνευδότοις ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ οἴκῳ συνέχεσθαι). Rolling in her bed without rest, she was in distress and there was no cessation to her pains” (κυλιομένη τε ἐν τῷ κραββάτῳ ἄπαστον εἶχεν τὴν ὀδύνην, καὶ οὐδεμία ἀνοχὴ τῶν ἀλγηδόνων ἦν ἐν αὐτῇ).⁹⁶ Her “vision” of the saints, moreover, is notably

⁹³ Cf. e.g., Miracles 10, 14, and 48, For limited exceptions in the form of post-healing offerings made at the cult site, see Csepregi, “Characteristics of Dream Images,” 96–7.

⁹⁴ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.8–9.

⁹⁵ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.9–10.

⁹⁶ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 15–6.

distinct in comparison with the lively interventions that take place in *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and others. When, having “by chance found herself alone for a little while” (οὕτως δὲ συμβάντος μόνην ἔλαχεν ταύτην πρὸς ὀλίγον εὐρεθῆναι) and “she saw that she was in danger” (εἶδεν ἑαυτὴν κινδυνεύουσαν),⁹⁷ the woman decides to take action, which the narrator describes in minute detail.

Dragging herself from the bed, she went down and came to the place where these most-wise saints had been painted on the wall (συρομένη κατήλθεν ἐκ τῆς κλίνης, καὶ φθάσασα τὸν τόπον, ἐν ᾧ ἐν τῷ τοίχῳ ἦσαν γεγραμμένοι οἱ πάνσοφοι οὗτοι ἅγιοι). She straightened herself by using her faith in place of a crutch, scraped the plaster with the nails of her own hands, and put it in water (τῆ πίστις αὐτῆς ἀντὶ βακτηρίας χρησαμένη καὶ ἀνορθώσασα ἑαυτήν, τοῖς ὄνυξιν τε αὐτῆς τῶν χειρῶν καταξέσασα τοῦ χρίσματος καὶ βαλοῦσα ἐν ὕδατι). She drank the mixture and immediately became healthy, the pains inside her ceasing due to the intervention of the saints” (ἔπιεν εὐκρατον καὶ παρευθὺ ὑγιῆς γέγονεν, τῶν ὄντων ἐν αὐτῇ ἀλγηδόνων παυσαμένων τῆ τῶν ἁγίων ἐπιφοιτήσει).⁹⁸

Rather than the saints appearing to the woman in a dream, she has, it seems, almost forced their intervention by scraping matter from their image. The only thing that she “sees” is that she herself is in danger. This image is not merely apotropaic nor identity affirming, but its role seems downright compulsory of the saints.

Except, when we look at this paradoxical moment in comparison with *Cos. Dam.* 30 and 13, it is clear that what the woman procures is not the saints themselves but a sort of homeopathic, bootleg *kērōtē*, which she consumes to acquire the kind of immediate relief for her internal ailments that Constantine in *Cos. Dam.* 13 had promised it could provide. The wall-paint, cleverly called “chrism” (χρῖσμα), as well as her decision to mix the *chrism* with water and drink the “mixture” (εὐκρατος) it creates, lexically invokes the ritual anointing and healing practices of the saints’ shrine with *kērōtē* distributed during the night and often even consumed.

⁹⁷ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 16–8.

⁹⁸ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.18–138.24.

Though the *kērōtē* is not explicitly mentioned in *Cos. Dam* 15, the woman's actions, seemingly out of the ordinary if one is seeking solely to isolate a theology of the icon, turn her οἶκος into an image of *theirs*, complete with replacement *kērōtē* in the form of self-scraped *chrism*, saintly visitation, and healing. She never sleeps, so she cannot meet the saints as lively images in a dream, but they still intervene, as the text states, healing her despite the fact that she receives the “*kērōtē*” only from their lifeless image. The woman's treatment of the image and her healing make complete sense within the narrative logic of the inverted, substitute cult shrine her house has become.

The plausibility of her home shrine being active, moreover, is effectively the problem the narrator constructs and then seeks to resolve throughout the narrative. If we return for a moment to a point early in the story, the narrator betrays some concern over the woman's actions, seeking to find a way to domesticate them. The woman is described as painting the saints' images because “she just couldn't be satisfied” (ἀπλῶς...οὐκ ἔκορέννυτο) and is “insatiable” (ἀκόρεστος).⁹⁹ The question of whether this a virtuous act of piety or an overreach is signaled by the ambiguous description of her decision to paint as stimulated ἐκ τοῦ ὑπερβάλλοντος αὐτῆς πόθου—“by her desire” which is either “surpassing” (a virtue) or “excessive” (a vice).¹⁰⁰ The narrator calls attention to this tension and simultaneously attempts to forestall the critique, chiding the reader, “No one should attack this, faithful, (καὶ μηδεὶς ἐπιλάβοιτο τούτου, πιστοί) because the quality of insatiability is always judged to be innocent when it is for the benefit of the soul” (ἀκατηγόρητον γὰρ ἐπ' ὠφελείᾳ ψυχῆς πανταχοῦ τὸ ἄπληστον κρίνεται).¹⁰¹ But the concern is underscored a second time when the narrator describes how “she was in distress, and

⁹⁹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.8–9, 10. Cf. Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 132.

¹⁰⁰ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.11.

¹⁰¹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.12–3.

there was no ἀνοχή in her for the pains,” another double-entendre that plays on the question of whether the pains themselves would not cease or simply that she have the “endurance” for them. She goes too far in her desire and yet does not last in this quasi-ascetic show of holy devotion. Moreover, there are no witnesses—she is “by chance alone for a little while” (συμβάντος μόνην ἔλαχεν ταύτην πρὸς ὀλίγον)—raising the question of her reliability when she self-narrates the miracle at the shrine after healing. Is she making it up?¹⁰²

In view of these considerations, the narrator seeks to bring her story under control, first by having her return, “after her healing to this great house” (μετὰ τὰ ὑγιᾶναι [ἦλθεν] ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ τούτῳ οἴκῳ). Though she had brought the saints to her own home, it seems, it is in their home once again where “she described to everyone the healing that had come to her through the saints (διηγήσατο πᾶσιν τὴν διὰ τῶν ἁγίων προσγενομένην αὐτῆ...θεραπείαν) in such a σχῆμα” (ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ σχήματι). This lexeme, which figured prominently in *Cos. Dam.* 30 and 13 and can often mean “image” or “appearance,” in *Cos. Dam.* 15 seems to describe the entire simulacra of the house shrine and her activities therein.¹⁰³ The excerpt at Nicaea II ends here, but the full version makes explicit a second concern for the consequences of the woman’s actions. “No one should think that this was some new-fangled miracle done by the saints (καὶ μηδεὶς ὑπολάβοι καινὸν γεγενῆσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων τοῦτο τὸ θαύμα)—or simply that the sick woman obtained the healing from the completion of the scheme by *her*” (ἢ ἀπλῶς τὴν ἀσθενοῦσαν τεύξασθαι τῆς ἐκ

¹⁰² Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.17. Arguably, this is not all that different from the report of anyone healed by the saints *in a dream*, which presumably the author did not have access to, but it is distinctive that the narrator here calls attention to the illusive potential of this woman’s actions in the waking world as well; cf. Csepregi, “Who Is Behind Incubation Stories,” 163.

¹⁰³ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 138.24–27. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. σχῆμα 7 (“action” or “act” and 17 (“plot” or “scheme”)) come the closest to capturing the sense of σχῆμα here. Cf. Festugière, *Sainte Thècle, Saints Côme et Damien, Saints Cyr et Jean*, 130, who translates σχῆμα as “gesture” (geste). Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, 311, settles for the reasonably ambiguous “in this way.”

τοῦ ἐπιτελεσθέντος παρ’ αὐτῆς σχήματος ἰάσεως).¹⁰⁴ These details make clear that the woman’s home shrine—including its lifeless image of Cosmas and Damian and the home-scraped *kērōtē*—occupies a lesser position than that of the official cult site and that she herself is no replacement for either the saints or those who administer their benefactions.

But the domesticated miracle is likewise not to be doubted: the woman’s faith made it possible. As noted above, the entire narrative is framed by the trio of Pauline theological virtues, faith, hope, and love. The woman, for her part, is described as “a faithful woman” (πιστὴ γυνή), who “had acquired this hope” (ταύτην τὴν ἐλπίδα κεκτημένη),¹⁰⁵ and her works—painting the image, scraping the wall, consuming the drink—are all framed in that light. Indeed, after describing the woman’s healing, the narrator turns to interpret the events for the reader, reaching for the Epistle of James: “Do you see how quickly the faithful woman found the fruits of her hope? (ὄρας πῶς ταχέως τοὺς καρποὺς τῆς ἐλπίδος αὐτῆς εὗρεν ἡ πιστὴ γυνή). You know, *philochristoi*, how faith collaborates with works (ἔγνωτε, φιλόχριστοι, πῶς ἡ πίστις συνεργεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις) and (how) faith is brought to perfection by works” (καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις τελειοῦται, cf. James 2:22).¹⁰⁶ Her works, the narrator argues, demonstrate the genuineness of her faith and her identity as a φιλόχριστος—making her part of the Constantinopolitan audience—which are rewarded with the miraculous healing of the saints. Through the play on faith and hope, moreover, the narrator likewise casts her, albeit subtly, in imitation of the woman with the issue of blood who grasped Jesus’s garment in the hope of being healed. In the gospel accounts, the woman recovers immediately, and Jesus informs her that it was her faith that made her well (Mk

¹⁰⁴ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 138.30–2. Cf. Festugière, *Sainte Thècle, Saints Côme et Damien, Saints Cyr et Jean*, 131 n. 63, where he translates σχῆμα “literally” as “gesture” again but in the main text interprets σχῆμα as referring specifically to the drinking of “cette potion.”

¹⁰⁵ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 137.3–4.

¹⁰⁶ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 138.28–9.

5:25-34, Mt 9:20-22, Lk 8:43-8).¹⁰⁷ In *Cos. Dam.* 15, as well, the woman recovers immediately.

This thematic emphasis on faith and hope attempts to persuade the reader that her role in the healing was her faith, hope, and love for the saints, not her production of counterfeit *kērōtē*.

Finally, however, in case this effort has failed, the narrator sketches out a biblical exemplar for Cosmas and Damian as well, who surprisingly otherwise receive no character treatment in this account. Immediately after warning the audience that no one should think the woman's healing was something new nor that she achieved it herself, the narrator continues, "For the voice of Lord is speaking to *all* his holy apostles (φωνὴν γὰρ τοῦ κυρίου πρὸς πάντα τοὺς ἁγίους αὐτοῦ ἀποστόλους), saying, *The works which I do, you will also do, and you will do (works) greater than these* (ἢ λέγουσα: τὰ ἔργα, ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ, καὶ ὑμεῖς ποιήσετε, καὶ μείζονα τούτων ποιήσετε, John 14:12).¹⁰⁸ As an example, the narrator explains, "This is why the shadow of Peter, the first of the apostles, undid death and drove out illness (ὄθεν... ἢ τοῦ πρώτου τῶν ἀποστόλων Πέτρου σκιά καὶ θάνατον ἔλυσεν καὶ νόσου ἐξήλασεν, cf. Acts 5:15-16) even though the shadow of the Lord himself had never worked [that] wonder" (τῆς αὐτοῦ τοῦ δεσπότητος σκιάς μηδαμοῦ θαῦμα ἐργασαμένης). The narrator engages in a quick self-correction that emphasizes the distinctive activity of the saints without over praising them: "Rather, our lord was also active in these wonders through his saints" (ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῦτα ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν διὰ τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ ἐνεργεῖ τὰ θαύματα).¹⁰⁹ And with that, the account ends. Faced with a miracle story that potentially threatened the authority of the cult site, the author of *Cos. Dam.* 15 worked to balance

¹⁰⁷ Cf. the even more explicit modeling on the same biblical episode in the *Vita Symeonis junioris* 118, where a woman suffering from a discharge of blood remarks, "If only I can see his likeness, I shall be saved." Brubaker, "Icons before Iconoclasm?" 1247, wants to set aside the likening of Symeon to Jesus, but to dismiss this aspect is to miss how narrative, biblical modeling, and icon theory converge.

¹⁰⁸ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 138.32-4.

¹⁰⁹ Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 138.35-8.

praise for the faithful woman with subordination of her and her wall-painting to a role in the narrative at best secondary to the saints and the *kērōtē* at their home shrine.

Icon or Idol? Failings of Florilegial Reading

The reading of *Cos. Dam.* 15 I present in this chapter constitutes a considerable revision of how this narrative has been typically interpreted by scholars interested in image theory in the centuries prior to the Iconoclast Controversy. In the final section of the chapter, I wish to demonstrate how the persistent focus on the woman's consumption of *chrism* within the context of iconophile and iconoclast wrangling—and the incomplete presentation of these narratives at Nicaea II—has caused the misreading of these narratives by taking for granted the concern about icons as primary. The result has been the continuance of invective and apologetic arguments about images more than analysis of what these accounts can actually tell us because modern scholars, wittingly or not, have continued the work produced by florilegial exerpition.

As described in chapter 1, iconophiles and iconoclasts may have agreed in principle that the material image was lifeless, though the line between living and lifeless was not always so clear nor the ramifications transparent. This concern appears behind the florilegial reading practices of Kitzinger and Peers as well, whose work I introduced in the introduction above.¹¹⁰ In fact, buried in the footnotes of Kitzinger's "Cult of Images" as support for the sixth-century date of the beginning of the "cult of images" is a reference to page 35 or Ernst von Dobschütz's colossal 1899 *Christusbilder*, mostly remembered for its monumental collection and publication of materials related to miraculous images of Christ, as the name suggests.¹¹¹ This page, however,

¹¹⁰ See pp. 21–7.

¹¹¹ Kitzinger, "Cult of Images," 87 n. 9.

features rather more than support for an argument about dating; it is one on which von Dobschütz reaches the climax of the argument of his first two chapters: Christian *acheiropoietai* were little different from ancient “pagan” palladia and “heaven sent” images, in which “one believed that life stirred.”¹¹² As I have described in chapter 1, there were indeed many practices of Christian material piety that shared features in common with Greco-Roman and Egyptian majority cultures. But these beliefs, von Dobschütz argued, were the result of “the naïve piety of the people (Volk),” which in turn eliminated distinctions between these special images and those without special status, making all images in effect equivalent to the gods they represented.¹¹³ Crucially, for von Dobschütz, the “complete identity (vollen Übereinstimmung) between image and person of the deity” among the Greeks¹¹⁴ took hold in Christianity with *acheiropoieta* images “as a pagan intruder” (ein heidnischer Eindringling) in the mid-sixth century as a kind of idolatry (Bilderdienst).¹¹⁵

As Andrew Palmer has observed, in *Christusbilder* von Dobschütz (a German Lutheran) was engaged at least tacitly in anti-Catholic polemic with his attempt to debunk the antiquity of the Catholic *Veronica* tradition.¹¹⁶ But we can observe yet another effect of his religious stance. The connection between ancient Greek and Roman practices and the emergence of *acheiropoietai* images in the sixth century that led to the *Veronica* traditions lies precisely, in von Dobschütz’s argument, in idolatry, construed as the conflation of image with its prototype, namely the deity. This is, as noted earlier, precisely the argument that Kitzinger puts forth

¹¹² Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 35.

¹¹³ Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 22–23.

¹¹⁴ Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 24.

¹¹⁵ Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 35 (cf. Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 87 n.9). Dobschütz takes the further step of relating this development to an additional influx of “Neoplatonic philosophy” through the writings of John Philoponus and Ps. Dionysius. In the case of Philoponus, the charge of falling into pagan polytheism appears to have been levied at him already in Late Antiquity due to his concerted exegeses of Aristotle’s writings and his consequent affiliation with the “tritheism” heresy of the later sixth century; see Lang, 5–7, 159–62.

¹¹⁶ Palmer, “*Logos* of the Mandylyon,” 119–121.

regarding a wide array of miracle stories featuring images. For Kitzinger, miracle stories involving religious images *de facto* suggest a conflation of image with deity (or “divine forces”), which, in turn, suggests that believers confusedly think that the images are alive, endowed with spirit or divinity. Such error is natural, he concludes, but nevertheless indicative of “idolatric beliefs and practices”¹¹⁷ because stories featuring miraculous images “leave behind the concept of the image as a purely static and lifeless mirror reflection and enter the realm of thoughts and ideas attributing to images some form of animate life and power.” As a result, “the Christian image had become indistinguishable from the pagan idol.”¹¹⁸ To prove his point, Kitzinger turns to *Cos. Dam. 15*: when the woman is cured, in his interpretation specifically by drinking the plaster mixture, “the act...is blandly described as ‘the entering in’ (ἐπιφοίτησις) of the saints. This amounts to complete identification of picture and prototype.”¹¹⁹

Accordingly, for the same reasons that ancient and medieval Christian authors had to ensure that they did not defend the worship of lifeless matter nor the conflation of image with living saint, spiritual power, or God, Kitzinger takes issues with narratives like *Cos. Dam. 15*. Stories that feature activities of images in his argument become clear evidence of idolatry among the masses, adjudicated by the same living/lifeless binary put forth repeatedly in Jewish and Christian polemic. Kitzinger’s learned essay, therefore, participates in and perpetuates the normative work of distinguishing some Christians from others by deploying the ontological and epistemological arguments. Those (like Kitzinger) who knew that images were properly inanimate and thus disapproved of their role in the church were distinct from those whose lower degree of education on these matters, he suggests, was reflected in hagiographical narratives.

¹¹⁷ Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 87.

¹¹⁸ Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 146; see the image and prototype language on 145.

¹¹⁹ Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 148.

Though few scholars today would countenance such bald ascription of a polemical term like “idolatry” onto the practices of an entire period, Kitzinger’s work has had outsize influence both among those who follow his conclusions and those who oppose them, not only because of the range of material he manages to survey but also because of the way he aligns animate images with a conflation of image and prototype.

Even for Peers, who in his “Object Relations” essay regards both the iconophile and iconoclast “theologians” as misguided, the interpretation of *Cos. Dam. 15* is governed *normatively* by the tensions between truth and deception that shoot through materiality in late antiquity. As I observed above, for Peers the ontological reality of animate matter—a claim characteristic of New Animists—is perceived by the woman who consumes the plaster-water mixture made from the wall-image of Cosmas and Damian. He opposes this view to that of “theologians” some of whom “argued that Christians were free from idolatry because images were not real” while “others argued against images altogether because images were so unreal as to be pointless.”¹²⁰ Peers does not specify precisely who he means by these “theologians,” but from the context of the argument it is almost certainly the Byzantine iconophiles and iconoclasts, respectively. In denying the “reality” of the images (by which Peers appears to mean ‘deferring liveliness and agency away from the material and to the spiritual’) “the theologians in their theoretical texts” suffered, he argues in a presumably playful but nevertheless ableist manner, from “Capgras Syndrome,” a psychological condition of miscognition whereby the subject thinks the person they see and know has been replaced by a “Doppelgänger.” The “highly stressful discussion over idolatry” was mostly restricted to these theologians, he argues, because they were the only ones who refused to see the reality that the material was divinized, active, and

¹²⁰ Peers, “Object Relations,” 976.

lively. “The silent majority,” as he calls those Christians whom he claims were not so stressed, “knew they did not have idols simply because their images ‘worked.’” Binaries like “God and matter, icon and idol, representation and nature” were smoothed out “into a collaborative, relational materiality.”¹²¹ In short, Peers advocates for scholars not to view the relations between pious believers and images (which he characterizes broadly to include relics)¹²² as interactions with objects or mere representations, but rather as between subjects; the materiality of images was indelibly (if not always actively) infused with divinity, a fact which served as the basis for such object relations.

Thus, while Peers self-consciously opposes his animist approach to the “modernist” concerns of Kitzinger, his actual analysis of sources like *Cos. Dam.* 15 ends up much the same: evidence for the conflation of image/prototype and lifeless/living distinctions among the popular, “silent majority.” The key distinction, of course, is that Kitzinger sees this as a negative outcome and he couches his analysis in the explicitly theological terms of “idolatry.” Peers gives the conclusion a positive connotation: the woman, in her prayer and consumption of the plaster, related to the painting and its matter as an active, holy subject, which the scholar can observe because the text does not work to distinguish image from prototype. Moreover, whereas Kitzinger’s argument sets up an opposition between the respective pieties of the educated rationalist and the deceived, popular believer, Peers’s own rejection of the modernist view pushes him set up a similar binary between the perceptive animist (like himself) and the deceived theoretician of images who denies the real subjecthood of the image as matter in front of them.

¹²¹ Peers, “Object Relations,” 974-76.

¹²² Peers, “Object Relations,” 971: “In this period, relics and images were equivalent, and the images of the saints had that same physical reality and presence as did bodily remains.” Equivalence doubtless overstates the similarities, as I discussed in chapter 1, but both kinds of cult object presented similar problems of representation and participation in the divine.

Although he largely wishes to throw out the eighth and ninth century theological arguments as constitutive for late ancient views on images (perhaps because they are too similar to the “modernist” conceptions that he positions his work against), his characterization of theologians and modernists as afflicted by Capgras Syndrome preserves the idolatry *topos* that pits the icon as revelatory and true against the idol as deceptive and false. If only other scholars had the right state of mind—recall the psychological argument of Athenagoras, for instance—then they would see images the “right way.” Ironically, the argument remains one governed by the intellectualizing discourse around images that Peers seeks to jettison.

Of course, the assumption shared by Peers and Kitzinger that *Cos. Dam.* 15 is somehow unintellectual or unconsciously reflective of popular practices is one that requires argument and interrogation, as well a grappling with the “reality effect” of narrative itself. Taking a different tack with some attempt to take the text less for granted is Patricia Cox Miller in *The Corporeal Imagination*. Influenced by a set of theoretical discourses known as Thing Theory that both precede and run parallel to New Materialisms, Miller follows an approach distinct from that of Peers in that she attempts to discern how not-explicitly-theoretical sources themselves home in on, probe, and try to mitigate the problems and pitfalls of identifying real presence in material images.¹²³ In her words, Miller tracks how Late Ancient Christians deployed “pictorial strategies

¹²³ Thing Theory was formalized, as it were, in Bill Brown’s special issue of *Critical Inquiry*, later published in the volume Bill Brown, ed., *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). As a field of inquiry, it emerges from concerns with commodity capitalism, on the one hand, and Heideggerian phenomenological inquiry into being on the other. Oriented most commonly toward studying representations of “objects” in art and literature, scholars working with this theoretical framework study not necessarily “objects” but the ways that objects resist objecthood and force human subjects into a changed relationship. Brown’s classic example is the dirty window: its opacity precludes the use for which its human designers intended it (Brown, *Thing Theory*, in *Things* [ed. Brown], 4; Miller cites this example in *Corporeal Imagination*, 2). Study of how such changed relations are represented in particular times and places can reveal “the force of inanimate objects in human experience.” I follow Sarah Wasserman’s reconstruction of the scholarly work on these issues; Wasserman adds that the stronger forms of new materialisms, outlined above, constitute a kind of “second phase” of Thing Theory. See Sarah Wasserman, “Thing Theory,” *Oxford Bibliographies* in “Literary and Critical Theory” (New York: Oxford University Press), Last Modified June 24, 2020. DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780190221911-0097. For an analysis of Byzantine material objects

that draw on the power of discourse to materialize its effects in the world of the reader by attributing corporeal qualities to inscrutable objects (like the bodies of the saints) or by attributing spiritual qualities to corporeal objects (like relics, icons, or the dust at a stylite's column)."¹²⁴ She argues that the fourth through eighth centuries were a time of experimentation in which Christians dealt discursively with these "things" that were neither easily dismissible as lifeless objects because of their evident power, but likewise neither without risk due to their evident similarity to the material cult objects of paganism. In this period, Miller argues, "flirtation with idolatry, understood as reifying the holy in the human, was a constant problem."¹²⁵ Prior to the Byzantine Iconoclast Controversy, "in which positions regarding the role of images in Christian theology and ritual were argued openly," Christian literary (and some material) sources, she argues, "betray a hesitation...or even a nervousness regarding the potential for confusing the material and the spiritual."¹²⁶

Miller's treatment of *Cos. Dam.* 15 indexes her approach as well, including her deployment of theoretically inflected terms to describe the complex strategies by which Christian authors sought to deal with this persistent issue of idolatry. Turning to her study of icons as "things," which she characterizes as "objects whose surplus value made them magnets of attraction,"¹²⁷ Miller underscores how the miraculous healing that occurs when the woman

particularly influenced by the Heideggerian lineage, see Charles Barber, "Thingliness" in *Byzantine Things in the World* (ed. Peers), 98–105.

¹²⁴ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 8.

¹²⁵ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 6.

¹²⁶ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 6. cf. Peers, "Object Relations," 972, calling it a "terminating point" in Late Antique culture. Kitzinger's three-fold progression model treats the Iconoclast Controversy similarly. Miller describes this period and the hesitation she traces as characterized by a "Material Turn" (3-7), perhaps a nod to the scholarly material turn I discussed in the Introduction, though she never makes this explicit. Much like in the case of the scholarly turn, one wonders how complete it was. If nothing else, as Maia Kotrosits has noted in *The Lives of Objects: Material Culture, Experience, and the Real in the History of Early Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 27, the attention paid to material objects and materiality in this period seems little more than "an intensification of a longer-running, and not at all especially Christian, set of practices and recognitions."

¹²⁷ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 131.

drinks the plaster seems like a “portrayal of iconophilia run amok...that would certainly seem to flirt with idolatry” from the “perspective of an eight- or ninth-century iconoclastic reader.” But she likewise attends to the literary creativity, seeing the flirtation “as a narrative technique for negotiating the delicate dynamic of saintly presence and absence in images.” She argues that the woman’s dissatisfaction with seeing their painted images, therefore, cannot be understood as a complete conflation of image and prototype. Yet, “the saints *are* somehow present...on an edge, not of desire but of ontological uncertainty regarding the quality of their presence,” she argues. Dwelling for a moment on the noun used in *Cos. Dam.* 15 to describe the saints’ intervention, ἐπιφοίτησις, Miller concludes that their presence is “neither fully material nor fully ethereal but something in between,” the text keeping these two ontological states in a “tensive relationship.”¹²⁸

The problem with Miller’s reading is not necessarily that she takes the content of the text for granted, but rather the *context*. For Miller, hagiography constitutes a “set of discursive strategies for presenting sainthood,” which, in the context of idolatry polemics, had to invest its subjects with evidence of spiritual vivacity without “collapsing the transcendent into the immanent.” Often, she concludes, “materializing saintly presence” required the narrative “animation of inanimate objects” to displace “the reality of saintly presence and power onto images.”¹²⁹ Such literary practices therefore “pictured the theory” that painted representations were a “*play* of identity and difference” that sought simultaneously to claim a relationship to divine power yet not suggest that the subjects of representation were themselves contained or

¹²⁸ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 132. Miller’s treatment of *Cos. Dam.* 15 is almost identical in her essay, “On the Edge of Self and Other: Holy Bodies in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17:2 (Summer 2009), 171–74, despite her claim that the article expands and revises chapter 7 of *Corporeal Imagination*. I cite from *Corporeal Imagination*.

¹²⁹ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 118–19, 128.

circumscribed therein.¹³⁰ “Although this image of an icon”—i.e., the narrative depiction of the image and its consumption in *Cos. Dam.* 15—“certainly petitions an overinvestment of meaning in matter, it hesitates fully to identify saintly subject with artistic object.” In Miller’s interpretation, the miracle story “pictures” a painted image that is animate yet immobile, the saints are present and absent, powerful yet inscrutable. Cosmas and Damian—along with their image—oscillate “between animate and inanimate, subject and object, human and thing.” In addition, ontological uncertainty about the status of the painted image was “productive, since it teaches the reader to imagine how a finite object operates in an infinite field of meaning.”¹³¹

Miller’s sophisticated analysis shows how even short hagiographical narratives often performed theological work. Nevertheless, she treats only the climax of this miracle story and does so in relative isolation from other episodes in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*.¹³² As a result, Miller’s focus remains solely upon the relationship between saint and icon, which is then interpreted according to the prototype/icon distinctions emphasized during the Iconoclast Controversy and hence a reified definition of idolatry quite similar to that which operates in the analysis of Peers and Kitzinger.¹³³ As such, even where Miller disagrees with Kitzinger (as well

¹³⁰ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 143. On “picturing theory,” see the oeuvre of W. J. T. Mitchell, especially *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹³¹ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 145. On the productive oscillation, see Bill Brown, “Reification, Reanimation, and the American Uncanny,” *Critical Inquiry* 32 (2006): 123-42, whom Miller cites.

¹³² For Miller’s treatment of *Cos. Dam.* 13, see *Corporeal Imagination*, 159–60 (discussed below). For both miracle stories, she appears to base her analysis off the excerpts translated in Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 138–39.

¹³³ While she provides at times an ostensibly broader gloss for “idolatry” (e.g., “reifying the holy in the human” and “confusing the material and the spiritual” [*Corporeal Imagination*, 6]), Miller makes it clear that she regards the Iconoclast Controversy’s debates about images as more or less determinative for articulating the Christian definition. We can discern this view from the numerous references to the eighth and ninth century debates throughout the book (e.g., 6–7, 117, 132–33, 143, 148) and reliance upon the conciliar articulation is stated explicitly in the re-emergence of image/prototype distinctions in the context of icons in the final chapter. Critiquing Kitzinger’s characterization of a shift in artistic style, exemplified in a mosaic of Saint Agnes, as indicative of an “extreme dematerialization” in the saintly figure, Miller argues that Kitzinger downplays the persistent “as if” in late ancient statements about the relationship between invisible saint and visible picture. Kitzinger sees claims of honoring the saint *as if* present as “collapsing the distinction between original and copy, prototype and picture,” while Miller argues that “taking seriously the ‘as if’ dimension... prevents the human element from being swallowed

as Peers, though his work in this vein is later than Miller's book), her analyses end up colored by the same continuation of debates about whether stories of miraculous images indicate idolatry among Christian practitioners (i.e., the collapse of image prototype distinctions seen in the treatment of the inanimate as animate). Where Kitzinger concludes "yes," and Peers determines "yes but this was a correct apprehension of the world," Miller modifies the ontological and epistemological arguments to argue "no, because it was only partial." The authors of the texts came up with techniques and strategies to "avoid idolatry." They did so, in Miller's recounting, at least partially in an effort to teach readers how to properly view or imagine holy matter in bodies, relics, and icons, which perhaps suggests that there really was a widespread concern with idolatrous practices, even if the texts themselves do not treat the inanimate as animate *per se*.

As we have seen, however, it is not so clear that the author of *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15, sees the icon as a reason for concern about idolatry. If anything, it was the dream images of the saints that caused mental impressions on the dreamers that resided at the center of controversy. The author of these miracle stories was intent on emphasizing the reality and reliability of these saintly manifestations. The material images in these three accounts are used sometimes to affirm, sometimes to disconfirm, always to complicate the relationship between painted image and dream image, subordinating each to the cultic *kērōtē* and making it *the* medium between corporeal and incorporeal that extended saintly healing and presence into the world. The scholarly reading of *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 as focused on the relationship of image and prototype

up by the divine and preserves the tensive play *between* human and divine that was a crucial feature of the paradoxical ontology of icons" (171). Rather than "virtually collapsing," she asserts, "the icon "stages a play of difference *and* sameness with regard to its prototype" (175). While this is surely correct and an important reminder, Miller's positioning vis-à-vis the Iconoclast Controversy and in relation to Kitzinger puts her in the role of *defending* the figures she studies against the normative polemical charge of idolatry. As she states in this same section: "I will position [Saint Agnes's] icon as a form of visual hagiographical rhetoric that, like its contemporary literary counterparts, emphasizes the specifically transfigured quality of saintly presence, *thus avoiding idolatry*" (173, emphasis added).

characteristic of iconophile image theory in the eighth and ninth centuries is one frequently overdetermined by a selective, extracted, and florilegal reading of these accounts.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have focused on three short narratives from the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, including one of the most well-known stories among all those studied by scholars of early Byzantium and images, *Cos. Dam. 15*. Interest in this narrative has focused exclusively on the actions of the woman scraping off plaster from the wall painting of the saints and consuming it, events which have been interpreted solely for what they suggest about the development of icon piety. Kitzinger saw idolatry. Peers saw a recognition of the lively state of all matter in antiquity that iconophiles and iconoclasts (and modern scholars!) have been too convinced otherwise to perceive. Miller saw an anticipation of iconophile theology whereby readers were taught to see the saints as animate and present in their icons. All saw the image in *Cos. Dam. 15* as exceptionally animate, a living image *par excellence*, a prime example of the porous boundaries between image and prototype.

My analysis, however, demonstrates that very little in *Cos. Dam. 30, 13, and 15*—aside from the presence of images outside the shrine, in Constantine's pocket, and in the woman's house—justifies the kind of icon-theory obsession with image and prototype that has held scholars' attention. The material images in these accounts are, on the contrary, prototypically lifeless. They do not move, do not speak, do not respond in any way, and their connection to a still living subject is ambiguous at best. But this lifelessness does not mean uselessness, at least not to the author of these accounts, who deploys expectations around the image to different effects. In *Cos. Dam. 30*, the icon to which the man prays functions within the narrative almost

as a stumbling block, creating a humorous scene in which the man mistakes the saints—whom he should recognize from their image—as his usual doctors and tries to instruct them in proper medical treatment. Conversely, in *Cos. Dam.* 13 the material image affirms the characters' recognition of the saints, but even more so serves the author's play between faith by hearing and faith by sight, which continues throughout the narrative even after the icon itself no longer plays a role. In *Cos. Dam.* 15, contrary to prior interpretations, the existence of the wall painting does not appear so much to exult the venerability of images as signal the secondary quality of the woman's house shrine; while dreamers at the cult site receive *kērōtē* from the saints in living, moving, speaking, and touching images, this woman had to take it from the wall.

Across all three, the prized material extension of both the saints and the cult site is not the image but the *kērōtē*, the blessed wax and oil mixture that could be applied to ailments both external and internal. The subordination of image to *kērōtē*, and hence the various ways the author plots the action, develops characters, and uses various material props to develop themes, however, has been difficult to recognize due to the florilegal focus (and total exclusion of *Cos. Dam.* 30) on only the excerpts that seemed relevant to the development of image theory and practices in late ancient Christianity. This consistent decision among scholars has ultimately privileged and even reproduced the normative concerns about images in dispute during the Iconoclast Controversy. The purported attention *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 give to images *per se* has been simply taken for granted.

Building upon the important work of Matthew J. Dal Santo, Philip Booth, and others, therefore, I sought to explicate the theological and cultic concerns faced by cults of the saints in the sixth century rather than yet again relating the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* to the eighth and ninth century deliberations. In the lengthy treatise of Eustratius of Constantinople, *De statu*,

we see that mimetic worries about deception and revelation permeated even debates about the living image of God that was the holy soul, as philosophically inclined rationalists questioned whether the saints or anyone else could provide intercession or receive benefit after the death of the body. Eustratius rejected the notion that manifestations of the saints in dreams and visions would be produced by anything other than the living, active souls of the saints, though he had to concede that these souls themselves, as properly incorporeal and imperceptible, produced paradoxically sensible impressions upon rational souls. In making this argument, he drew an analogy between the soul and painters—common enough in antiquity and beyond—but altered the commonplace such that, rather than the soul itself, the *visions* of the saints encountered by supplicants were images akin to those produced by painters who produce something real and true, but not by nature. I argue that the author of *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15 deployed a similar analogy in the three narratives. The visions are alive and active but notably immaterial and incorporeal, a problem for a cult concerned with healing diseased bodies. So, the author deploys the paradox of living images by portraying the two images at the same time—living and lifeless—one in the incorporeal world of dreams, the other in the waking world of lifeless matter, and connecting them with *kērōtē*.

In this sense, Peers is right in his assessment of *Cos. Dam.* 15 testifying to a smooth, “collaborative, relational materiality,” whereby the paint heals through the “powerful surfeit of matter,” but not quite in the way he claims.¹³⁴ The matter matters in these narratives. Image, *kērōtē*, and body are all plotted to interact, and there are chains of competing yet complementary agencies that range from matter to saint to God in each account. But attention to such elements as

¹³⁴ Peers, “Object Relations,” 971. Cf. Sweeney, “Holy Images, Holy Matter,” 132–33, for whom the scraped plaster demonstrates, somewhat nonsensically, how the icon had to become “more material” before it could be miraculous through sheerly visual means.

the setting, pacing, focalization, theological and cultic contexts shows how the agency of an interested, human author lay behind the purported revelation of “animism” he traces out. What these narratives tell us about images in the Late Antique cult of Cosmas and Damian is simply that they were present both inside the shrine and outside it and that they were perceived by the author of *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15 as potentially both obfuscatory and revelatory. What mattered most was the saints and their *kērōtē*; the image was a sufficiently dynamic cognitive tool that it provided both mimetic problems and mimetic solutions to bring about a desired result.

In the next chapter, I turn from the sixth century back to the late fourth or early fifth to a text in the *Martyrdom of Mark* which has featured in no discussion of images in Late Antiquity and, at first glance, seems to have little place in a project concerned with living images. But the lessons from this chapter regarding the dynamic uses and pairings of lifeless and living images are there on full display.

3. A Spirited Iconomachy:

Epiphany and Conquest in the *Martyrdom of Mark*

In the sixth century, a scribe copying the *Passion of Peter of Alexandria* included an episode that attests to the successful propagation of the cult of Saint Mark. Imprisoned during the Diocletian Persecution, Archbishop Peter of Alexandria hands himself over to execution secretly, lest the faithful who guarded him face consequences for their actions. Peter arranges that he be allowed to visit the tomb of Saint Mark, the first bishop of Alexandria, “in the place called *‘Boukolou’* (εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν καλούμενον τὰ Βουκόλου), which the military tribune (οἱ τριβοῦνοι) allows (§11). Having descended to the tomb (τάφος) of the blessed Mark the apostle, Peter embraces it (περιπτύσσω) and cries out suddenly in tears and prayer to the “honored father and evangelist of the only begotten Son of God and witness of his sufferings” (Πάτερ τίμιε καὶ εὐαγγελιστὰ τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μάρτυς τῶν αὐτοῦ παθημάτων). Peter praises Mark for being the first to teach the “proclamation of the faith” (τὸ κήρυγμα τῆς πίστεως) in Egypt and to earn “the crown of martyrdom” (ὁ τοῦ μαρτυρίου στέφανος), and then asks Mark to pray on his behalf as he prepared for his own race (τὸ στάδιον) (§12). With the prayer complete, Peter gets up from the memorial of Saint Mark and offers a second prayer, this time to Jesus, asking that his own sacrifice suffice to quell the persecution of the faithful. Finally, kissing (ἀσπάζομαι) the tomb of Mark and his episcopal successors, Peter returns to the tribune to await his execution (§13).

While a major goal of the scene is to place Peter firmly in the episcopal line of Saint Mark, the details also underscore how the tomb that holds Mark’s relics functions as an especially effective place for prayer to both the saint and to Jesus. A nearby holy virgin even

receives confirmation that Peter’s prayer was heeded, hearing a voice from heaven that declares Peter will be the “last of the martyrs” (τέλος μαρτύρων). Furthermore, having started and finished with a physical embrace of Mark’s tomb, Peter’s prayer leaves him sanctified: his face becomes “truly like the face of an angel” (ὡσπερ πρόσωπον ἀληθῶς ἀγγέλου) (§13, cf. Acts 6:15). Later, after he is beheaded, his body remains standing for a time (§14) and the faithful place his lifeless body back on the episcopal throne. They “rejoiced because they saw the dead man as though alive and sitting on his throne” (ἐχάρη, τὸν νεκρὸν ὡς ζῶντα βλέποντες ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ καθήμενον) (§16). Proximity and prayer to Mark’s relics provide Peter of Alexandria with revelatory access to Jesus, facilitating the receipt of his prayer and the sanctification and paradoxical lifelikeness of his own inanimate body.¹

Establishing why Mark’s relics might have this kind of effect almost three hundred years after his death, I argue, is one of the main goals of the author of the *Martyrdom of Mark* (*Mart. Mark*).² In the *Martyrdom*, which I will argue dates to the late-fourth or early fifth century

¹ Greek text in Paul Devos, “Une passion grecque inédite de S. Pierre d’Alexandrie et sa traduction par Anastase le Bibliothécaire,” *AnBoll* 83 (1965): 157–87 (esp. 171–72). On the dating of the longest recension, see William Telfer, “St. Peter of Alexandria and Arius,” *AnBoll* 67 (1949), 118–19, as well as Aurelio de Santos Otero, “Later Acts of the Apostles,” in *New Testament Apocrypha* volume II, ed. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McLachlan Wilson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 462. On Peter of Alexandria generally, see Tim Vivian, *St. Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), esp. 64ff. on the *Passio* recensions.

² The text analyzed here as the *Martyrdom of Mark* has frequently been called the *Acts of Mark* in scholarship and my choice merits explanation. No critical edition of the text exists, but, in addition to testimonia in Latin, Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic, the narrative survives with at least 40 Greek witness in two closely related recensions that are represented respectively by the tenth century codex *Par. gr. 881* 310–313v (edited in PG 115, 164–169, attributed incorrectly by Migne to the *Menologion* of Simeon Metaphrastes) and the eleventh-century codex *Vat. gr. 866* 276–277v (in *Acta Sanctorum* 12: April. T. III [rev. ed. Paris: Palmé, 1863–1940], XXXVII–XLVII). The primary differences between these recensions are an extended introduction and the insertion near the end of a physiognomic description of Mark’s appearance, both in *Vat. gr. 866*, though several others will be discussed in notes throughout the chapter. The two recensions are listed by Halkin under the name *Passio* (BHG 1036 and 1035); intriguingly, *Vat. gr. 1660*, dated to 916, likely predates both the edited manuscripts and includes the physiognomic description while otherwise following the recension exemplified by *Par. gr. 881*; catalogued by Halkin as 1038f.

Halkin’s categorization of the narrative as *Passio* is consistent with title of the work generally found in manuscripts as μαρτύριον (with some variation of the genitive to follow, e.g., μαρτύριον τοῦ ἁγίου ἀποστόλου καὶ εὐαγγελιστοῦ Μάρκου Ἀλεξανδρείας in *Par. gr. 881* but μαρτύριον τοῦ ἁγίου Μάρκου τοῦ εὐαγγελιστοῦ in *Vat. Gr. 866*). Nevertheless, in his important study R.A. Lipsius, “Die Acten des Markus” in *Die Apokryphen*

aftermath of the destruction of the Serapeum, Mark is promised by an angel that his bodily remains—or relics (τὰ λείψανα)—will not perish (§8) and the local Christians inter his body as the first “treasure” (κειμήλιον) in Alexandria (§10). However, as we saw in chapter 1 with the dispute between Jerome and Vigilantius, and again in different circumstances with debates over the postmortem soul in chapter 2, the efficacy and holiness of relics was not an entirely uncontroversial contention. Jerome, for instance, had conceded that relic veneration bore superficial similarities to idol worship but insisted—although both statues and the body parts of dead human being were ostensibly lifeless, located on the material side of the corporeal/spiritual gulf—that relics were nevertheless superior to idols because the bodies of the saints were only

Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden vol. II.2 (Leipzig, 1887; reprint Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1976), 321–53, refers to this text as “Die Acten des Markus” (329ff), an attribution which appears to have stuck, as the “*Acts of Mark*” are discussed in Birger A. Pearson, “Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Some Observations,” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. Birger A. Pearson and James Goehring, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 137–145 and in Allen Dwight Callahan, “The ‘Acts of Saint Mark’: An introduction and commentary” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1992), as well as his translation with notes of *Vat. Gr. 866* (Allen Dwight Callahan, “The *Acts of Saint Mark*: An Introduction and Translation,” *Coptic Church Review* 14:1 [Spring 1993], 3–10), where he calls it the “so-called *Acts of Mark*” (3). Most others have followed suit.

However, in 1969 François Halkin published an a transcription of a different, much longer text found in codex *Athonensis Stauroinicetas 18* (13th c) with the incipit Πράξεις καὶ θαύματα καὶ μαρτύριον τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ πανευφήμου ἀποστόλου καὶ ἐναγγελιστοῦ Μαρκοῦ (“Actes inédits de saint Marc,” *AnBoll* 87 [1969]: 343–71), which was included in later editions of the BHG under 1036m, *Acta et miracula* (see *Novum auctarium bibliothecae hagiographicae Graecae*, Subsidia Hagiographica 65 [Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1984], 135). Comparison between the μαρτύριον and the πράξεις indicates that the longer text bears a literary relationship to the shorter, at places expanding and filling in gaps in the shorter account, but the two texts are too different to consider them different recensions of the same text. As a result, Aurelio de Santos Otero listed the shorter text under “*Martyrium Marci*” (in *New Testament Apocrypha* vol. II, eds. Hennecke and Schneemelcher, 461–64) and the longer under “*Acta Marci*” (464–65). This choice is followed by Callahan and François Bovon in their introduction and translation, “Martyre de Marc l’évangéliste,” in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* II, ed. Pierre Geoltrain and Jean-Daniel Kaestli (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 569–86, who work with *Par. gr. 881* because “le texte paraît plus ancien et généralement plus proche de l’original” (573), as well as by Tobias Nicklas in a forthcoming introduction and translation of *Mart. Mark* for Tony Burke’s *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Texts* volume III, which follows *Vat. gr. 866* (my thanks to Tony Burke and Tobias Nicklas for allowing me to see this in advance and offer suggestions) and Tobias Nicklas, “The Martyrdom of Mark in Late Antique Alexandria,” in *Alexandria*, eds. Benjamin Schliesser, Jan Rüggenier, Thomas J. Krause, and Jörg Frey, WUNT 460 (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 519–42. Due to the convention of the manuscript incipits, I will follow the recent turn to referring to this text (BHG 1035/1036) as the *Martyrdom of Mark* (*Mart. Mark*) to differentiate it from the longer, *Acts of Mark* in Halkin, “Actes inédits.” When citing from scholarship that refers to the text as the *Acts of Mark*, I will clarify using editorial brackets (e.g., The *Acts [Martyrdom] of Mark*).

sleeping and thus their souls could both intercede with God in heaven and act through their bodies on earth.

But the ontological similarity between relics and idols was nevertheless potent, and the tension it created would complicate a second major goal of the author of *Mart. Mark*: to claim cultural and religious supremacy for Christians over and against the worshippers of idols. One way the author achieved this was to create a verbal portrait of Mark's soul by depicting his deeds for commemoration and his virtues for imitation (perhaps especially by bishops like Peter of Alexandria, above). By describing how Mark, a Christian saint, apostle, and evangelist (called variously in *Mart. Mark* ὁ ἅγιος Μάρκος, ὁ μακάριος Μάρκος, ὁ ἀπόστολος, ὁ εὐαγγελιστής), went obediently to Cyrene, the Pentapolis, and Alexandria to preach, perform miracles, and topple idols, how he converted Ananias³ and established successors and a clergy, and how he was captured, dragged around Alexandria, and killed, all while giving thanks to God, the author sought to provide a living memorial superior to any image or monument.⁴

But the depiction of Mark's deeds in and of itself does little to explain why his inanimate body would retain and transmit Mark's holy power. How, I ask in this chapter, does the author of the *Martyrdom* reconcile the two goals of investing a body's lifeless remains with lasting power and claiming distinction from the inanimate idols of the surrounding culture? The argumentative commonplaces this author enlists bear some similarity to the argument of Jerome, but the narrative strategy they enlist is significantly different. On the one hand, as I will demonstrate in detail below, the author depicts Mark as iconic in his deeds, a (once) living image of Jesus, set

³ According to Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* II.16 and II.24, Mark was the first bishop of Alexandria, and his successor was a certain Annianus (Ἀννιανός), but *Mart. Mark* records his name as Ananias (Ἀνανίας). Otero, "Later Acts," 462 considers this to be a "confusion." I write Ananias throughout.

⁴ See the sources and discussion on these literary images above, pp. 33–6, especially Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 34–93.

up in contrast to the idols of the pagans. The opposition between the saint and the idols was a basic one in late ancient hagiography and, in this regard, *Mart. Mark* is fairly conventional. On the other hand, in order to heighten the claim of cultural supremacy at work in the opposition between Mark and the idols, I argue that the author makes Mark the living image more and more image-like so that the apostle is not only the vanquisher of idols but awfully close to one himself. Nowhere is this clearer than in the implicit comparison to the famous statue of Serapis in Alexandria, which Christian historiographers vehemently insisted had no relationship to the divine on account of its material nature. The author thereby calls attention to the very materiality of Mark's dead body, attributing to his relics an ambiguous animacy that relies on the same logic of representation refused in the case of idols, but which is perceivable in the knowledge that Mark will nonetheless triumph over Serapis whose worshippers had killed him. In fashioning this multi-temporal plot, therefore, the author of *Mart. Mark* discloses an ongoing cultural negotiation over the power of images and suggests a view, despite contrary claims, that dead matter could localize the Christian God.⁵

The Martyr against the Idols

From the very start, the author of *Mart. Mark* advances their goal of claiming cultural supremacy by framing the narrative in strongly oppositional terms, presenting the actions of the

⁵ Since there is no critical edition, I have based my analysis on the edition of *Par. gr. 881* published by Migne in PG 115, 164–69, with recourse to review of the manuscript through scans made by the BNF when necessary, for two primary reasons. First, I regard it as the older recension and more likely to reflect the inaugural composition of *Mart. Mark*. Second, when I composed this chapter, the two accessible English translations of *Mart. Mark* that I knew—Callahan's published translation and the forthcoming translation and introduction in MNTA 3, both focused on *Vat. gr. 866*; Nicklas's translation of *Par. gr. 881* in "The Martyrdom of Mark," 537–42 was not published nor publicized for more than a year after I had completed my analysis in this chapter. Accordingly, I thought that close analysis of *Par. gr. 881*, the then less-studied recension, would make a bigger contribution. However, now that Nicklas's 2021 translation and study of have been published, comparison between my own interpretations and his can proceed on even ground as all translations in this chapter are mine unless otherwise noted.

narrative as those of “us” against “them.” After Mark is commissioned to Libya and Egypt, which were under the same episcopal administration after the Council of Nicaea, the narrator explains why he was sent to these places specifically: “This entire land (πᾶσα ἡ γῆ) was a people who were uncircumcised in heart and idolaters (εἰδωλολάτραι), who were full of every impurity (πάσης ἀκαθαρσίας) and who revered unclean spirits (πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων).” The proclivities of this people even shaped the landscape: “Throughout every house, street, and district they built sacred precincts and groves for themselves (σηκοὺς καὶ τεμένη κατεσκευάζοντο); in their midst were the astrological arts and sorceries [were practiced], and there was every wakeful—rather, demonic—power (ἀποτελέσματά τε, καὶ γοητεῖαι, καὶ πᾶσα δύναμις ἐγρηγορητικὴ μᾶλλον δὲ δαιμονικὴ ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς),⁶ which Christ abolished and destroyed during his sojourn” (ἦν ἐπιδημήσας...κατέλυσε καὶ ἀπόλεσεν)” (§1). Although Christ has put down the demonic, his representative Mark is sent in to finish the job.

Once Mark arrives in Cyrene, he finds immediate success and demonstrates the superiority of his deity. “Many came to believe through him in *our* Lord Jesus Christ (τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν) and threw *their* idols (τὰ εἰδῶλα αὐτῶν) on the ground” (§2). Similarly, after Mark goes to Alexandria, the “men of the city” (οἱ ἄνδρες τῆς πόλεως) seek to kill Mark on the grounds that “he was overturning the sacrifices of the gods and hindering their

⁶ It is difficult to be sure of the precise sense of this clause. I have so far been unable to find other attestation of the adjective ἐγρηγορητικός, but it must be related to the verbs ἐγείρω or γρηγορέω, hence my choice of “wakeful.” Callahan, “Acts of Mark (Dissertation),” 41 translates this adjective as “angelic,” but provides no comment or justification for doing so. As to the connection of this clause to the next, Migne places a period after ἐγρηγορητικὴ, but this leaves a series of nominative nouns without a verb; a survey of *Par. gr. 881*, *Vat. gr. 1660*, and *Par. gr. 1534* shows punctuation after αὐτοῖς, as expected, but markings after ἐγρηγορητικὴ are unclear. The recension represented by *Vat. gr. 866* reads differently here: καὶ πᾶσα δύναμις δαιμονιώδης ἐγρηγορή (“and every demonic power stirred”) τὲ καὶ ἦν παρ’ αὐτοῖς (“and was with them”), which may be an attempt to make sense of a difficult sentence. The Latin translation provided by Migne attempts to clarify as well, adding a verb: *siderum etiam eventa et magicæ artes, omnisque daemonum facultas apud eos exercebatur...* (moreover, the fortunes of the stars and the magical arts, and every skill of the demons was practiced among them”). In any case, the passage weaves together idol worship, magical practices, and demons in one land and people to whom Mark is sent.

cultic devotions” (καὶ ἀνατρέπει τὰς τῶν θεῶν θυσίας, καὶ κωλύει αὐτῶν τὰς θρησκείας) and was responsible for a “crowd of believers” (ὄχλος τῶν πιστευόντων) (§5). Mark’s missionary activity is thereby framed as a competition. In the first instance, Mark plays offense, racking up converts to Christ; in the second, he plays defense, stymying the religious practices of the Alexandrians. In both cases, the increase in believers means a victory over the idol worshippers. Mark then returns to Cyrene for two years, but comes again to Alexandria to find that the brothers and sisters have now “built themselves a church in the area called Boukolos by the sea, under the cliffs” (ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομήσαντες ἑαυτοῖς ἐν τοῖς καλουμένοις Βουκόλοις τοῖς παραθαλασσίοις ὑποκάτω κρημνῶν) (§5). As they increased in number, grace, and knowledge of God, so too did they increase in derision for the idols and those who worshipped them. “The Christians were multiplying (ἐπληθύνοντο), laughing at the idols (κατεγέλων τῶν εἰδώλων) and mocking the pagans (ἐξεμυκτήριζον τοὺς Ἑλληνας)” (§6).⁷ For their part, the pagans (οἱ Ἑλληνας) increase only in jealousy (ζήλου) when hear of Mark’s healing miracles; they are powerless. They try to “lay hold of him” (αὐτὸν πιᾶσαι), but “failed to find him” (οὐκ ἠύρισκεν αὐτὸν); they “were gnashing their teeth” at him (ἔβρυχον τοὺς ὀδόντας); they can only complain during “the processions of their idols” (κωμασῖαι τῶν εἰδώλων) that “the damages of the magician are many!” (πολλὰ βία τοῦ μάγου) (§6).⁸ To this point, the competition is rather one sided.

⁷ I translate οἱ Ἑλληνας as pagans throughout, *pace* Nicklas, “The Martyrdom of Mark,” who translates as “Greeks.” While the term does not by any means capture the religious diversity of late antique society, part of the rhetoric of this narrative involves generalizing about cultural and religious others, specifically not Christian and not Jewish (Jews are notably absent from this account as Nicklas, “The Martyrdom of Mark,” 526, also observes). As evidence that the author of *Mart. Mark* categorizes religious others generically under the ethnic marker of *Hellenes*, see Ananias’ prior religious education in both Homer and the teachings of the Egyptians in §4 (see below for discussion). The lack of distinction between Greek and Egyptian cultic activity perhaps reflects particularly well the only deity besides Jesus named in *Mart. Mark*, the syncretic Greco-Egyptian god, Serapis, who was named after Osiris and the Apis bull, but represents a slew of Greek deities including Zeus, Dionysus, Hades, and Asclepius.

⁸ The charge that Mark is at fault for “damages” (βία) most immediately refers to violence against the idols that were mocked by the Christians earlier in the section and which are presumably being carried in the κωμασῖαι. According to Ari Z. Bryen, *Violence in Roman Egypt: A Study in Legal Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 55, βία, distinct from an act of ὕβρις, “always indicates harm not to full people but to

The tables appear to turn, however, in the second half of *Mart. Mark*, as the stage is set for direct conflict: “It happened that for *our* blessed Festival of the Pascha (τὴν μακαρίαν ἡμῶν ἑορτὴν τοῦ Πάσχα), the Holy Sunday fell on 26 Pharmouthi, 8 Kalends of May—that is, on April 24—which was also *their* Procession of Serapis” (αὐτῶν Σεραπικὴ Κωμασία). Taking advantage of this coincidence, the pagans “capture Mark while he was praying the Divine Anaphora” (κατέλαβον αὐτὸν τὰς εὐχὰς τῆς θεϊκῆς ἀναφορᾶς ποιοῦμενον) and proceed to throw a rope around his neck, dragging him around the city and chanting “We are dragging the buffalo to Boukolos!” (σύρομεν τὸν βούβαλον εἰς τὰ βουκόλου) (§7).⁹ They throw Mark in prison, where

inanimate objects, financial interests, and slaves,” the last of whom counted as property. For the importance of this distinction, see below, pp. 176–77, where I highlight the characterization of Mark as image and slave.

⁹ The significance of this chant is obscure, both in terms of the animal chosen (the water buffalo) and whether τὰ βουκόλου has any import in addition to being the location of the Christian church built earlier in the narrative (§5), presumably where Mark was also captured. ὁ βουκόλος most commonly refers generically to a “herdsman” but, at least during Ptolemaic times, attendants to Oserapis were apparently called βουκόλοι (see the recounting of a dispute between ὁ βουκόλος τοῦ Ὄσεραπι and the servants in charge of libations to Asclepius in UPZ 57 [= *Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit (altere Funde)* vol. I: Papyrus aus Unterägypten, ed. Ulrich Wilcken (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977), 284, dated to the mid-second century BCE]). In part on this basis, it has been suggested (e.g. by Callahan, “The *Acts of Mark*: Tradition, Transmission, and Translation of the Arabic Version,” in *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: Harvard Divinity School Studies*, ed. François Bovon, Ann Graham Brock, and Christopher R. Matthews [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999], 76–77 and Pearson, “Earliest Christianity,” 153 n. 122) that the name τὰ βουκόλου indicates some allusion to the Serapis cult, especially granting the bucolic wordplay with βούβαλος, which Callahan connects to grazing and the Apis cult. Lipsius, “Markus,” 334 translates the chant in this direction—“Lasst uns den Ochsen im Stalle schleppen”—but without comment on religious significance, evidently concluding that the choice of animal was based on the place name τὰ βουκόλου (334 n. 1 simply glosses βούβαλος, βουκόλος, and τὰ βουκόλου as Büffel, Rinderhirt, and der Stall). If this is correct, it would seem that in *Mart. Mark*, the apostle is led like the Apis Bull to slaughter, making his martyrdom an even more highly charged, ironic event.

Unfortunately, in my view, the evidence is too tenuous to permit substantive conclusions regarding βούβαλος or τὰ βουκόλου in the chant. For an explicit connection to the Apis bull, one would expect μόσχος or βοῦς (see, e.g. Strabo, *Geography* 17.1.31), which works almost as alliteratively as βούβαλος and which does not lead to any animal confusion, since the (water) buffalo was certainly considered its own species: Philo, *Special Laws* 18, lists both the calf (μόσχος) and the buffalo (βούβαλος), as well as the antelope (ὄρυξ) gazelle (δορκάς), and deer (ἔλαφος) among the animals suitable to eat. Yet more perplexing, two later Coptic sources, likely influenced by *Mart. Mark*, translate βούβαλος as ⲡⲱⲱ, which predominantly refers to the hartebeest antelope, perhaps confusing βούβαλος for βούβαλις, an alternative Greek lexeme for antelope (on ⲡⲱⲱ see Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 605; cf. κελλοχ on 104, Crum’s entry glossed as “buffalo”). The first source, a homiletic encomium to Mark, repeats the declaration of the Serapis worshippers but without the alliteration: ⲥϮⲗⲁ ⲡⲱⲱⲉ ⲉ ⲡⲓⲙⲁ ⲛ̀ⲛ̀ⲃⲟⲩⲕⲟⲗⲟⲥ (“Drag the antelope to the place of the herdsman [Boukolos]”). The second, describing a church, states that it is located in ⲧⲁ ⲃⲟⲩⲕⲟⲗⲟⲱ ⲉⲧⲉⲡⲓⲙⲁ ⲛ̀ⲛ̀ⲡⲱⲱⲉ ⲡⲉ (“The regions of Boukolos, which is ‘the place of the antelope’”). Both are listed in Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 605 and in Callahan, “*Acts of Mark*, (Arabic),” 76 n. 37, though without citation. Perhaps grasping at this interpretation of the place name, the translator of the Ethiopic *Mart. Mark* adds, “They called him *bibalos*, meaning antelope, because his face was long.” (Noted in Nicklas’ forthcoming translation in MNTA 3; on the second Ethiopic version, see Getatchew Haile, “A New Version of the *Acts of Mark*.” *AnBoll* 99 [1981]: 117–

he receives two visions: first of the angel who promises that Mark's relics (τὰ λείψανα) will be preserved; and second of Christ himself, who departs with a blessing, "Peace to you, *our* Mark, *my* evangelist" (Ερήνη [*sic*] σοι, ἡμέτερε Μάρκε, εὐαγγελιστά μου) (§8), again heightening the opposition between the Christians and Pagans. On the following day, the multitude of the city again drags Mark by the neck, chanting the same refrain, until Mark repeats Jesus's words, "Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit" (Εἰς χεῖράς σου, Κύριε, παρατίθημι τὸ πνεῦμά μου) and dies (§9).¹⁰ In killing Mark, the worshippers of the idols seem to have struck a winning blow.

With Mark dead, the "impious Pagans (δυσσεβεῖς Ἕλληνας)" look to capitalize on their victory and thus attempt to burn his remains "in the place called *Angeloī*" (εἰς τοὺς καλουμένους ἀγγέλους). They are prevented, however, by a sudden storm, which forces most of them to give up the body and flee, though some still remain to mock the Christians. "They were saying that *their* thrice-Blessed Serapis had made a visit to the man for his birthday" (ἔλεγον ὡς ὅτι ὁ τρισμακάριος Σέραπις αὐτῶν τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐποιήσατο διὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ γενέθλιον) (§9). Subsequently, "pious men" (ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς) gather Mark's body-relic, and deposit (ἀποτίθεσθαι) it in the eastern part (ἀνατολικόν μέρος) of the city "as the first treasure in Alexandria" (ὡς πρῶτον κειμήλιον ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ). The author concludes with one final statement of cultural identity, listing several dates to commemorate Mark's death according to the Egyptian, Roman, and Hebrew calendars, and then, "According to *us*, the Christians, [Mark

34.) Further commentary on the buffalo in Callahan, "Acts of Mark (Dissertation)," 84–5. For my own interpretation of Mark's martyrdom in connection to Egyptian cult activity, see below.

¹⁰ Cf. Jesus in Luke 23:46 "commending" his spirit (εἰς χεῖράς σου παρατίθεμαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου), which in turn recalls Ps 31:6. Mark's actual death in *Mart. Mark* (καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν παρέδωκε τὸ πνεῦμα), however, alludes to John 19:30 (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα). The death of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark is imitated by way of inversion in *Mart. Mark*, as Mark gives thanks to Jesus "because you did not forsake me" (ὅτι οὐκ ἐγκατέλιπές με; cf. Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34) (§8). Ironically, Mark's death lease resembles that of Jesus as described in the Gospel of Mark 15:37, in which Jesus "expires" (ἐξέπνευσεν). In addition, as Nicklas, "The Martyrdom of Mark," 522 nicely observes, "the text paradoxically depicts Mark as a post-Easter witness of the pre-Easter Jesus."

went to death's sleep] during the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ" (κατὰ δὲ ἡμᾶς τοῦς Χριστιανούς βασιλεύοντος τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) (§10). Though Mark has died, for the author of *Mart. Mark*, the saint has demonstrated—and through this textual commemoration will continue to demonstrate—the superiority of Christianity over the idols, of Christians against the pagans.

Indeed, the success of the narrative depends on Mark still yet triumphing over his foes, an element of the narrative which complements a victory-in-death theology of martyrdom developed throughout. When Mark receives his revelation to go to Alexandria, for instance, the author describes how “he strode eagerly, like a noble athlete into the wrestling pit” (ὡς γενναῖος ἀθλητῆς ἐπὶ τὸ σκάμμα προθύμως ἐβάδιζε) (§2), deploying a common martyrological metaphor of the saint in pursuit of a crown.¹¹ Accordingly, Mark's struggle is ultimately a violent one. As the Pagans drag him around the city, Mark's “flesh was falling to the ground and the rocks were stained with his blood” (ἦσαν αἱ σάρκες αὐτοῦ πίπτουσαι εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ αἱ πέτραι ἐμολύνοντο τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ) (§7). In addition to underscoring the suffering of the martyr, then, the author portrays Mark as practically embodying Tertullian's famous declaration that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.¹² Sent to Alexandria, a place full of idols and the demonic (§1), “to sow the good seed of God” (τὸ καλὸν σπέρμα τοῦ Θεοῦ κατασπεῖραι) (§2),¹³ Mark's own flesh and blood are then planted and his body buried in the land. Even in the defeat of death,

¹¹ There is no mention of a “crown” for Mark, but for similar athletic metaphors, see Callahan, “Acts of Mark (Dissertation),” 51–53, 55 and his brief discussion of early Christian examples (e.g. *Martyrs of Lyon* 17, 19, 24; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 18). Callahan also lists several (deutero-)Pauline examples, (1 Cor 2:24; Phil 3:14; Eph 6:12), but the first does not contain an athletic metaphor (perhaps a typo for 9:24–7) and the third is unclear. In any case, we should certainly add 2 Tim 4:7 to the list of examples.

¹² Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 50.13: “We are made more numerous as often as we are mowed down by you; the blood of Christians is seed (*Plures effimur quotiens metimur a vobis; semen est sanguis Christianorum*; text of E. Dekkers as printed in *Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina* [Turnhout: Brepols, 1954], 1.171). On this powerful but somewhat ambiguous passage, see Blake Leyerle, “Blood is Seed,” *Journal of Religion* 81:1 (Jan 2001): 26–48.

¹³ *Vat. gr. 866* reads here τὸ καλὸν σπέρμα τοῦ λόγου, which renders clearer the probable reference to the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1–9, 13–20).

then, the author of the *Martyrdom* portrays Mark as victorious over his religious rivals, fitting for a text that Stephen Davis has described as a “an attempt to explain...the [Egyptian] church’s identity as a community founded on the blood of the martyrs.”¹⁴ The author shows no ambivalence concerning the claim to cultural superiority on the part of Christians.

Mark the Living Image Who Dies

Yet, as highlighted above, there is an inherent tension in the act of comparing a dead saint to idols. Sure, Mark may have been superior in his actions and death, but what about later, long after his body has ceased to live? The author of the *Martyrdom* seeks to make Mark’s physical body holy by depicting Mark as a living image of Christ and portraying him in life as a multi-bodied, epiphanic medium.¹⁵ Building on an understanding of martyrs as imitators of Christ,¹⁶ the author thereby also amplifies the conflict between Mark and the idols he overthrows, staging it as a battle of images between the Christians and pagans of the city and making the case for Mark’s relics at the center of Alexandrian cultic activity.

In addition to his words at death, which repeat those of Jesus on the cross, the narrator consciously characterizes Mark as an imitator of and medium for Christ by his actions and words. Mark’s miracles, for instance, consciously echo those of Jesus. He heals the sick (ἀσθενοῦντας ἐθεράπευσε), cleanses lepers (λεπρούς ἐκαθάρισε), and casts out difficult spirits (πνεύματα χαλεπὰ ἐξέβαλε) (§2); he heals the sick and cleanses lepers again, he preaches the gospel to the deaf (κωφοῖς εὐηγγελίζετο) and gives sight to the blind (τυφλοῖς πολλοῖς ἐχαρίσατο

¹⁴ Stephen Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and its Leadership in Late Antiquity* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2004), 12.

¹⁵ On the term “epiphanic medium,” see Margaret M. Mitchell, “Epiphanic Evolutions in Earliest Christianity,” now in *Paul and the Emergence of Christian Textuality*, 242, discussed below.

¹⁶ Candida Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

τὸ βλέπειν) (§6).¹⁷ The narrator develops this pattern of Christ-imitation still further during the only extended miracle story depicted in the narrative. As Mark enters Alexandria, his sandal breaks and he seeks out a cobbler, who becomes his first convert, Ananias. While fixing the footwear, Ananias manages to strike (πλήσσω) his left hand and cry out “God is One” (Εἷς Θεός), an expression applied commonly across the spectrum of major divinities in Late Antiquity, including Serapis.¹⁸ Mark, however, simply laughs and remarks that “the Lord has made my way prosperous” (Εὐώδωσε Κύριος τὴν ὁδόν μου), indicating that this shared proclamation may present another claim to Christian superiority in a crowded religious landscape.¹⁹ The proof of preeminence follows immediately, in the form of a healing performed in clear imitation of Jesus in John 9:1-7, the healing of the man born blind. “[Mark] spat on the ground, made mud from the spit, and smeared the man’s hand” (Καὶ πτύσας χαμαὶ, ἐποίησεν πηλὸν ἐκ τοῦ πτύσματος καὶ ἐπέχρισε τὴν χεῖρα τοῦ ἀνδρός), before issuing a command to the hand, “In the name of Jesus Christ, the son of the always living God, be healthy!” (Ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος εἰς τοῦ αἰῶνα, Ἰσθι ὑγιής) (§3).²⁰

Similar to the account in John, which revolves around Jesus’s identity and the works of God

¹⁷ Cf. Matthew 11:5 and Luke 7:22.

¹⁸ Erik Peterson has documented this proclamation in *HEIS THEOS: Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche, und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur antiken „Ein-Gott“-Akklamation*, reprinted with Addenda and Corrigenda by Christoph Marksches, Henrik Hildebrandt, and Barbara Nichtweiß, *Ausgewählte Schriften* 8 (Würzburg: Echter, 2012), especially 227–241, 564–567 on Serapis.

¹⁹ Compare the Coptic *Life of Severus* by Zacharia of Mytilene, written in 515 CE, which features the eponymous Monk declaring “*Heis Theos*” upon discovery of a cache of images in a temple of Isis. The narrator explains that the statement here is apotropaic: “meant ‘to extirpate the error of polytheism’” (cited and discussed in David Frankfurter, “Iconoclasm and Christianization in Late Antique Egypt: Christian Treatments of Space and Image” in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*, ed. Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter [Leiden: Brill, 2008], 144).

²⁰ Cf. John 9:6 “Having said these things, [Jesus] spit on the ground and made mud from the spit and smeared the mud on his eyes” (ταῦτα εἰπὼν ἔπτυσεν χαμαὶ καὶ ἐποίησεν πηλὸν ἐκ τοῦ πτύσματος καὶ ἐπέχρισεν αὐτοῦ τὸν πηλὸν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς). In both the gospel passage and in *Mart. Mark*, the verb for “smear” (ἐπιχρίω) is probably a double-entendre, as it also means “anoint.” Moreover, it is likely that by invoking the healing of the man born blind, the author of *Mart. Mark* has Mark cure Ananias’ spiritual blindness as well, or at least begins the process to be concluded later. For other connections between sight and touch in the narrative, compare Mark’s vision of the angel in §8, who “grabs hold of him” (ἦψατο αὐτοῦ) but is described visually (“After the blessed Mark beheld this vision...” [Ταύτην τὴν ὄπτασιν θεασάμενος ὁ μακάριος Μαρκος...]).

being revealed (φανερῶ) in the man born blind (John 9:3), Mark here reveals himself as prototypically Christ-like in the specific character of his miracle, which in turn discloses divine power through the healing of Ananias.

The narrator then intertwines Mark's iconic actions with visual appearance. After Ananias' hand is healed, he examines (ιστορέω) Mark's power and activity as well as his "ascetic garb (τὸ ἀσκητικὸν σχῆμα)," finally deciding from what he sees to invite Mark for dinner (§3). Later in the narrative, when Mark receives his vision in prison, Jesus "was present with him in the garb (τῷ σχήματι) he had when he was with his disciples (ὃ ἦν μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ) and in the form (οἷα μορφῆ) he had before his passion and burial" (ἦν πρὸ τοῦ παθεῖν αὐτὸν καὶ ταφῆναι) (§8).²¹ While the reader does not receive a description of how Jesus looked, these hints are an indication that visual encounter can provide valuable and revelatory information. Like Jesus, Mark's appearance plays a powerful role in identifying him as powerful and trustworthy.²²

The author strengthens the presentation of Mark as an iconic medium for Jesus just a few lines later. As Mark and Ananias eat together, Ananias continues his inquiry, asking "Father, what shall I call you (Πάτερ, τί ἄρα, καλῶ σε), who are you (τίς εἶ), and what is the source of this powerful word that is in you?" (πόθεν ὁ λόγος οὗτος ὁ δυνατὸς ἐν σοί;). In reply to all three questions, Mark exclaims, "I am a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God" (Ἐγὼ δοῦλός

²¹ On σχῆμα as "garb" or dress, see LSJ A.4.b; Lampe s.v. σχῆμα 8, often with reference to a monk's habit. Something more generic, like "appearance" is possible for σχῆμα, but the adjective "ascetic" in the case of Mark and the complementary lexeme μορφή in the case of Jesus make it likely to indicate something more specific than appearance. Jesus' clothing changes between the time with his disciples and his passion and burial; his appearance and human form do not.

²² This is evident both within *Mart. Mark* itself and, given the late antique context, from the dynamics of episcopal power and authority. See Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), especially 100-153, "Ascetic Authority" (e.g., p. 102: "The ascetic 'look' was both outward manifestation and advertisement of personal holiness").

εἶμι τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ).²³ Ananias responds dejectedly, “I wish I could see him” (Ἐβουλόμην αὐτὸν ἰδεῖν).²⁴ Rather than chastise Ananias for his desire to see, as Jesus does to Thomas in John 20:29, for instance, Mark—identified here for the only time in the narrative as μάρτυς—exclaims in return, “I am showing him to you!” (Ἐγὼ σοι αὐτὸν δεικνύω) (§4). Mark’s declaration functions as a double-entendre, pointing simultaneously to future action, as well as to the present moment, identifying his soon-to-be-martyred body as a revelatory medium for Jesus.²⁵ Through visual witness of Mark the living image, the author argues, one encounters Jesus.

At the same time, the author of *Mart. Mark* plots the scene so that Mark’s epiphanic body extends beyond his physical form as well. In addition to the growing body of Christian converts who overthrow the idols, as well as to Mark’s himself, the author portrays Mark’s texts—his own gospel as well as the broader corpus of Old and New Testaments texts—as a third body of revelatory wisdom. Near the opening of the narrative, when Mark arrives in Cyrene, the people convert, receive illumination, and are baptized, due not only to Mark’s miracles, but also because “The inspired evangelist...expounded his account of the beginning of Christ” (τοῦ θεπεσίου εὐαγγελιστοῦ...λαλήσαντος αὐτοῦ τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον) (§2). This account, which alludes to the Gospel of Mark, reveals the deity so that the listeners convert. With the effect of Christian texts established, the author returns to this dynamic during the dinner scene. After Mark proclaims to Ananias that he is showing him Jesus, pointing foremost to his own body, he

²³ For this apostolic (especially Pauline) moniker, compare Romans 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Revelation 1:1, et passim. Cf. *Mart. Mark* 8, where Mark is addressed by the angel as “Mark, the slave of God” (Ὁ δοῦλος τοῦ Θεοῦ Μάρκος).

²⁴ Smyth observes that ἐβουλόμην with an infinitive can express an unattainable wish, which suggests that here in *Mart. Mark* Ananias does not think his desire to see Jesus will be fulfilled. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 402 §1782.

²⁵ On the present tense for future action, see Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 421 §1879. The passage evokes John 14:8–9, where Philip asks Jesus to “show us the father” (δεῖψον ἡμῖν τὸν πατέρα) and Jesus replies, after some chiding, that “he who has seen me has seen the father” (ὁ ἑώρακώς ἐμὲ ἑώρακεν τὸν πατέρα).

then directs Ananias to the biblical texts. First, “Saint Mark began to recount *the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God* (ἤρξατο ὁ ἅγιος Μάρκος ἀρχὴν ποιεῖσθαι τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ), *Son of Abraham*” (Υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ), thus combining the opening of the Gospel of Mark with the first verse of Gospel of Matthew. He continues “to show him what the prophets said about Jesus” (δεικνύειν αὐτῷ τὰ περὶ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ). Ananias suddenly interrupts, admitting that he has “never before heard these scriptures of which you speak (ἐγὼ γραφὰς ἅσπερ σὺ λέγεις οὐδέποτε ἤκουσα), but instead the Iliad and the Odyssey, and all the things that the children of the Egyptians learn (ἀλλ’ Ἰλίαδα [sic] καὶ Ὀδυσσεΐαδα, καὶ ὅσα σοφίζονται οἱ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων παῖδες).” Mark responds by continuing to reveal Christ through text, first “preaching the Gospel of Christ to Ananias” (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι αὐτῷ τὸν Χριστόν) and then “showing him that *the wisdom of this world is foolishness next to God*” (δεικνύειν αὐτῷ ὅτι ἡ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου μωρία παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ ἐστίν) (§4), bringing in the Pauline corpus through a direct citation of 1 Corinthians 3:19. Through the encounter with Mark’s power, his epiphanic body, and his extended textual corpus, Ananias and his household join the body of believers. The superiority of Christianity is once again revealed through Mark.

The extension of Mark’s body into a textual corpus that faces off against “pagan” literature in bibliomachy enables the reader better to connect Mark’s physical body to his discursive embodiment in the *Mart. Mark* itself. In this regard, the ways that Mark as martyr, apostle, and evangelist reveals Christ can be experienced long after Mark’s death, with the narrative working to endow his relics with meaning. The author of the *Mart. Mark* therefore characterizes Mark in ways that are strikingly similar to how Paul the Apostle portrays himself in his letters as an epiphanic envoy for Christ. As has been argued by Margaret M. Mitchell, Paul saw himself—his letters, his physical presence, and his marked, suffering body—as a “one-man,

multi-media presentation of the gospel of Christ-crucified. The message (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) and the messenger (Paul the ἀπόστολος) were indivisibly united in re-presenting to the audience an aural-visual icon of Christ crucified, which is the gospel.”²⁶ A similar logic adheres in *Mart. Mark*. Mark’s body and appearance, the Christian scriptures, his death, and the text that memorializes them all serve as images through which Jesus can be seen and known, and they locate divine presence simultaneously in a reproducible text and in Mark’s unique epiphanic body. By portraying Mark as a living image of Christ, “the Son of the living God” (τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος) (§3), and by extending his body to the texts that will outlast and out-circulate his living body, the author of *Mart. Mark* also invests a kind of life into the body that remains by showing that it prevails even after Mark’s physical death.

Paradoxically, though, the author amplifies the effect of this investment by linking the image and martyr roles to the materiality that characterizes his relics. Although the author consistently draws a stark division between Mark and the Christians on one side, Pagans and the idols on the other, the depiction of Mark’s death surprisingly doubles down on the latent similarities between Mark’s body and the idols rather than once again raising the differences. In short, the author crafts Mark as a complex image, thereby providing the material basis for epiphanic representation of Jesus precisely in the dead matter of his martyred body. And the author does so through the supple array of meanings present in processions.

As described above, Mark is martyred after being dragged around the city for two days with a rope around his neck during the Festival Procession of Serapis (Σεραπικὴ Κωμασία).

²⁶ Mitchell, “Epiphanic Evolutions,” 242–243. Analogous to my comparison between Paul’s self-presentation and the portrayal of Mark in *Mart. Mark*, Mitchell also demonstrates how, after Paul’s death, the author of the Gospel of Mark relocated the gospel message in a text rather than an individual envoy, but still kept the synecdochical logic whereby the death of Jesus could stand for the entire proclamation. “Mark (the text) is (incorporeal) Paul for all time: Jesus Christ crucified can be seen there” (Mitchell, “Epiphanic Evolutions,” 248). On the “synecdochical logic,” see Margaret M. Mitchell, “Rhetorical Shorthand in Pauline Argumentation: The Functions of ‘The Gospel’ in the Corinthian Correspondence” in *Emergence of Christian Textuality*, 111–132.

Mart. Mark gives no explanation for this mode of execution, but similar spectacles of public punishment were plenty common in the Roman Empire. Kathleen Coleman describes how Roman penal aims privileged humiliation and deterrence, which lead to public displays that invited the approval of audiences to as great an extent as possible.²⁷ In a separate investigation of Roman *delatores* who were ritually humiliated with public processions, Coleman compares their fate to Celer, a *chiliarch* who, as described by Josephus, was punished for a dispute in Palestine when Claudius sent an order to “drag him around all around [Jerusalem] in full view of everyone before executing him” (πάντων ὁρόντων ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν πᾶσαν σύραντας οὕτως ἀποκτεῖναι).²⁸ By being dragged all around the city, Celer’s death was maximally humiliating, the carrying out of his execution communally shared.

In no small part due to the fact that their public nature made members from all levels of societies potential participants in them, such penal practices were ripe for literary inversion. We can see two illuminating examples in the depictions of violence against Jews in Philo’s *In Flaccum* and against Christians in a letter of Dionysius of Alexandria preserved in Eusebius’ *Historia ecclesiastica*. Philo, for his part, describes the pogrom against Jews in 38 CE in starkly theatrical terms, capitalizing on the “well-attested punitive dimension of the spectacles.”²⁹ Staging the forced march of the bound Jewish *gerousia* as a “fine procession” (καλὴ πομπή), for instance, Philo characterizes the atrocities of the pogrom as entertainment given by Flaccus. In

²⁷ Kathleen M. Coleman, “Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 44–70. Coleman argues that punishments like conflagration and fighting beasts were particularly popular due to the potential of survival and hence higher audience participation. Executions, especially those that enacted mythological conflicts or famous plays (the “fatal charades”), often took place in the theater, heightening the sense of spectacle and entertainment that accompanied the aims of Roman justice.

²⁸ The incident is detailed in Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20:132-36 (cf. *Jewish War* 2.244–246). Text and translation in Kathleen M. Coleman, “‘Informers’ on Parade,” *Studies in the History of Art* 56, Symposium Papers XXXIV: The Art of Ancient Spectacle (1999): 238.

²⁹ Jeff Jay, “Spectacle, Stage-Craft, and the Tragic in Philo’s *In Flaccum*: A Literary-Historical Analysis,” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 8:2 (2017): 224–231, citation at 224.

turn, the punishments he had previously meted out become the crimes before God that cause Flaccus's own exile. Although he had previously presided over the fine procession and other spectacles of (in)justice, Flaccus now marches in humiliation. Divine justice has put him on display.

Similarly, in a letter to Fabius of Antioch preserved in Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.41, Dionysius of Alexandria describes the exhibitory deaths of Christians who resisted imperial edicts to sacrifice under Emperor Decius. The public executions included burning, beheading, throwing the offender from a building, and drowning, with some—like Celer and like the literary portrait of Mark in *Mart. Mark*—being dragged through the streets of Alexandria.³⁰ Dionysius turns these spectacular deaths into an opportunity for his own publicizing efforts, enlisting the examples of the martyrs to his side in a debate over the treatment of the lapsed³¹ and framing their deaths as demonstrations of divine power. He describes how certain soldiers, for example, “walked” to their deaths “in parade (ἐνεπόμπευσαν) from the courts and rejoiced in their witness (μαρτυρία), with God leading them gloriously in a triumphal procession (θριαμβεύοντος αὐτοὺς ἐνδόξως τοῦ θεοῦ).³² Rather than being led in triumph by the Roman Emperor, these soldiers

³⁰ Cf. The fate of Quinta in *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.41.4: “Then, having led a faithful woman called Quinta to the idol-temple (τὸ εἰδωλεῖον), they compelled her to bow down (προσκυβεῖν). But she turned away and showed disgust, so, having bound her feet, they were dragging her through the whole city (διὰ πάσης τῆς πόλεως...σύροντες) against the rough stone-street and beating her, and she was bashed by giant stones (lit: stones the size of millstones [μυλταίοις λίθοις]). They led her to the same place (the suburb [τὸ προάστειον]) and stoned her.” Compare to 6.41.8: They were shouting that “If anyone did not hymn the blasphemous words, then this person must immediately be dragged (σύρεσθαι) and burned (πίμπρασθαι).” Citing these and several additional examples, Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 87 reasons that the execution of criminals by dragging constituted “a civic ritual intended to cleanse the city from a perceived criminal contagion or impurity.” Haas suggests that the “ritual” had a “standardized form” throughout Alexandrian history, but this claim gives insufficient attention to the differences in each example, as well as to the literary character of the descriptions. Furthermore, as Coleman shows, such spectacles are not *per se* Alexandrian, even if the aim of burning the corpse may have carried particular meaning in Egypt, as I will discuss below. Still, Haas is right in my view to frame his discussion of the public treatment of criminals in the context of processions (81–89).

³¹ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.42.4–6.

³² Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.41.23.

were led with glory by their heavenly king. Much in the same way as Philo transforms Flaccus from humiliator to humiliated, Dionysius flips the effect of a penal procession from humiliation to glory.

The positive spin put on the events by Dionysius of Alexandria builds on a metaphor developed by Paul throughout 2 Corinthians 2:14–6:13, which in turn illuminates what the author of the *Martyrdom of Mark* seeks accomplish with the description of Mark’s death. In this letter internal to 2 Corinthians.³³ Paul responds to his opponents’ characterization of him suffering bodily ailments and weakness due to divine punishment for his apostolic misdeeds. He does so, as detailed by Paul Duff, by “taking advantage of the tensive nature” entailed in the history of the triumphal procession as both military and epiphanic.³⁴ Roman and Egyptian deities like Dionysus, Isis, and Serapis were considered triumphal victors, while their worshippers were often characterized as prisoners. When Paul gives “thanks to God who always leads us in a triumphal procession in Christ” (τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ πάντοτε θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, 2 Cor 2:14a), therefore, he is laying the groundwork to flip a metaphor of weakness into one of strength. Put otherwise, Paul transforms the perception that he is “a victim of defeat, the object of the vengeance of God” into the assertion in 2 Cor 5:14 that “he is in fact a captive of the ‘love of Christ.’ He is a participant not in a military victory parade, but in an epiphany procession. He has been captured, not as a prisoner of war, but as a devotee of the deity.”³⁵ The primary aim of an epiphany procession was to present to onlookers a manifestation of the deity,³⁶ whose image, Christ (the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ of 2 Cor 4:4), Paul displays by “carrying around the dying of Jesus in

³³ I follow as most compelling for the reconstruction of the epistolary correspondence between Paul and the Corinthian community the letter division as argued for by Margaret M. Mitchell, “The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics,” in *Emergence of Christian Textuality*, 161–91.

³⁴ Paul B. Duff, “Metaphor, Motif, and Meaning: The Rhetorical Strategy Behind the Image ‘Led in Triumph’ in 2 Corinthians 2:14,” *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 53 (1991): 83.

³⁵ Duff, “Metaphor,” 87.

³⁶ Duff, “Metaphor,” 90–91.

the body (πάντοτε τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες) so that the life of Jesus might also be manifested in our body” (ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν φανερωθῇ, 2 Cor 4:10). Led in an epiphany procession, Paul depicts himself as both a devotee and a vessel (cf. 2 Cor 4:7) that carries the image, which itself is revealed through the very suffering that made his opponents think he was being punished by God.³⁷

The author of *Mart. Mark* makes similar use of the multiple meanings of processions, but in narrative form. Mark is sent as a herald who proclaims (κηρύσσειν) the gospel, thereby announcing the revelation of the deity (§1). As he leaves Cyrene, the Christian converts escort (προσπέμπειν) him to a boat and send him to Alexandria (§2), where the pagans seek to “lay hold of him” (πιᾶσαι αὐτόν) and cry out about “the damages of the magician” (βίαι τοῦ μάγου) during their processions (κωμασίαι) (§6). But what appears at first to be a subjective genitive—damaging acts that Mark *commits* against the pagans—turns out prophetically to be an objective genitive: what Mark will *suffer* during the Festival Procession of Serapis (Σεραπικὴ Κωμασία) (§7). The Serapis worshippers drag Mark around the city, publicly humiliating him with their mocking chant while he suffers (πάθειν). But the force of their spectacle is reversed as a result of the festival setting of their procession. Like Paul in 2 Cor 2:14-6:13, Mark—likewise a “slave of Christ” (δοῦλος Χριστοῦ) (§4) and a captive (κατέλαβον αὐτόν) (§7)—is led in what turns out to be an epiphany procession. However, Mark does not just carry the image, he also *is* the image. The Serapis worshippers do not parade around with their own cult objects during the festival; they lead a procession of Mark the multi-bodied, epiphanic icon of Christ! And it is effective. Christ appears twice: once visually to Mark in the prison (§8) and once verbally to the festival

³⁷ On the epiphanic character of Paul carrying the dying process of Jesus, see Mitchell, “Epiphanic Evolutions,” 244-45.

attendees when Mark commends his spirit (§9). Mark at first appears to be a punished captive, but instead proves triumphant.

In a significant way, then, the decision by the author of the *Martyrdom* to characterize Mark as a cult image emphasizes the matter of his body and suggests that it will persist as an epiphanic, representational medium as long as the remains of his body do not perish. Spiritual life lives on in his dead remains. Ironically, though, the very move to invest Mark's relics with divine power rests upon precisely the same logic that Christians frequently used to deny Pagan images and statues any relation to divinity in their critiques of idols, and which the author of the *Martyrdom* implicitly employs by opposing Mark and the Pagans. Mark's ontological status is therefore not entirely clear. He overturns idols and yet, it seems, he is remarkably similar to one. He is dead matter and yet, in the end, still a life-giving treasure. The binary between life and death, saint and idol, breaks down even while the author still claims superiority.

The rhetorical power of this paradox is well demonstrated by the ancient descriptions of the destruction of the cult statue of Serapis in Alexandria in 392. By examining how Christian authors like Rufinus of Aquileia and Socrates Scholasticus described this famous cult statue of Serapis—which met its own violent death—with ontological ambiguity, we will see how the author of *Mart. Mark* sets the iconic evangelist in a mimetic competition with the image of this deity. However, since the object of these ecclesiastical writers' description belongs to their religious opponents, the paradoxical attribution and denial of life to the statue comes to a much different effect.

The Death of Serapis, Who Had Never Been Alive

In 392 CE, longstanding tensions between Christians and the Serapis cult in Alexandria exploded into unrest that resulted in the sacking of the Serapeum and the dismemberment and burning of the Serapis cult statue.³⁸ Already 30 years prior, conflict in the city had erupted when George of Cappadocia, the *homoiousian*-aligned bishop appointed to Alexandria during one of Athanasius' exiles, apparently encouraged the military prefect Artemius to despoil (ἀποσυλλάω) the images (εἰκόνες), offerings (ἀναθήματα), and ornamentation (κόσμος) from the Alexandrian temple of Serapis ("the most holy shrine of the god," τὸ ἁγιώτατον τοῦ θεοῦ τέμενος).³⁹ This act of plunder evidently led a group of Alexandrians to take matters into their own hands, and the ensuing riot on December 24, 361 led to the death of the notoriously detested George. According to Socrates Scholasticus, George was tied to a camel and burnt alive as the camel ran around the city, one death among many, though in his account the riot was in response to an excavation and procession of cult objects from a Mithraeum that had been converted under Constantius.⁴⁰ Either

³⁸ Scholarship on the destruction of the Serapeum (especially attempts to reconstruct the events) is voluminous. On the date and for an excellent overview of the sources, aftermath, and the historiographical problems, see Johannes Hahn, "The Conversion of the Cult Statues: The Destruction of the Serapeum 392 A.D. and the Transformation of Alexandria in the 'Christ-Loving' City," in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*, ed. Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 335–365. Particularly helpful for understanding the archaeological evidence of the temple and its presence in the Alexandrian landscape at various stages is the extensive article by Judith S. McKenzie, Sheila Gibson, and A.T. Reyes, "Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the Archaeological Evidence," *Journal of Roman Studies* 94 (2004): 73–121. Across scholarly accounts, five late ancient authors who recount the event are frequently cited: four church historians, namely Rufinus, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen, and Theodoret, and one Hellenic chronicler, Eunapius, whose description of the events is now mostly lost, though an allusion to his work is found in his *Lives of the Sophists* 6.11 (see Hahn, "Conversion," 339). Of the church historians, Sozomen and Socrates give no account of the statue itself, so I focus my analysis on Rufinus and Theodoret.

³⁹ Julian, "Letter 21" in *Letters. Epigrams. Against the Galilaeans. Fragments*, trans. Wilmer C. Wright, LCL 157 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), 379B. Given the context and repeated mention of Serapis in the letter, τὸ ἁγιώτατον τοῦ θεοῦ τέμενος in 379B must refer to the temple of Serapis. Letter dated to January 362.

⁴⁰ Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 3.3. Cf. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 22.11.8-10, who reports that the mob threw the ashes of George and his associates into the ocean to prevent their relics from being collected and churches built in their honor, though Ammianus expresses doubt that the collection would have happened since "all men without distinction burned with hatred for George" (*Georgii odio omnes indiscrete flagrant*). Text and translation in Ammianus Marcellinus, *History, Volume II: Books 20-26*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, LCL 315 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940). Pearson, "Earliest Christianity," 144, has suggested that Mark's death in

way, the conflict did not just attest to a tense climate between Christians and the major religious cults of the city in the mid-fourth century. It was a contest over the very character of the city in the empire, which even Emperor Julian seemed to recognize, chastising the Alexandrians for rending the social order assigned by Serapis when they tore George to pieces.⁴¹

Public discord broke out once again in 392, according to Rufinus of Aquileia, who wrote about a decade after the events, after Emperor Theodosius I allowed the bishop of Alexandria to rehabilitate a disused basilica into a prayer house (*domus orationum*).⁴² During an investigation of the site, the Christians allegedly discovered a Mithraeum with a cache of cult objects, which they unveiled to the chagrin of those who were not Christians. “The pagans (*gentiles*), therefore, those who were observing that the hidden recesses of their crimes and the caverns of their disgraces were uncovered (*retegi*)...all began to rage madly (*omnes insanire*) and rave openly (*palam furere coeperunt*).”⁴³ Violence ensued, including open warfare on the streets and the capture of the “more numerous” (*multo plures*) but “less ferocious” (*minus feroces*) Christians, whom the pagans allegedly tortured and forced to offer sacrifice on an altar within the Serapeum.⁴⁴

Mart. Mark may have been modelled on that of George, and conjectured with the Bollandist editors of *Vat. gr. 866* that Mark was taken to be burned not at “*Angeloi*” but εις τὸ αἰγιαλός: “to the seashore” (154 n. 127). The differences between George’s death and Mark’s in *Mart. Mark*, are significant, however, and the description of being burned alive on a camel seems like precisely the kind of grisly detail a martyrdom would include; I do not see any particular impact on the *Mart. Mark* narrative. On tensions in Alexandria in the fourth century more generally, see Zsolt Kiss, “Alexandria in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries” in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. 191 on George.

⁴¹ Julian, “Letter 21,” 378D: “And I’ll add that [no thought entered] even for us, whom all the gods—most of all the mighty Serapis—judged it right to rule over the world.” (προσθήσω δὲ ὅτι [οὐκ εἰσηλθε λόγος from the previous clause] καὶ ἡμῶν, οὓς οἱ θεοὶ πάντες, ἐν πρώτοις δὲ ὁ μέγας Σάραπις ἄρχειν ἐδικαίωσαν τῆς οἰκουμένης.)

⁴² Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.22 in *Eusebius Werke II.2: Die Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Eduard Schwartz and Theodor Mommsen, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, 2nd ed., Neue Folge, Band 6.2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 1025.9-14. Translations are mine, but see Rufinus of Aquileia, *History of the Church*, trans. Philip R. Amidon, Fathers of the Church 133 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016) for a translation of the whole. The bishop is identified in 11.26 as Theophilus of Alexandria.

⁴³ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.22 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1025.16-19].

⁴⁴ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.22 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1025.23-29]. Rufinus is coy about identifying the temple at this point in his history, but Sozomen (*HE* 7.15.3) identifies the temple as the Serapeum and the events that follow in Rufinus’s account seem to confirm it.

At this point, Rufinus zooms out from the events for a moment to tell his readers more about the Serapis statue, including the steps its caretakers in the temple took to make it seem alive. He describes the enormous rooms in the temple, even alleging that its elevation was artificial, and remarks upon the imposing size of the statue and how it was made of all kinds of metal and wood.⁴⁵ Together these features created a sense of impressive excess, as if the statue exuded the presence of the deity. Rufinus then details how those who designed the temple came up with tricks to enhance this experience phenomenologically: in addition to “many other things built on the site by those of old for the purpose of deception” (*multa alia decipiendi causa a veteribus in loco fuerant constructa*),⁴⁶ windows were prepared to make it seem like the Serapis kissed the sun each morning, for instance, and magnets were arranged so that the statue would levitate.⁴⁷ These features would have made the statue seem alive and powerful, and conveyed this experience to such an extent that Ammianus Marcellinus in the 380s described even the less impressive sculptures in the Serapeum as “breathing statues” (*spirantibus signorum figmentis*).⁴⁸

In attributing the statue’s liveliness to mechanistic interventions on the part of human beings and arguing that the statue was thus deceitful, Rufinus deploys a form of ontological argument that was built upon the materiality critique Clement of Alexandria had levied against the Serapis statue in his *Protrepticus* more than 200 years before Rufinus wrote his account. Clement, however, faced an additional problem: even though it was material, some claimed that the statue was divinely sent and not-made-by-hands (ἀχειροποίητον).⁴⁹ Such a claim implied that

⁴⁵ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.23 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1026.28–1027.3, 10–12].

⁴⁶ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.23 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1028.7–8].

⁴⁷ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.23 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1027.16–1028.2].

⁴⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* XXII.16.12.

⁴⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4.48.1 (*Clemens Alexandrinus*, ed. Otto Stählin, vol. 1, GCS 12 [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1905], 37, 5–8, henceforth cited as [Stählin page number, line numbers]). “Why should I waste time on these things? It is possible to show you who the great demon himself was, he who had been judged worthy, we hear, of reverence by everyone due to his pre-eminence—they have even dared to say that he is “not-made-by-hand”—the Egyptian Serapis” (Καὶ τί περὶ ταῦτα διατρίβω, ἐξὸν αὐτὸν τὸν μεγαλοδαίμονα ὑμῖν ἐπιδειξάι ὅστις ἦν,

the statue was divinely fashioned as a representation and perhaps greater than human. To refute this inference, Clement presented several origin stories, finally arguing that the statue was indeed beautiful and of great expense, but still the work of a human artist, one Bryaxis, and hence of lower ontological value than the artist himself.⁵⁰ Despite all the honors paid to it, Clement argued, this statue of Serapis—and in fact all statues—are but “insensate wood and stone” (ἀναισθήτω λίθω καὶ ξύλῳ). It was therefore not superior to any living creature: not worms, caterpillars, moles, nor field-mice—who partake of at least one sense—nor even the oyster, which at least lives and grows with the phases of the moon.⁵¹ Even these lowest of living creatures, he argued, are greater than the greatest of statues, because they have a soul that vivifies them, and thus bear at least a faint relationship to the incorporeal living god. Statues, on the other hand, cannot move, see, speak, hear, feel, breathe, or anything else and are thus a rotten medium for representing or encountering the divine: “A statue is truly like dead matter (ἔστιν γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ ἄγαλμα ὕλη νεκρὰ) which has been given form by the hand of a craftsman (τεχνίτου χειρὶ μεμορφωμένη); but our ‘statue’ is not a perceptible thing of perceptible matter but something intellectual (ἡμῖν δὲ οὐχ ὕλης αἰσθητῆς αἰσθητόν νοητόν δὲ τὸ ἄγαλμά ἐστιν). God—who alone is truly God—is not perceptible but intellectual” (νοητόν, οὐκ αἰσθητόν ἐστι ὁ θεός, μόνος ὄντως θεός).⁵²

ὄν δὴ κατ’ ἐξοχὴν πρὸς πάντων σεβασμοῦ κατηξιωμένον ἀκούομεν, τοῦτον <ὄν> ἀχειροποίητον εἰπεῖν τετολμήκασιν, τὸν Αἰγύπτιον Σάραπιν;).

⁵⁰ Clement, *Protrepticus* 4.48.5 [Stählin 37, 24-27]: “[Ptolemy] himself ordered, therefore, that Osiris, his own forefather, be sculpted at great expense, and Byraxis the craftsman constructed it—not the Athenian, but someone else with the same name as that Byraxis” (τὸν οὖν Ὅσιριν τὸν προπάτορα τὸν αὐτοῦ δαιδαλθῆναι ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸς πολυτελῶς, κατασκευάζει δὲ αὐτὸν Βρυάξις ὁ δημιουργός, οὐχ ὁ Ἀθηναῖος, ἄλλος δὲ τις ὁμώνυμος ἐκείνῳ τῷ Βρυάξιδι’).

⁵¹ Clement, *Protrepticus* 4.51.2–5 [Stählin 39, 19-40].

⁵² Clement, *Protrepticus* 4.51.6 [Stählin 40, 9-12]. Clement almost certainly builds his argument here on the back of Aristotle’s discussion of the soul and his taxonomical distinctions between inanimate, plant, animal, and human as discussed in *Historia animalium* 588b; see above, chapter 1, pp. 51–2.

Clement crafts a strong opposition between the material world of perception and the immaterial realm of the noetic. Due to its materiality, the statue of Serapis is resolutely inanimate, with no ability to represent or relate to the divine. But for Rufinus, the binary was upset by the appearance of movement and life, so his explanation of the human contrivances that animated the cult statue sought to restore its ontological status to below the human, below even the animal, because its movement is not the result of a soul but of human craft. This constituted a rhetorical claim meant in part to persuade those who considered the statue's materiality as less than fully determinative for its liveliness.⁵³ However, as Neis demonstrates in the case of the rabbinic writings she studies, the materiality critique sometimes belied the aim of denying idols power.⁵⁴ While damage to images, for instance, demonstrated "the very madeness and artefactual nature of the thing" and undercut any claims the image had to agency and divinity, "defacement might also imply that even the iconoclast has a certain faith in the representational claims of an image.... Surely blinding may imply that it originally did see."⁵⁵ An attack against an image, accordingly, paradoxically reveals its very resistance to straightforward objectification. Damaged and broken, the image exceeds "its mere materialization."⁵⁶

Furthermore, in late antique Egypt in particular, divine images were conceived of "as possessing qualities of the human body, including the senses."⁵⁷ Like flesh and blood bodies,

⁵³ Troels Myrup Kristensen *Making and Breaking the Gods: Christian Responses to Pagan Sculpture in Late Antiquity* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2013), 117 has rightly argued, "there is a need to understand Christians' destructive responses to pagan images as positively demonstrating the vitality of the images as participants in the religious order of the region.... The tone of these [Christian] texts must at least be aimed at people that had similar conceptions of images as being powerful and potentially dangerous. Why stress the point that an image was really only a piece of wood if your audience already agreed?" However, I would argue that it was not only credulous audiences who observed the hazards of cult statues and religious images.

⁵⁴ Neis, "Image-Things," 105: "...the possibility that there is more to these divine images pokes through. The continued enlivening of the biblical polemic against idols also continues to animate their threat, and thus their power."

⁵⁵ Neis, "Image-Things," 109.

⁵⁶ Neis, "Image-Things," 109, with reference to Brown, "Thing Theory," 5.

⁵⁷ Kristensen, *Making and Breaking the Gods*, 175.

many statues underwent targeted mutilation of sense organs, particularly the eyes, nose, mouth and ears, “as these were apparently considered crucial to the image’s ability to uphold life.”⁵⁸ Death by burning was particularly dreaded “since the total dissolution of the body deprived deceased individuals of the ability to live on in the afterlife.”⁵⁹ To hack apart a statue was to deny “its embodied state through the dispersal of the fragments,”⁶⁰ and to burn a statue was to prevent any restoration. The power of this treatment was bolstered by the mythical fate meted out to Osiris, for instance, and occasionally by the treatment of living persons as in the case of the Christian martyrs described above or the murder of Hypatia in 415.⁶¹ By treating the bodies of idols and human beings in similar ways, especially regarding mutilation, burning, and burial, ancient and late ancient Egyptians also linked those bodies in terms of punishment both on earth and in the afterlife.

As a result, the movement and lifelikeness of the Serapis cult statue were also useful to Rufinus. In his portrayal of the Christian assault on the Serapis statue, he implies that this image really was a living being despite the conviction that it was mere matter. Rufinus thus returns to the theme of deceptiveness that went along with a material idol. He describes how the Christians were ready to overthrow the “author of error” (*erroris autor*), but that a rumor had spread concerning the statue’s power and relation to divinity: “if a human hand touched that statue (*si humana manus simulacrum illud contigisset*), the earth would split open on the spot and disperse into chaos (*terra dehiscens ilico solveretur in chaos*), while the sky would crash down violently at once” (*caelumque repente rueret in praeceps*).⁶² Nonetheless, after some pause a soldier

⁵⁸ Kristensen, *Making and Breaking the Gods*, 178.

⁵⁹ Kristensen, *Making and Breaking the Gods*, 175.

⁶⁰ Kristensen, *Making and Breaking the Gods*, 179.

⁶¹ As described by Socrates Scholasticus (*HE* 7.13) and John of Nikiu (*Chronicle* 84.103); see Kristensen, *Making and Breaking the Gods*, 179–80, 190.

⁶² Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.23 [Schwartz/Mommsen: 1028.11–13]. The origin of this rumor as related to the Serapis statue appears to be unknown or invented by Rufinus (and then repeated by later historians).

“armed with faith” (*fide munitus*) struck the statue on the jaw with an axe in a bid to slay it. A great roar resounded, but the sky did not fall nor did the earth collapse and so the soldier “struck (*caedit*) again and again the smoke-grimed deity of decaying wood (*putris ligni fumosum genium*), which, once overthrown (*deiectum*), he burned (*conflagravit*) as easily as dry wood” (*lignum aridum*) put to the flame (*igni adhibito*).⁶³ Through an emphasis on the statue’s grimy woodenness and its powerlessness to stop an assault against it, Rufinus contends that a lifeless reality lay under the myths that propagated its animacy.

Yet, at the same time, this demonstration of the statue’s insensate materiality demonstrates Rufinus’s concern that revealing its physical nature might not be enough to decapitate it. The deception flips; it may be that the statue only seems to be mere matter, but in fact is more than it appears. Rufinus narrates how the statue was dismembered before it was set on fire: its “head (*caput*) was wrenched from the neck (*revulsum cervicibus*)” and “dragged around (*trahitur*), while the feet and other members (*pedes aliaque membra*) were chopped off with axes (*caesa securibus*), seized, and pulled apart with ropes (*rapta funibus distrahuntur*).” Serapis’s old and sluggish (*senex veterosus*) body was then “limb by limb, each at its own place (*per singula loca membratim*), burned to ashes (*exuritur*) before the sight of his worshipper, Alexandria (*in conspectus cultricis Alexandriae*).”⁶⁴ The Christians even deployed a spectacular mode of execution that allowed no chance of survival: “Finally, the torso that yet remained was cremated in the amphitheater” (*ad ultimum truncus qui superfuerat in amphitheatro*

However, Françoise Thelamon, in his important monograph *Païens et chrétiens au IV^e siècle: L'apport de l'Histoire ecclésiastique' de Rufin d'Aquilée* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1981), 199–201, argues that the “superstition” is indicative of an Egyptian religious mentality and theological system in which the cosmos would collapse without fulfillment of the customary rites. In particular, Thelamon cites the hieratic Papyrus Salt 825, which details conditions similar to what Rufinus describes of the rumor, but which the rites were designed to prevent.

⁶³ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.23 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1028.17–19].

⁶⁴ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.23 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1028.19–22].

concrematur).⁶⁵ The way Rufinus describes these actions contradicts the very assertion he makes of its lifelessness. Serapis is an old man, whom the Christians humiliate, dismember, drag around the city in a triumphal procession, and burn. In order to kill the lifeless statue of Serapis, the Christians paradoxically had to treat it like an animate opponent.

Indeed, in Rufinus' account, the statue of Serapis seems even to have animated the entire apparatus of "paganism" in Greco-Roman Egypt. As the statue turned to ash, Rufinus adds that "this was the end of the vain superstition and the ancient error of Serapis" (*vanae que superstitionis et erroris antiqui Serapis hic finis fuit*).⁶⁶ And not just Serapis. Once the "head of idolatry (*capite idolatriae deiecto*) was overthrown," so too were idols all throughout Alexandria—"monsters more than statues" (*portenta potius quam simulacra*)—destroyed and disgraced.⁶⁷ In fact, "after the death of Serapis (*post occasum Serapis*), who had never been alive (*qui numquam vixerat*),"⁶⁸ not even busts of Serapis (*thoraces Serapis*)—nor those of any other demon—remained in the walls of houses, doorposts, or windows.⁶⁹ "At the tomb of Serapis" (*in Serapis sepulchro*), now empty, a martyr shrine and a church now rose up, demonstrating the conquest that had taken place.⁷⁰ In this account, Alexandrian Christians destroyed the statue not simply to demonstrate the statue's lifelessness, but to ensure it. Serapis worship was literally killed off.

The description of the destruction of the Serapis statue Rufinus provides does not necessarily give us a reliable picture of what happened on the ground in 392,⁷¹ but it does enable us to see how he portrays the statue as both living and dead in order to advance his rhetorical

⁶⁵ On *crematio* as a penal practice, see e.g., Coleman, "Fatal Charades," 55.

⁶⁶ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.23 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1028.24–1029.1].

⁶⁷ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.24 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1030.16–19].

⁶⁸ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.28 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1034.18–19].

⁶⁹ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.29 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1034.27ff].

⁷⁰ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 11.27 [Schwartz/Mommsen 1032.18–20].

⁷¹ Hahn, "Conversion of Cult Statues," 345–47.

goals. Having inherited biblical and philosophical polemic about the “idols of the pagans” as deceptive, material images ill-suited to representation of the divine, Rufinus calls attention to the lifeless matter from which Serapis was constructed. He moves due to magnets, not a soul; he is made of wood, which can be chopped by an axe-wielding soldier and burned like kindling. At the same time, if Serapis is already dead and powerless, then why would he need to be defeated? What kind of Christian triumph would that be? Therefore, Rufinus simultaneously depicts Serapis as a living person, humiliated and executed ignominiously like a criminal or political enemy in the theater, and prevented from an honorable burial. Rufinus thus sculpts the cult statue of Serapis into an enemy worthy of defeat in this contest between Christians and the idols without totally giving up the traditions of idolatry critique. By paradoxically embracing both the life and lifelessness of Serapis, Rufinus heightens the Christian triumph.

Rufinus is not alone in describing the destruction of the Serapis cult statue in paradoxical terms. Theodoret’s *Ecclesiastical History*, completed about a half century later, likewise enlists the materiality critique, but uses the literary technique of personification as he does so. Theodoret attends to the imposing character of the statue and temple, but counters that despite the statue’s reputation, it is lifeless (ἄψυχος) and its head a “home for mice” (μυῶν οἰκητήριον), denoting that even these lowly creatures were still more active agents than the statue. Moreover, he too describes the rumor that the “earth would be thrown into confusion and destruction would overtake everything” (κλονηθήσεται μὲν ἡ γῆ, πανωλεθρία δὲ καταλήψεται). Calling it a “deceitful tale” (λόγος ἀπατηλός) and nothing but an example of “the tales of drunken old women” (τοὺς λόγους γραϊδίων μεθύντων) (5.22.3–4), Theodoret connects the deceptive stories to the fraudulent animacy of the idol. And yet, although to this point in his account Theodoret has described “the statue” (τὸ ξόανον), he suddenly gives it an identity, calling it Serapis and

gendering it as masculine. “*Serapis* received the blow” from the axe and “*he* failed to utter any sound” because “*he* was made of wood” (ξύλινός) and “*he* was lifeless” (ἄψυχος).⁷² Theodoret thus personifies the statue, encouraging the sense that it was Serapis the deity being attacked.

Similarly, in his description of the ensuing assault, the Christian assailants seek to humiliate the statue, once again treating it like a living person in order to demonstrate their power over the lifeless statue. “They divided him into small pieces (εἰς μικρὰ δὲ αὐτὸν διελόντες) and handed some over to fire (τὰ μὲν παρέδοσαν τῷ πυρί), while they dragged the head through the entire city (τὴν δὲ κεφαλὴν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ἄστεως ἔσυρον) and those who were worshippers looked on and mocked the weakness of the one who had been worshipped by them” (τῶν προσκυνούντων ὀρώντων καὶ τοῦ παρ’ αὐτῶν προσκυνηθέντος τὴν ἀσθένειαν κωμωδούντων). According to Theodoret, the Alexandrian Christians capitalized on the spectacle of triumphal and penal processions, turning the former worshippers into an approving audience that learns from the execution of Serapis and overthrows the signs of their former ruler. “In this way, then, the sacred precincts of the demons of land and sea everywhere were destroyed” (οὕτω

⁷² Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.22.3–4 (in Léon Parmentier, ed., *Theodoret. Kirchengeschichte*, 2nd ed., GCS 44 [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954], 321.1–12). The passage is compact enough to cite in full. “After [Theophilus] went up to the temple of Serapis (some say ‘this is the most grand and beautiful temple in the entire world,’ as it were), he saw the massive statue (ξόανον) that frightened onlookers (τοὺς θεατάς) with its size. In addition to its size, a deceitful tale (λόγος ἀπατηλός) had taken hold: if someone were to approach (πελάσοι) it, the earth would be thrown into confusion and complete destruction would overtake everything. But since he thought that these tales (λόγους) were the prattling of drunken old women, and since he thought little of its magnitude on the grounds that it was lifeless (ὡς ἀψύχου), he ordered someone with an axe to strike Serapis eagerly. And after that man had struck it, everyone shouted in a confused chatter since they were afraid. Serapis took the blow but did not feel any pain (ἤλγησε), since he was made of wood (ξύλινος), and failed to let out any sound, since he was lifeless (ἄψυχος ὢν). When his head was lopped off (ἀφηρέθη), a nest of mice came running out from within it—for the God of the Egyptians was a home for mice.” (Εἰς δὲ τὸν τοῦ Σαράπιδος νεῶν ἀναβάς [τῶν δὲ πανταχοῦ γῆς καθὰ φασὶ τινες μέγιστός τε οὗτος καὶ κάλλιστος], εἶδε τὸ ξόανον παμμέγεθες καὶ τῷ μεγέθει τοὺς θεατάς δεδιττόμενον. πρὸς δὲ τῷ μεγέθει καὶ λόγος κατεῖχεν ἀπατηλός, ὡς εἴ τις τούτῳ πελάσοι, κλονηθήσεται μὲν ἡ γῆ, πανωλεθρία δὲ ἅπαντας καταλήψεται. ἀλλὰ τούτους μὲν τοὺς λόγους γραϊδίων μεθύοντων νομίσας εἶναι ληρήματα, τοῦ δὲ μεγέθους ὡς ἀψύχου καταφρονήσας, ἐκέλευσέ τινα πέλεκυν ἔχοντι παῖσαι προθύμως τὸν Σάραπιν. ἐκεῖνον δὲ παίσαντος, ἐβόησαν μὲν ἅπαντες τὸ θρυλούμενον δείσαντες· ὁ δὲ Σάραπις δεξάμενος τὴν πληγὴν οὔτε ἤλγησε, ξύλινος γὰρ ἦν, οὔτε φωνὴν ἀφῆκεν, ἄψυχος ὢν. ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀφηρέθη, μύες ἀγελήδων ἐξέδραμον ἔνδοθεν· μῶν γὰρ οἰκητήριον ἦν ὁ Αἰγυπτίων θεός.)

δὴ τὰ πανταχοῦ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης τῶν δαιμόνων κατελύθη τεμένη).⁷³ As with Rufinus, the overthrow of the statue serves as a metonymy for Theodoret, ringing the death knell for the cult and “paganism” altogether. As the imposing statue was pulled apart and consumed, proving to be weak, so was the strength of opposition to Christian dominance proven to be easily dismantled. Serapis and his statue were both powerless to stop the agents of the true God.

When Julian wrote his letter to the Alexandrians in January 362, he appealed to the power and judgment of great Serapis, arguing that Serapis was the one who had appointed him emperor. Serapis was the one who received honor, the god who oversaw and whose statue would be the destination of an epiphanic procession. In Theodoret’s *History*, the revelation exposed by the procession is Serapis’s own weakness; the ruler has become vanquished, his demise public. Without admitting some agency to the cult statue, some representational correspondence to Serapis, the act of iconoclasm is much less meaningful.

In this way, by both insisting upon and inverting the ontological argument against statues, Rufinus and Theodoret create a narrative where the Serapis cult statue both was and was not the deity represented by it,⁷⁴ both was and was not alive, a tension which they presented in order to advance claims that were not entirely complementary. In addition, whereas processions to Serapis were meant to make the power and magnitude of the god known, in these descriptions they do so by underscoring just how deceived the city of Alexandria had been by human contrivances and tales, perhaps amplified by the one-two punch of demons and the idol-mad intellects of those attracted to material things. By averring, on the one hand, that the statue is mere matter, powerless, lifeless, and therefore incapable of representing the incorporeal divine,

⁷³ Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.22.6 (GCS 321.12-16).

⁷⁴ For a similar formulation of the status of images in Roman religion, see Ando, *Matter of the Gods*, 22. Kiernan, *Roman Cult Images*, esp. 6–9, characterizes the role of the “idol” in Roman religion less tensively.

and yet, on the other hand, that the destruction of the statue meant the defeat of Serapis “himself” and paganism more broadly, Rufinus and Theodoret had to tacitly suspend the stark division between the material image and incorporeal prototype. To achieve one goal, they had to contradict the first. To kill Serapis, he had to have been alive.

Mark and Serapis: A Spirited Iconomachy

Due to the partial suspension of difference between living person and dead idol evident in the assault on the Serapeum, as seen particularly in the narratological descriptions of the event in the ecclesiastical histories of Rufinus and Socrates, this particular cult statue occupied an ambiguous place in the binary that Christian authors set up between saints and idols. The interstitial existence is ironically not dissimilar from the ambiguous ontology with which the author of *Mart. Mark* characterizes the evangelist Mark, turning him into an image that is paraded during the Festival Procession of Serapis (Σεραπικὴ Κωμασία). The confluence of these two indefinitely bounded figures, I argue, is no coincidence. Rather, *Mart. Mark* relies on Christian reveling in the death of Serapis for its own articulation of Christian dominance. The *Martyrdom* retrojects the conflict of 392 to the first century by re-writing the destruction of the Serapeum into an iconoclastic assault on Mark’s body. Though the two iconic bodies suffer similar attacks in the same city, the divergent outcomes demonstrate how the author of *Mart. Mark* imaginatively deployed the revelatory and obfuscatory elements of images to elevate Mark and his relics over Serapis, bolstering the claim to Christian cultural supremacy and power.

Excursus: Dating the *Martyrdom of Mark*

A brief detour into dating issues is necessary, however, because *Mart. Mark* has been dated to “before 368 CE”—at least a quarter century before the Serapeum riot—by Allen Dwight

Callahan, the scholar who has worked most on this tradition since Lipsius' treatment in 1887.⁷⁵ Rejecting Lipsius' dating of the narrative to the "end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century,"⁷⁶ Callahan suggests that the publication of the so-called Jubilee Book that in 368 celebrated the fortieth year of Athanasius' episcopacy may provide "a more reliable indicator of the approximate dating" of the *Acts (Martyrdom)*, because it represents a "point at which traditions about St. Mark's establishment of the see would have been collected and published." Callahan then argues that the narrative itself and the traditions it reflects would have long antedated its publication, claiming that the story of Mark's death comes from a time when Christianity was "far from ascendant in Egypt." Since "the narrative implies that the mission to Egypt is Jewish-Christian" and therefore could not reflect a fourth or fifth century context,⁷⁷ he claims, scholars should turn for context to ancient "Alexandrian mob violence" and "ethnic hostility" in "the time of the Roman occupation of Egypt."⁷⁸ In particular, he argues that we should look for the origins of this martyrdom tradition in the conflicts between Greeks and Jews

⁷⁵ After completing his dissertation on the *Acts (Martyrdom) of Mark* in 1992, which primarily contributed an introduction to the *Mart. Mark* tradition and a translation with extensive commentary of *Par. gr. 881*, Callahan published a translation and short commentary of *Vat. gr. 866* in 1993 and a second translation and introduction to *Par. gr. 881* in 2005 with François Bovon in French for EAC II (all cited above in this chapter, n. 2), which closely follow in succinct form the arguments made in his dissertation. In the interim, in 1999, he also published an article in Bovon's Apocryphal Acts volume (Callahan, "The *Acts of Mark*: Tradition, Transmission, and Translation of the Arabic Version," 62–85) that somewhat confusedly argued for the primacy of the Coptic version of *Mart. Mark* (extant in a few fragments), but this essay adds no new material on dating. The engagement in this excursus with Callahan's arguments for dating thus refer primarily to his dissertation. Davis, *Early Coptic Papacy*, 1-20 allows for later dates, as does Otero, "Later Acts," 462-3, but both appear to lean toward a fourth century date.

⁷⁶ Callahan, "Acts of Mark (Dissertation)," 19. Lipsius, "Markus," 345 actually gives as an Abfassungszeit for the *Acts (Martyrdom)* a range from the "middle" of the fourth century to the beginning of the fifth, but his discussion varies. In any case, Callahan highlights only one aspect of Lipsius' analysis, namely the suggestion that Mark's preaching is condensed in "developed trinitarian formulas" ("ausgebildeten trinitarischen Formeln"), which post-date the Council of Constantinople in 381 and thus provide a *terminus a quo* for *Mart. Mark*. Callahan interprets Lipsius' not entirely clear "formulas" to refer to Mark's baptizing activity in §2 (as well as the commission [§1] in *Vat. gr. 866*) and argues to the contrary that Mark's words follow only "the dominical command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit found in Matthew 28:19 and the Didache 7.1, and thus not in the 'trinitarian' sense at all." While his own argument for an earlier date is no stronger, Callahan is right to observe the lack of evidence supporting Lipsius on this point.

⁷⁷ Callahan, "Acts of Mark (Dissertation), 20.

⁷⁸ Callahan, "Acts of Mark (Dissertation)," 25, 26. Of course, Roman occupation of Egypt stretched effectively from 30 BCE to 641 CE.

“that punctuated Alexandrian history in the first and second centuries... particularly from the reign of Caligula until the revolt of 115–117 CE,” and he points especially the episcopal reign of Kerdon (98–107), “the last episcopal figure mentioned in the *Acts (Martyrdom)*.”⁷⁹ Therefore, he concludes that the traditions regarding Mark’s death and then the *Martyrdom of Mark* itself emerged between the first quarter of the second century and the last quarter of the fourth century, evidently meaning 368 CE. On Callahan’s dating, it would be difficult to see any connection between *Mart. Mark* and the destruction of the Serapis statue and temple.

However, the evidence for Callahan’s argument for this date is practically non-existent. To start, there is no indication in the *Martyrdom* that Mark’s mission is Jewish-Christian. Callahan’s claim seems to be based on the presence of a large Jewish diaspora in Alexandria, which likely served as an inroad for the earliest Christ-believing missionaries in the city. Citing A.F.J. Klijn, Callahan avers that “to speak about Jewish Christianity in Egypt is, at the same time, to discuss early Christianity in Egypt in general.”⁸⁰ Evidently understanding the lexeme *Hellenes* (Ἕλληνες) to include primarily ethnic Greeks, Callahan moreover suggests that around this time, native Egyptians and non-elite Jews would have formed an underclass alliance against their philhellenic Roman oppressors, and hence would have constituted the milieu for this Jewish Christian mission.⁸¹ To be sure, the presence and character of Christ-believers in first- and second-century Egypt is a notoriously murky subject and the Jewish diaspora in Alexandria may well have provided a home to the nascent movement. *Mart. Mark*, however, provides no peek behind this veil. In fact, the author seems to have erased Jews and Judaism entirely from the

⁷⁹ Callahan, “Acts of Mark (Dissertation),” 26.

⁸⁰ Callahan, “Acts of Mark (Dissertation),” 16, citing A.F.J. Klijn, “Jewish Christianity in Egypt” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (eds. Pearson and Goehring), 162. Callahan includes the hyphen (“Jewish-Christian”) on p. 19 but omits it elsewhere. There does not appear to be a distinction.

⁸¹ Callahan, “Acts of Mark (Dissertation),” 17–19.

cultural landscape of Alexandria.⁸² Mark is sent only to rid the land of demonic, “pagan” practices. Discernible in the case of Ananias, whose religious education consisted of both Homer *and* the teachings of the Egyptians (§4), “Greek” and “Egyptian” ethnic identities are conflated in the *Martyrdom* under the religio-ethnic category of “Pagan,” denoted by οἱ Ἕλληνας. Ananias has not even heard of the scriptures Mark preaches (including “the Prophets”), so he cannot be a literary representative of the diaspora Jewish community in Alexandria. For the author of *Mart. Mark*, only Christians and idol-worshippers are of concern. Callahan’s argument is therefore circular: although Jews are not specifically mentioned in the narrative, because *Mart. Mark*, he asserts, does in fact preserve reliable traditions about the earliest Christian mission in Egypt and because early Christianity in Egypt began among Jews, the text indicates that there is a joint Christian-Jewish mission and reflects traditions of an early date. But *Mart. Mark* provides evidence for none of this. Since the text reflects nothing of the context Callahan holds up as evidence for an early date, accordingly that date cannot be used in any significant way to interpret *Mart. Mark*.

Callahan’s basis for a *terminus ad quem* in the Jubilee Book of 368 is also misleading. He suggests that this book represents “a probable point at which the traditions”—presumably those pertaining to Mark—“perhaps already in written form, were brought together.”⁸³ But his source for this claim about the Jubilee Book, an article by William Telfer, offers no such conclusion.

⁸² The author of the later *Acts* (ed. Halkin) seems to have noticed this absence, reinserting “the Jews” as primary antagonists to Mark and giving them a role alongside οἱ Ἕλληνας during a trial scene between Mark and the governor of Alexandria that is reminiscent of their function in the canonical Gospels (Halkin, “Actes inédits,” 366-70). The reinsertion of the Jews is noticed as well by Pearson, “Earliest Christianity,” 144 n. 61, though he, like Callahan after him, concludes that this detail is “a reminiscence of the fact that the earliest Christians in Alexandria were Jews.” However, the trial scene in the later *Acts* required significant rewriting and restaging of the conflict such that the new inclusion of the characters of the Jews—and moreover the erasure of Serapis—cannot be considered merely coincidental. Rather, the invisibility of the Jews and the focus on Serapis in *Mart. Mark*, which in any case seems to have circulated much more widely than the *Acts*, underscores the particular context of religious contestation.

⁸³ Callahan, “Acts of Mark (Dissertation),” 26.

According to Telfer’s article, the Jubilee Book, the content of which was deduced from a series of Latin fragments discovered by C.H. Turner in Verona, is a “history of the Alexandrine church in the fourth century.” Though primarily focused on the life of Athanasius, the book includes documents pertaining to the “church in the [Diocletian] persecution and at the times of Nicaea and Sardica.”⁸⁴ Telfer concludes that because it was sent by Cyril of Alexandria in 419 to the bishop of Carthage in support of an argument about the rights of the see of Rome, there must have been nothing better at hand for him to use, and consequently that the records of the early fourth century church in Alexandria must have been sparse. The majority of the article then argues that the Jubilee Book served as the primary historical source for the hagiographical *Passion of Peter of Alexandria*, and Telfer reconstructs new “fragments” of the Jubilee Book on that basis.⁸⁵ The only item Callahan takes from this article is the existence and date of the Jubilee Book, and then he manufactures a connection to Mark traditions despite Telfer’s conclusions that the book simply documented events from the fourth century. The Jubilee Book, therefore, cannot be relied on for any dating of *Mart. Mark*.

Traditions connecting Mark to Alexandria likely go back at least to the tenure of Patriarch Demetrius (189–215),⁸⁶ but, besides *Mart. Mark* itself, we have no extant witness to

⁸⁴ Telfer, “St. Peter of Alexandria and Arius,” 117.

⁸⁵ Lipsius, “Markus,” 338–339 had also wondered if the *Passio Petri* might be a fourth-century witness to *Mart. Mark* due to the martyr shrine, but Pearson, “Earliest Christianity,” 143–144 rightly observes that the longest recension of the *Passio*—the only one with the episode (§11–12) in which Peter prays at the shrine of Mark—dates to a later period. On the *Passio*, see above, n. 1.

⁸⁶ The earliest testimony to a list of Alexandrian bishops comes only later from Eusebius (*HE* II.16): “They say that this Mark was the first one sent to Egypt to preach the Gospel, which he also composed, and the first to establish churches in Alexandria herself” (Τοῦτον δὲ Μάρκον πρῶτων φασιν ἐπὶ τῆς Αἰγύπτου στειλάμενον, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, ὃ δὴ καὶ συνεγράψατο, κηρῶσαι, ἐκκλησίας τε πρῶτον ἐπ’ αὐτῆς Αλεξανδρείας συστήσασθαι). Eusebius does not mention the death of Mark—let alone his martyrdom—which makes it unlikely that Eusebius knew of any such traditions. In II.24, he states only that Annianus succeeded Mark in the eighth year of Nero. It was suggested by Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 53–60 (trans. of this section by David Hay) that Patriarch Demetrius invented this list in the midst of controversy about apostolic Christianity in Alexandria, supported in part by the paucity of description the early bishops receive in Eusebius’ account: “Therefore, the first ten names (after Mark, the companion of the apostles) are and remain for us a mere echo and a puff of smoke; and they scarcely could have ever been anything but that” (Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 55).

knowledge of Mark's manner of death before the fifth century, and even then, the evidence is meager. Palladius' *Lausiaca History*, composed about 420 CE, includes a brief reference to Mark's martyr shrine,⁸⁷ and Paulinus of Nola alludes to Mark's activities in Egypt in one of his birthday songs composed for St. Felix on January 14, 405,⁸⁸ and then mentions the destruction of the Serapeum a few lines later.⁸⁹ While Davis has concluded on this basis that *Mart. Mark*

⁸⁷ Palladius, *Historia Lausaica* 45.4: "[Philoromus] went away on foot on a journey as far as Rome herself in order to pray at the martyr-shrine of the blessed Peter. And he also made it to Alexandria to pray at the martyr-shrine of Mark. And he even went a second time to Jerusalem, having traveled on his own feet and having taken care of his own expenditures." ("Ὁς πεζῇ τῇ πορείᾳ καὶ μέχρις αὐτῆς Ῥώμης ἀπῆλθεν εὐξόμενος εἰς τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ μακαρίου Πέτρου· ἔφθασε δὲ καὶ μέχρις Ἀλεξανδρείας, εὐξόμενος εἰς τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Μάρκου. Ἦλθε δὲ καὶ δεύτερον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμους, ἰδίως ἀπελθὼν ποσὶ καὶ ἀναλώμασιν ἑαυτῷ ἐπαρκέσας. Greek text [Recension G] in G.J.M. Bartelink, *Palladio. La storia Lausiaca* [Verona: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1974]. Retrieved from: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/Iris/Cite?2111:001:179249>.) Pearson, "Earliest Christianity" 143 was the first to make the connection between Palladius and *Mart. Mark*.

⁸⁸ *Carmen XIX.84-85*: "On you, Alexandria, Mark was conferred, so that the bull could be driven out with Jupiter, and so that Egypt would not stupidly worship cattle under the name of Apis." (*Marcus, Alexandria, tibi datus, ut bove pulso/ Cum Jove, nec pecudes Aegyptus in Apide demens*; ll. 98–110 associates the fall of Serapis in Egypt with the flight of Satan [see below, n. 89]). Text in Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, ed. Wilhelm Hartel in *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 30 (Vienna: F. Tempesky, 1894); 2nd ed. Margit Kamptner (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/paulinus.poemata.html>. Translation from *Paulinus: The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola*, trans. by P.G. Walsh, *Ancient Christian Writers* 40 (New York: Newman Press, 1976), 134. For a concise account of the *Natalicia* and Paulinus' life, see "Introduction" in Walsh, *Poems*, 2–3, 6–13, including the chronology of *Natalicia* on pp. 6–7. In the introduction to their translation of the *Martyrdom* for *EAC* II, Bovon and Callahan questionably list 389 as a boundary ("date butoir") for the poem, since 389 is the earliest date of any of Paulinus' extant poems. Apparently so that they can have fourth-century testimony in support of an argument for the *Martyrdom of Mark* as part of the Jubilee book of 368 (see above), they also date the composition of Palladius' *Historia Lausaica* to the last quarter of the fourth century, despite scholarly consensus for a composition in 419–20. In neither case do Bovon and Callahan give any evidence for their dating methodology (Callahan and Bovon, "Martyre," 570, 572; cf. Callahan, "Acts of Mark [Dissertation]," 85 on Palladius; Paulinus does not appear in the latter). Puzzlingly, Pearson, "Earliest Christianity," 153 also claims that Mark's martyr shrine is attested by the late fourth century, even though the evidence he discusses on 143–44—the reference in Palladius and in the *Passio* of Peter of Alexandria—likewise dates to the fifth century or later. It is possible that Pearson and Callahan both backdate the pilgrimage of Philoromos narrated in *Historia Lausaica* 45, but this is nowhere stated.

⁸⁹ The evidence for knowledge of Mark's martyrdom in Paulinus' *Carmen XIX* is more complex, I think, than acknowledged by Davis and others, who cite it as clear testimony for Mark's manner of death. Consisting of 730 lines, this poem builds toward Paulinus' recounting of the recent theft in Nola of a gold, ornamental cross (ll. 378ff., the cross is described ll. 604–55), a crime halted by the martyr, Felix, whose posthumous power bound the thief with invisible constraints and brought him back to the basilica built in his honor (ll. 496ff.). Before describing this harrowing tale, Paulinus sets the scene by reciting how saints and martyrs were sent to various lands to heal the senses and souls of humankind (35–8, 45ff.), a commission which sowed the seeds of the downfall of Satan, "who possessed the race of men under the names of a thousand gods" (159, translations follow Walsh, *Poems*). A thousand gods required a litany of saints to fight them: Paulinus names Andrew, John, Matthew, Thomas, Thaddaeus, Philip, Titus and Luke in their cities before he arrives at Mark and Alexandria (84-5), at which point Paulinus describes how their commissioning to those cities set off a cascade of fallen idols.

While Paulinus may well mean Serapis by "the bull with Jupiter" (*ut bove pulso/ Cum Jove*), he does not name this deity directly until a little further on: "Satan has also fled (*fugit*) from Egypt, where he had taken countless forms (*figuras*) and countless names appropriate to different monsters (*monstris*). Thus, he fashioned holy Joseph

probably emerged “somewhat earlier” than Paulinus’ Latin poem,⁹⁰ we have no certain testimony to the specifics of Mark’s death as described in *Mart. Mark* prior to the anonymous, mid-seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale* (the entries end in 628).⁹¹ This is a late *terminus ante quem*, so perhaps all we can conclude with confidence goes back to Lipsius: “Only so much is evident that the text belongs to a time in which the pagan celebration of Sarapis either continued in Alexandria, or was still in living memory,”⁹² though of course, *Mart. Mark* would have contributed to keeping that memory alive. Most likely, in my view, *Mart. Mark* began to be circulated in an effort to popularize the martyr cult of Saint Mark, which we hear about for the first time in the early fifth century, but it may not have spread beyond Egypt until later. In any

into Serapis, hiding that revered name beneath a name of death” (98-101). After describing the alleged connection between Joseph and Serapis, Paulinus describes how God pricked the hearts of the Christians so they would respond. And respond they did: “With Serapis overturned and shattered (*eversio fractoque*), the people shut the door (*clausit*) on the cult (*cultum*) of that impious demon (*daemonis*)” (109-110, translation mine). The section ends with a denial of Isis’ divinity and an affirmation of the three-in-one nature of God (141).

It is not precisely clear, then, that in *Carmen XIX* Paulinus alludes to Mark’s conflict with Serapis worshippers, and even less is it certain that Paulinus knows *Mart. Mark* as a text. Still, Paulinus sees Mark’s actions in Alexandria as the seed that grew into the faith that led to the destruction of Serapis, the disappearance of Isis, and the flight of Satan from Egypt. He may have gotten his sense of the destruction of the Serapis cult statue as a totalizing event from Rufinus’ *Church History* (especially 11.24 and 11.28), but neither Rufinus nor the other historians mention Mark. Paulinus does. This does not necessarily reflect direct knowledge of *Mart. Mark* as a text, but his view of Mark’s role in this conflict is consistent with my argument that *Mart. Mark* enacts a proleptic justification for the destruction of the Serapeum within the providential plan of God. As a result, I tentatively accept it as testimony for the sake of dating *Mart. Mark*, but I do not rely on it for the validity of my argument.

⁹⁰ Davis, *Coptic Papacy*, 185 n. 37.

⁹¹ For the entry on the consulate of Syrianus and Marcellus, the chronicle includes an aside on Mark that closely reflects the account of *Mart. Mark*: “In the reign of this Trajan, Mark the evangelist who also became bishop of Alexandria, was dragged with a rope from the place called *Boukoloï* to the so-called *Angeloï* and burnt up by fire there on the first of Pharmouthi and martyred in this way” (ἐπὶ τούτου Τραϊανὸς καὶ Μάρκος ὁ εὐαγγελιστὴς καὶ ἐπίσκοπος Ἀλεξανδρείας γενόμενος, κάλων λαβὼν καὶ συρεῖς ἀπὸ τῶν καλουμένων Βουκολίων ἕως τῶν λεγομένων Ἀγγέλων, ἐκεῖσε πυρὶ κατεκαύθη Φαρμουθὶ πρώτη, καὶ οὕτως ἐμαρτύρησεν. Text of *Chronicon Paschale* in Bonn, ed. (1832), p. 471, cited in Lipsius, “Markus,” 340). Compare *Mart. Mark* §7: “And having taken him, they threw a rope around his neck and dragged him in this manner” (καὶ λάβοντες αὐτὸν, ἔβαλον κάλον εἰς τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ οὕτως ἔσυρον αὐτόν). The two accounts are not a perfect match—in *Mart. Mark*, for instance, Mark is dead before the crowd decides to take his body to *Angeloï* and attempt to burn it; likewise, there is no mention of Serapis worshippers in the chronicle and the dates of the month are different (1st of Pharmouthi vs. 26th of Pharmouthi in *Mart. Mark*), but Lipsius rightly concludes that this author must have had *Mart. Mark*. The *Chronicon Paschale* has received a partial translation in Mary Whitby and Michael Whitby, trans., *Chronicon Paschale 284-628 AD*, Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), but the translation begins from 284, the start of the reign of Diocletian.

⁹² Lipsius, “Markus,” 345: “Nur soviel ist ersichtlich, dass die Schrift einer Zeit angehört, in welcher die heidnische Sarapisfeier in Alexandrien entweder noch fort dauerte, oder doch noch in lebendiger Erinnerung stand.”

case, as will become clear, *Mart. Mark* as we have it clearly post-dates the destruction of the Serapeum.⁹³

Mark and Serapis: A Spirited Iconomachy (resumed)

The narratives of Rufinus and Theodoret are not identical in all regards, but we can underline a number of important features that characterized their reconstructions of the destruction of the Serapeum and its cult statue. In both authors' works, the destruction is cast as part of a longer narrative between "Christians and Pagans," the tide of which has turned as a cascade of temples and cults is overturned for good, including that of Serapis. The statue is divided into multiple pieces, which are dragged throughout the city in a mocking, triumphal procession. In addition to demonstrating his weakness, the distribution of the pieces prevents the return of Serapis from the dead, a goal amplified by the successful burning of his body to ashes. In Rufinus, Serapis is said to have a tomb, but there seems to be no body in it. Finally, all of this happens despite the deceptive fear of cosmic level destruction. The purported conclusion in these narratives is the expiration of the Serapis cult and the justified confidence of Christian triumph.

The author of the *Martyrdom* constructs clear parallels between the ironic procession of Mark's body and that of Serapis in the narrative future, but with opposite results. As argued above, the action of the narrative operates along a stark opposition of Christian versus Pagan, which culminates in §6 with Christian mockery of pagan processions. Only at this point are Serapis and his worshippers mentioned. Once they capture Mark, the festival participants drag him around the city with a rope around his neck in a mocking procession, proclaiming that they

⁹³ This is one point where I most clearly diverge from Nicklas, "The Martyrdom of Mark," 532, who concludes on the basis of "conflicts like those between Christians and the supporters of ancient Greco-Egyptian cults" in *Mart. Mark* that "a date before the final escalation seems plausible."

are dragging him to *Boukolou* in the northeastern part of the city (and presumably where they also seized him, given that Mark is captured while presiding over the Anaphoros on Easter [§7] and only one church is mentioned in the narrative itself [§5]).⁹⁴

But, unlike with the Serapis statue, the procession does not result in Mark's dismemberment. During his night in prison, Mark is visited by an angel who promises him that his "relics (τὰ λείψανα) will not perish on earth" (εἰς γῆν οὐκ ἀπολοῦνται) (§8), a promise which again highlights both the similarity and difference between Mark and the idols, since "perish" (ἀπόλλυμι) is precisely what the demonic representatives do in §1. After Mark dies, the "impious pagans" (δυσσεβεῖς Ἕλληνες) take his body, now described with a singular noun, τὸ λείψανον, as if to emphasize its continued wholeness. They bring it to *Angeloi* where they "lit a fire...and began to burn" it (πῦρ ἀνάψαντες... ἐτέφρωσαν) (§9), but their efforts to destroy his body are further stymied. "Then, by the providence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Τότε προνοία τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), a furious storm came down and there was a great squall of wind (κατέβη λαίλαψ, καὶ ζάλη ἀνέμου ἐγένετο μεγάλη). The sun withdrew its rays and there was a great clap of thunder and a torrent of rain and hail until evening (ὁ ἥλιος συνέστειλεν τὰς ἀκτῖνας, καὶ ἐγένετο βροντῶν ἤχος πολὺς καὶ ὑετὸς πλεῖστος μετὰ χαλάζης ἕως ἑσπέρας), so that many houses collapsed, and many people died" (ὥστε καὶ οἰκήματα πολλὰ καταπίπτειν καὶ πολλοὺς τεθνηκέναι) (§9). Not only does this storm foil their intentions and prevent the Serapis

⁹⁴ On the location, see Pearson, "Earliest Christianity," 153 and Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 398 n. 94. Both scholars associate the church and shrine with the church called "Baucalis," where Arius served as presbyter according to Epiphanius, *Panarion* 69.2 (see Pearson, "Earliest Christianity," 153, noting that "a *baukalis* is a vessel used for cooling water or wine"; Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 269, cites Pearson on this point). If they are right, then the location chosen may also represent an intra-Christian polemic and reclamation of a contested space. However, as argued by Judith R. McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, c. 300 B.C. to A.D. 700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 242 and 407 n. 28, there is no philological reason to make this connection despite the phonetic similarities. For support internal to the narrative that the burial shrine of Mark was located in the eastern or northeastern part of the city, see *Mart. Mark* §10, "And they laid him away in the eastern part (of the city)" (καὶ εἰς τὸ ἀνατολικὸν μέρος ἀπέθεντο).

worshippers from disintegrating Mark’s body—and presence—in Alexandria, but its ferocity also evokes the forewarned falling of the sky and destruction which failed to occur in the case of the Serapis statue. For the author of *Mart. Mark*, the rumor was correct, just misattributed. Mark bears a powerful relation to the deity.

Finally, the author of *Mart. Mark* describes Mark’s death as galvanizing the Christian cult, precisely the opposite effect that the destruction of the statue of Serapis has according to both Rufinus and Theodoret. In Rufinus, after the main statue is burned, there is no trace of Serapis left anywhere save an empty tomb—the destruction of the cult object concludes with the erasure of all remnants; in Theodoret, the sacred precincts of the demons of land and sea everywhere were destroyed. Mark, however, is given burial “in a place hewn out with glory” (ἐν τόπῳ λελατομημένῳ ἐνδόξως). After pious men (ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς) gather his still-whole body (τὸ λείψανον), guaranteed by the angel to endure, they keep him “as the first treasure they had acquired in Alexandria” (ὡς πρῶτον κειμήλιον ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ κεκτημένοι) (§10). Rather than being erased, Mark’s cult and presence are memorialized.

The author draws explicit attention to this comparison between Serapis and Mark through yet another instance of ironic wordplay. While many flee the storm and give up the body, others are said to jeer “that their thrice-blessed Serapis made a divine visitation to this man on account of his birthday!” (ὁ τρισμακάριος Σέραπις αὐτῶν τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐποιήσατο διὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ γενέθλιον) (§9). On one hand, their caustic taunt refers to the power of Serapis, whose Alexandrian “birthday” festival is indeed attested as taking place on April 25, according to the *Kalendarium Romanum Constantini Magni* of 325.⁹⁵ On the other hand, the author inverts the mention of the birthday so that it patently refers to Mark’s martyrdom on that same day (§8,

⁹⁵ Lipsius, “Markus,” 345.

10).⁹⁶ In addition, the author carefully chooses “ἐπισκοπή” for “divine visitation,” a lexeme which likewise often refers to the office of the bishop. Rather than making a divine visitation, then, Serapis is correctly, if not intentionally, proclaimed by this taunt to have sown the seeds of his own downfall. Mark’s “birthday” and episcopal see, which will come to replace Serapis’ festival day and temple, are established by the very actions of Serapis’ worshippers. Rather than being toppled by his death, Mark’s episcopacy and cult are instead founded.

Comparison of Treatment of Serapis Statue and Body of Mark

Serapis	Mark
Dragged in pieces (mocking procession)	Dragged in one piece (mocking procession)
Burned successfully and completely	Failed burning, body buried in one piece
Baseless fear of sky falling and destruction	Unexpected episode of sky falling via torrential hailstorm and civic destruction
Result is justified confidence of Christians	Result is fear of some Serapis worshippers, ironic confidence of others
Conclusion is end of Serapis cult	Conclusion is establishment of Mark cult and ἐπισκοπή

The author of *Mart. Mark*, therefore, characterizes Mark’s death on the basis of the targeted destruction of the Serapis cult statue, and accordingly forges for future readers a link

⁹⁶ Mark is abducted on April 24 (πρὸ ὀκτῶ Καναδῶν Μαΐου, τοῦτ’ ἔστι Ἀπριλλίου κδ’) (§7) and martyred the next day. Migne’s edition of *Par. gr. 881* is obscure on the day of his death in §10, giving only πρὸς τὰ Καλανδῶν Μαΐων for the Roman date, but the manuscript, though faded here, appears to read πρὸ ἐπτὰ Καλανδῶν Μαΐων, which would accord with a progression from the prior date. Although according to Otero, “Later Acts,” 462, the *Martyrdom* itself is not among the works of Simeon Metaphrastes (*contra* Migne), the account was often appointed to be read on April 25, as indicated by folio 310r in *Par. gr. 881*. For additional references to Mark’s feast day, see Lipsius, “Markus,” 336-42. The practice of treating a martyr’s day of death as their “birthday” was well-established among early Christians, as for instance, in *Martyrium Polycarpi* 18 (τὴν τοῦ μαρτυρίου αὐτοῦ ἡμέραν γενέθλιον) or the *Natalicia* Paulinus of Nola delivered each year on the anniversary of Felix’s martyrdom, discussed above. On saints’ days replacing local festivals more broadly, see R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), especially chapter seven on “The Martyrs and Sacred Time,” 97-106, though Graf, *Roman Festivals in the Greek East*, 309 rightly clarifies that the full replacement was typically less successful than assumed by modern scholars, and that competing festivals tended to occur alongside each other.

between Mark and Serapis. Through such narrative contrivances, the author participates in cultural assumptions about dismemberment and burning as punishment, asserting the dominance of the Christian God while denying Serapis worshippers the power to do to Mark's body what Christians will in the narrative future do to Serapis. Furthermore, the body—Mark's relics—is carried in procession around the city, from τὰ βουκόλου in the northeast, perhaps all the way to the southwest corner of the city (if τοὺς καλουμένους ἀγγέλους refers to the Angelion church built later at the site of the Serapeum),⁹⁷ and back to τὰ βουκόλου, a ritual which must have

⁹⁷ Several scholars have speculated on the possibility of a connection between this church and the place where the Serapis worshippers tried to burn Mark's body in *Mart. Mark* (for instance, see Pearson, "Earliest Christianity," 154, mistakenly calling Angelion an "alternate name for a church built in the sixth century in honor of Saint John the Baptist," and Callahan, "Acts of Mark [Dissertation], 98, who attributes the building of this sixth-century church to emperor Theodosius; cf. Birger A. Pearson, "The *Acts of Mark* and the Topography of Ancient Alexandria," *Bulletin Société archéologique d'Alexandrie* 45 [1993], 243; Callahan, "Acts of Mark [*Vat. gr. 866*]," 9 n. 34; Nicklas, "The Martyrdom of Mark," 532 n. 62). If they are right about the identification, then the symbolic geography of *Mart. Mark* is rendered in high definition. The arguments of both scholars, however, are somewhat confused on the matter, which makes the potential connection between Angelion church and *Mart. Mark* less certain.

The church mentioned by Rufinus in *Historia Ecclesiastica* 11.27 was dedicated to Arcadius or Honorius, the sons of Emperor Theodosius, while the martyr shrine erected in the immediate aftermath was dedicated to John the Baptist. Thelamon, *Païens et chrétiens*, 264, states that the area where these churches were built was known as "Angelium or Evangelium," but he offers no evidence to support that claim. Regardless, as part of the ongoing diophysite/miophysite disputes between Julian and the various parties in Egypt and Syria in the sixth century, a church called Angelion was built by followers of Patriarch Theodosius (Coptic Miaphysite patriarch from 535–567, though he spent most of his episcopal career in Constantinople under the protection of Empress Theodora). After Julian closed all the churches for a year (538–39) in order to shut down theological dissent and bring the Alexandrian churches under control of the Chalcedonian leadership, those who were encouraged by Theodosius' letters "built a church by the power of Christ, in the western part of Alexandria, in the place called the Pillars, or the Serapeum; and this church is the Angelion, which they built secretly at the hundred-and-five steps" (Sawirus ibn el-Muqaffa, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, ed. and trans. Basil Evetts, *Patrologia Orientalis* I.2 [Paris: Firmin Didot, 1904], 467. This section of the *History* was probably composed by George the Archdeacon, scribe of Patriarch Simon I [692–700], according to Johannes den Heijer, "History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria" in *Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. Aziz S. Atiya [New York and Toronto: Macmillan, 1991], 4.1238–42). Two Greek sources (I have not yet found Coptic, Syriac, or other sources that mention an Angelion church)—Timothy of Constantinople's seventh-century *De iis qui ad ecclesiam accedunt sive de receptione haereticorum* (*On the Reception of Heretics*) and Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopolus' fourteenth century *Historia Ecclesiastica* (which seems to follow Timothy's writing here)—associate the church with a sect they call Ἀγγελίται "because of the place called Angelion in Alexandria, in which those who held positions of authority (τὰ πρῶτα) among them were gathered and had their meeting place" (PG 86, 60B: ἐκ τοῦ τόπου οὗτω καλουμένου Ἀγγελίου ἐν Ἀλεξανδρίᾳ, ἐν ᾧ συνακτῆριον ἔχοντες οἱ τὰ πρῶτα ἐν αὐτοῖς φέροντες συνάγονται. Cf. Xanthopolus, *Historia* 18.49 in PG 147, 432A–B). The possible connection between τοὺς καλουμένους ἀγγέλους and the Angelites is first observed by Aristide Calderini, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano* (Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1935), I/1, 88. On the history of various factions in Alexandria and their importance for ecclesial identity in this period, see Davis, *Early Coptic Papacy*, 88–112.

Mart. Mark clearly displays an interest in investing Alexandrian sites with apostolic significance (we can add "Mendion," mentioned in *Mart. Mark* §3, as a location that likely refers to a church later named for Athanasius

taken place among late ancient Christians in Alexandria. By drawing such close parallels, the author contends that Mark's epiphanic body functions as a superior cult image for the city.

At the same time, the author of *Mart. Mark* plays on the ambiguous liveliness of the Serapis statue and uses it to call attention to the shifting status of Mark's own body, weakening the boundary between the Mark depicted in the narrative and the one that lives on for epiphanic encounter. Mark is an image, and yet not; his relics are mere matter, and yet more. What is certain is that he, as a representative of Christ, is superior to Serapis, the great cult statue and leading god of Alexandria. Mark's lifeless body, the author conveys, is still more animate than the "living" Serapis statue.

Conclusions

In the analysis of Patricia Cox Miller, relics are *the* exemplar for Thing Theory because they use the material to enhance the spiritual and thus, despite being mere objects, they "can no longer be taken for granted as part of the everyday world of the naturalized environment of the death and decay of the human body."⁹⁸ They exceed their material status and resist passive objectification. As a result, relics were "neither wholly material nor wholly spiritual" but "mediated between matter and spirit and so subdued the potential dichotomy between them."⁹⁹ In *Mart. Mark*, however, Mark's relics are resolutely material. The angel promises that they will be preserved alongside a promise that Mark's spirit (πνεῦμα), which he hands over (παραδίδωμι)

[see Pearson, "Earliest Christianity," 152]). But given the later date for the construction of this church and the complexity surrounding its patronage, it is difficult to conclude with confidence that τοὺς καλουμένους ἄγγέλους in §6 and §8 refers to the location of the Serapeum and a church built there. If it does, then three possibilities for the inclusion of this detail in *Mart. Mark* seem most likely: it was included as the result of later revision (i.e., in the sixth or seventh century, which is also when we first have certain attestation of the text in the *Chronikon Paschale*), the *Mart. Mark* itself was not written and circulated until the midst of this intra-Christian conflict, or the sixth-century church itself was named after the area.

⁹⁸ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 62. For further discussion of Thing Theory, see above p. 149 n. 122.

⁹⁹ Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 64.

(§9), will be received by archangels (§8). There is no spirit in them. But his relics can attain the object-defying powers of agency that “things” exemplify, evident in their later characterization in the *Passio Petri*, because the author of *Mart. Mark* does not characterize the living Mark as an entirely active subject.

I have argued in this chapter that *Mart. Mark*, a late ancient narrative text that describes the career and death of Mark the apostle and evangelist, establishes a strong opposition between the saint and the idols, which the author then deliberately collapses by fashioning Mark himself into an image paraded in religious procession. Mark is set up as superior to the idols, but also much the same. However, the consequences of this ontological similarity are downplayed through a creative deployment of the epistemological and ethical arguments whereby the deity is encountered through Mark, who was made holy by his active imitation of Christ. Mark represents Christ through his actions, words, and textual corpus, painting with his own soul a portrait of Christ that readers and listeners will in turn be able to imitate. Yet by playing up the tensive significances of processions in the spectacle that is Mark’s death, the representational capacities of Mark are materialized, the author thus forging a link between the living Mark and the dead Mark that invests his material remains with holy power through a circuit that flows between his multiple bodies: physical, textual, and communal. While it has been well established that many late ancient Christians believed the “presence” of the holy could be encountered in relics and martyria,¹⁰⁰ my analysis here shows how the author of *Mart. Mark* actively engaged with the theological conundrum presented by investing the corporeal body with spiritual power.

Of course, this engagement could have happened in other ways. Jerome defended relics by differentiating terms, by denying that the saints were lifeless, and leaning heavily on the

¹⁰⁰ See the classic study of Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), esp. 86–105 on *praesentia*.

demonological affiliation between idols and demons. *Mart. Mark* makes its case subtly and bluntly at the same time. The power of Mark's relics is proven almost off the page, as the author relies on the audience's recognition of irony in Mark's death and calls attention to the striking parallels between the procession of Mark's remains to the infamous destruction of the Serapis cult statue. The multi-temporal plot that emerges reveals a conception of both lifeless idols and living images that complicates a neat division of soul and body, spirit and matter. But this complication cannot be taken to support the sharp opposition between "theologians" and "the normal order" proposed by Glenn Peers and Virginia Burrus on the issue of lively matter and relational agency.¹⁰¹ Neither *Mart. Mark* nor the accounts of Rufinus and Theodoret—erudite theologians in their own right—can be interpreted as either fully embracing the animacy and agency of matter or rejecting it, a conclusion which would require taking for granted sophisticated narratological choices as statements of uncomplicated belief. Moreover, a primary way that many late ancient and Byzantine Christians, theologically astute and otherwise, learned to "cultivate relationships to nonhuman things"¹⁰² was through the reading and ritual reenactment of narratives like *Mart. Mark*. We cannot conclude that they are wholly representative of popular views or necessarily opposed to the curt declarations that emerged from theological controversies; the narrative poetics are too intertwined in the depiction of images. Contrary to Peers' pronouncement, the "line between image and saint, representation and relic," did not so much "lose meaning"¹⁰³ in narrative animation as gain it. This is a necessary reminder for the analysis of the apocryphal *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, to which I now turn.

¹⁰¹ Peers, "Object Relations," 975-976; Burrus, *Ancient Christian Ecopoetics*, e.g., 212.

¹⁰² Burrus, *Ecopoetics*, 151.

¹⁰³ Peers, "Object Relations," 972.

4. Idol Chatter:

Materiality and Animacy in the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*

Perhaps paradoxically, one of the most striking features of the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals* is an absence. This apocryphal narrative, which likely dates to the turn from the fourth to the fifth century CE in Egypt, is, to put it candidly, full of arresting enigmas; but there is no toppling of idols.¹ The destruction of idols is of course not present in all

¹ The best edition remains “Acta Andreae et Matthiae,” in *Acta apostolorum apocrypha post Constantinum Tischendorf* II.1, ed. Maximilianus Bonnet (Hildesheim and New York: G. Olms, 1972 [1898]), 65–116. Dennis R. MacDonald offered an edition in *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, Texts and Translations 33 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholar’s Press, 1990), 70–169, which selectively draws on a wider array of testimonies; however, the entire edition is aimed at reconstructing the so-called “primitive *Acts of Andrew*” in pursuit of his contention that the *AA* was a Christian *Odyssey*, and on this basis he selects supposedly Homeric-allusive readings from later Andrew texts and the later Latin edition to replace, for instance, “City of the Cannibals” with “City of the Myrmidons.” A new edition by Andrey Vinogradov is apparently underway with CCSA, but publication seems to be well in the future. For these reasons, I will follow Bonnet’s edition, citing by paragraph number in the main text of the chapter and, when quoting, by page and line number in the notes.

On the date and provenance, much of the scholarly discussion has centered around the relationship of *Acts Andr. Matth.* to the second-century apocryphal *Acta Andreae* and the late sixth century *Epitome* of Gregory of Tours (see L. Roig Lanzillota, “Cannibals, Myrmidonians, Sinopeans, or Jews? The Five Versions of the Acts of Andrew and Matthias and Their Source[s],” in *Wonders Never Cease: The Purpose of Narrating Miracle Stories in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. Michael Labahn and Bert Liettaert Peerbolte, LNTS 288 [London: T&T Clark, 2006], 221–243), as well as the discussion in MacDonald, *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*, 3–59, and his back and forth with J.P. Prieur in, e.g., Dennis R. MacDonald, “The Acts of Andrew and Matthias and the Acts of Andrew,” *Semeia* 38 [1986], 28). Most scholars, however, have rightly concluded that the text under discussion in this chapter is a later composition, more or less unrelated to the *Acts of Andrew* (stated forcefully in Anthony Hilhorst and Pieter J. Lalleman, “The Acts of Andrew and Matthias: Is it Part of the Original Acts of Andrew?” in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer, Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles 5 [Leuven: Peeters, 2000], 1–14). More recently, scholars have begun more carefully to analyze the relationship of *Acts Andr. Matth.* to the so-called “Egyptian” apocryphal acts, many of which were likely composed in the late fourth and fifth centuries as well, and which eventually formed something of a set for Christians under the Alexandrian Patriarchate. While the original languages likely vary in individual cases, the texts were successively translated together into Bohairic, Arabic, and Ethiopic in the Middle Ages. (The current, most comprehensive discussion of these apocrypha as a whole can be found in a blog post written by Tony Burke as a preview for his forthcoming work in the *Yale Anchor Bible Reference Library*: Tony Burke, “The ‘Egyptian’ Collection of Apocryphal Acts, Part 1: Coptic, Arabic, and Ge’ez Sources,” *Apocryphicity: A Blog Devoted to the Study of Christian Apocrypha*, December 12, 2020, <https://www.apocryphicity.ca/2020/12/12/the-egyptian-collection-of-apocryphal-acts-part-1-coptic-arabic-and-geez-sources/>.) Joseph Flamion was the first modern scholar to suggest this literary context for *Acts Andr. Matth.*, directing readers to connections between *Acts Andr. Matth.* and works such as the *Acts of Andrew and Peter* (see Bonnet, *AAA* II.1 117–27) in his monograph, *Les Actes Apocryphes de l’Apôtre André: les Actes d’André et de Mathias, de Pierre et d’André et les textes apparentés* (Louvain: Bureaux du Recueil, 1911), 269–300. More recently, Luna Martelli has analyzed *Acts Andr. Matth.* and similar texts in relation to the subject of her dissertation, the *Acta Andreae et Barthomaei*, which I will discuss more below (see Luna Martelli, “*Acta Andreae et Barthomaei*

Christian narrative literature, but its presence, built on biblical motifs, was common enough to become an expected trope in missionary narratives, and the overturning of these signs of absent divinity more often than not signaled the change in religious identity. Moreover, as we saw in the previous chapter with the *Martyrdom of Mark*, the narrative opposition between Christ and the idols (often between his followers and those who worship the idols), can be quite strong. But that is not the case in the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* (hereafter *Acts Andr. Matth.*). In fact, it is a rather surprising collaboration between an idol and Jesus and what that might mean for the interpretation of this narrative—what the author expected readers to understand about lifeless images—that intrigues me here.

The narrative recounts primarily the exploits of the apostle Andrew in the so-called City of the Cannibals (*Anthropophagoi*),² where, later in the account, he will undergo persecution and torture before inciting their conversion and initiation into Christian life. Before this takes place, however, *Acts Andr. Matth.* opens with the commission of Andrew’s fellow apostle Matthias to this foreboding city, where he is immediately captured, blinded, and given a potion to remove his human capacities (though it fails), so that the *anthropophagoi* can eat him after a period of thirty days (§1-3). Jesus appears to Andrew three days before Matthias’s expiration date, commanding him to go and save his fellow apostle, a prospect at which Andrew initially balks, due to the

[BHG 2056, CANT 238]: Edizione critica e commento della versione greca” [PhD diss., Università di Bologna, 2015], 26–50). Finally, Ivan Miroshnikov, “The Coptic Versions of the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* (CANT 236), with an Edition of IFAO Copte Inv. 123,” *Le Muséon* 132 (3–4) (2019): 291, dates *Acts Andr. Matth.* slightly earlier, to the mid- to late-fourth century, on the basis of Andrey Vinogradov, *The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals* [Russian] (Moscow: Dmitry Pozharsky University, 2014), 147–49, though Vinogradov’s discussion on this point adds nothing to that of Flamion and the mid-century assessment of Flamion in Francis Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 202–5. I thank Ivan Miroshnikov for pointing me to Vinogradov’s monograph.

² Lit. “people eaters.” Throughout this chapter I tend toward transliterating “*anthropophagos*” instead of the conventional translation “cannibal,” due to the latter term’s wider reference to human-eating non-human animals, for instance, and the latter’s derivation from the Spanish name for the West Indies Carib people, a genealogy that perhaps gives a misleading picture of this monstrous literary character. I do still occasionally, translate the term as cannibal, however, especially with reference to the name of the city in this narrative.

distance of the city and his weak human flesh (§4). Nonetheless, Andrew travels to the shore the next day and finds a boat captained by Jesus in disguise that just so happens to be travelling in the direction of the cannibals, so Andrew and his disciples climb on board (§5-7). During the journey, the narrative turns for a time to a discussion between Andrew and Captain Jesus regarding the miracles of Jesus and the failure of “the faithless Jews” to believe, even after witnessing the testimony of an animated stone sphinx (§8-15).

After this extended discussion ends, Andrew falls asleep and Jesus has his angels deliver the apostle and his disciples to the gates of the City of the Cannibals, where Andrew realizes what has happened and receives from Jesus a preview of what tortures will befall him in the city (§16-18). He then enters, finds the prison where Matthias and other captives are held, heals and frees them, and finally proceeds to the rest of the city for a series of showdowns with the *anthropophagoi* (§19-21). They, it turns out, have been spurred to action by the devil, who acts among them in the guise of an old man, encouraging them to eat members of their own society since the prisoners have been freed (§22-24). After winning a few rounds of contest against the city’s inhabitants, Andrew is captured and tortured for three days, being dragged around the city by its inhabitants and mocked by the devil with seven unnamed “wicked demons” at night (§25-28), until Jesus appears to and heals him. Refreshed, the apostle prays for brackish water to shoot forth from the mouth of an alabaster statue, and the water consumes the flesh-eating citizens until they decide to confess belief in Andrew’s God (§29-30). The water recedes, and Andrew raises those killed by the water, condemns the city’s leaders (along with one old man who sought to have his children slaughtered in his place) to be swallowed up temporarily by the earth. He baptizes the rest, giving them a church, the commandments, and the mysteries of Jesus Christ

before attempting to leave the city, which requires Jesus to appear and instruct Andrew to stay and teach the newly converted, erstwhile cannibals in the faith (§31-33).

Notably, the *anthropophagoi* are not asked to turn over any idols before or as the result of converting. In fact, despite the attempt of Dennis R. MacDonald to describe the *Acts Andr. Matth.* as targeted specifically against Greek heroes, philosophy, and religion,³ the only potential indication of their religious practices comes during a conversation for which the cannibals are not even present. At the end of the second day of being dragged around (§26), Andrew is mocked by the devil and seven demons in a passage that loosely imitates the passion accounts of Jesus.⁴ The demons taunt “Now you have fallen into our hands. Where is your power, your fearsomeness, your glory, and your exaltation? (Νῦν ἐνέπεσας εἰς τὰς χεῖρας ἡμῶν· ποῦ ἐστὶν ἡ δύναμίς σου καὶ ὁ φόβος σου καὶ ἡ δόξα σου καὶ ἡ ὑψωσίς σου;) You are the one who raised yourself against us, both dishonoring us and telling stories of our works in every place and region (ὁ ἐπαίρων σεαυτὸν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀτιμάζων ἡμᾶς καὶ διηγούμενος τὰ ἔργα ἡμῶν τοῖς κατὰ τόπον καὶ χώραν), and you turned our temples into deserted houses (καὶ ἐποίησας τὰ ἱερὰ ἡμῶν οἰκίας ἐρήμους γενέσθαι), lest sacrifices be offered up in them so that we might take delight” (ἵνα μὴ ἀνενεχθῶσιν θυσίαι ἐν αὐτοῖς, ὅπως καὶ ἡμεῖς τερφθῶμεν) (§26).⁵ By mentioning their

³ Dennis R. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer: The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). In MacDonald’s reconstruction, the *Acts Andr. Matth.* creatively imitates passages and themes from an array of Homeric episodes, including Circe’s transformation of Odysseus’s men into animals (*Od.* X), Odysseus’s descent to the underworld (*Od.* XI), and the humiliation of Hector (*Il.* XXII). Other parallels for §3-17 include an unordered assortment of passages from *Od.* II-XV, even though the chapter in his monograph that analyzes *Acts. Andr. Matth.* is titled “The Iliad,” suggesting that the narrative functioned as a kind of prologue to the longer *Acta Andreae*. In short, MacDonald fails on his own terms to show that “by the end of the chapter it will become clear that they repeatedly occur in the same order as in the epics, a phenomenon impossible to attribute to happenstance” (39). For a more thorough assessment of MacDonald’s methodology and its shortcomings, albeit in a later work that develops the thesis of *Christianizing Homer*, see Margaret M. Mitchell, “Homer in the New Testament?” *Journal of Religion* 83:2 (2003): 244–60.

⁴ In §18, Jesus tells Andrew that he underwent his own suffering to present a model (τύπος) for Andrew. The text fulfills this claim by including a scene of extended mockery (§26–27) that peaks with the demons’ taunt that they will kill Andrew “like your teacher, called Jesus, whom Herod killed” (Bonnet, *Acts. Andr. Matth.* 105.2–3).

⁵ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 104.9–105.1. All translations are my own.

temples, the author has the demons allude to a widespread Christian belief that demons were behind the cultic activities and sacrificial offerings of the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, and others.⁶ But the demons' complaint also suggests that they are not particularly gladdened by sacrifices in their current location, either. They have been driven from every place, not unlike the devil in *Vita Antonii* 41, who complains that monks have filled the desert and left him without a home. It is thus hard to conclude that the *anthropophagoi* themselves have or had been offering sacrifices like these. There is no temple for them to worship in. *Pace* Tobias Nicklas, who asserted that the cannibals had made a pact with the devil,⁷ they are characterized in *Acts Andr. Matth.* as wholly unaware of the devil's identity—disguised as he is as an old man (γέρων, e.g., §24)—and activity among them.⁸ Their recognition of the superiority of the Christian God is not

⁶ See already Paul 1 Cor 10:14–22 drawing this association for the early Christ cult. For the prevalence of this theme in monastic writings and identity formation, the context in which *Acts Andr. Matth.* was likely composed, see David Brakke, “From Temple to Cell, From Gods to Demons: Pagan Temples in the Monastic Topography of Fourth-Century Egypt,” in *From Temple to Church* (eds. Hahn, Emmel, and Gotter), 91–112; David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 227–239. Both Flamion and Martelli suggest a monastic setting for the initial composition and circulation of these texts (Flamion, *Les Actes*, 310–24; Martelli, “*Acta Andree et Bartholomaei*,” 50–63), a likelihood supported by the first extant allusion to *Acts Andr. Matth.* found in *On the Cell* 117. In this writing by the late fourth or early fifth century anchorite, Paul of Tamma encourages his monastic readers to stand against demons, and withdraw inwardly, “For Andrew was found walking by himself in the City of the Cannibals” (ἀγρε γαρ εανδρεας εφμοσσε μαγαα ρη τπολις ηηεογαμρωμε). On Paul of Tamma's text, *On the Cell*, see Tito Orlandi, *Paulo di Tamma: Opere. Introduzione, Testo, Traduzione, e Concordanze* (Roma: C.I.M., 1988), 112; for biographical information, see Alin Suciu, “Sitting in the Cell: The Literary Development of an Ascetic Praxis in Paul of Tamma's Writings. With an Edition of Some Hitherto Unknown Fragments of *De Cella*,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 68.1 (April 2017): 142–150. The allusion to *Acts Andr. Matth.* in Paul of Tamma has also been noted by David Brakke, “Making of a Monastic Demonology: Three Ascetic Teachers on Withdrawal and Resistance,” *Church History* 70:1 (2001), 41–42; and by Miroshnikov, “Coptic *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*,” 314–15, who observes that Paul seems to be familiar with the Greek version of *Acts Andr. Matth.*, where Andrew and Matthias separate, rather than the most common Coptic version (eventually transmitted into Arabic and Ethiopic), where the apostles remain together and Matthias plays a larger role.

⁷ Tobias Nicklas, “Zaubertränke, sprechende Statuen und eine Gefangenenbefreiung: Magie und Wunder in den *Akten des Andreas und Matthias*,” *Annali di Storia dell' Esegese* 24:2 (2007): 497.

⁸ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 100.1. For further support of this conclusion, see §24 (101.8–10). After the *anthropophagoi* and the devil (in disguise but recognized by Andrew) fail to find Andrew as he evades their murderous pursuits, Jesus appears and commands the apostle to “reveal” himself “to them, so that they might learn the power of the devil who is active among them” (φανέρωσον σεαυτὸν εἰς αὐτούς, ἵνα μάθωσιν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἐνεργοῦντος αὐτοῖς διαβόλου), indicating that they have thus far been unaware. The revelation of the devil's power (or lack thereof), however, is never actually given to the cannibals, only to the reading audience. In §27, the demons complain that they cannot kill Andrew due to their fear of the cross seal on his forehead, and they eventually flee with the devil when Andrew promises that “if the Lord pays me a visit in this city” (ἐὰν γὰρ μοι ὁ κύριος ἐπισκοπήν ποιήσῃ; or, “...creates an episcopacy for me in this city,” cf. pp. 199–200 in chapter 3, above), then I will teach you a lesson as you deserve (παιδεύσω ὑμᾶς καθὼς ἄξιόι ἐστε [106.17–107.1]). The entire scene, however, happens in

initiated by witnessing the defeat of their own gods, demonically understood or otherwise. It is not even clear in *Acts Andr. Matth.* that the *anthropophagoi* have idols or other gods at all.

This portrayal of *anthropophagite* religiosity (or lack thereof) deviates surprisingly from the commonplace form of relationship between idols, idol worshippers, and the demonic wiles that inspire them. In fact, whereas in chapter 3 the opposition to idols plays out a rather marked concern with the similarities between Christian relic cults and “pagan idolatry,” here, I argue, an idol allows the author to purge a worrying resemblance to Jews: a shared idol polemic. In this chapter, I analyze how the animated stone sphinx in the flashback episode from *Acts Andr. Matth.* §12–15 is depicted simultaneously as an inanimate idol and as a living image. Throughout the narrative, I argue, stony (in)animacy is compared and contrasted with imitation and virtuous obedience, encouraging reflection for readers upon what makes up true liveliness and lifelessness, themes perhaps particularly important for monastic readers of the *Acts Andr. Matth.*, amongst whom this narrative likely originated. After contextualizing this scene, my analysis focuses on how the author deploys choices in narrative setting and characterization to de-animate the Chief Priests of the Jews through the animation of the sphinx, thus heightening the divide between Christians and Jews despite a shared idolatry discourse. Building on this analysis, I then explore how the portrayal of the sphinx as an ambiguous Christian ally provides the author an opportunity to dramatize the life-giving power of Jesus and force the reader to see beyond appearances when discerning the presence of Christ.

But this decoupling of the idol from lifelessness also came with certain risks, I argue, as it challenged the implicit basis for the boundary maintenance that idolatry polemic enacted, namely, what Mel Chen has described as an “animacy hierarchy.” Accordingly, I turn at the end

private, without any *anthropophagos* present, and the citizens continue their torture of Andrew on the following day, ignorant of the flight of the demons.

of the chapter to two instances of narrative reception of the *Acts Andr. Matth.* Each of these slightly later narratives, the *Martyrdom of Matthew/Matthias* and the *Acts of Andrew and Bartholomew*, engages differently with the (in)animacy of idols. They thus attest to the simultaneous success and failure of deliberately subverting expectations regarding the materiality and representative capacities of idols in *Acts Andr. Matth.* §12–15. This diversity of depictions of idols in the same story world, I conclude, illustrates a mode of Christianizing the image by portraying a range of relations to religious others and their objects.

The Riddle of the Sphinx

The broader movement of the text that culminates in the episode with the sphinx begins shortly after Andrew balks at the idea of traveling to the city of the cannibals within three days (§4). Andrew finds the boat Jesus had promised, which is piloted by Jesus with three angels, whom Andrew does not recognize because Jesus “had hidden his own divinity and was appearing to Andrew as a human ship captain” (κρύψας τὴ ἐαυτοῦ θεότητα, καὶ ἦν φαινόμενος τῷ Ἀνδρέᾳ ὡς ἄνθρωπος πρῶρεύς) (§5).⁹ A back and forth ensues, during which Andrew tells Captain Jesus that they do not have fare for the journey because their Lord commanded them not to carry a purse, extra clothing or food when they go to preach (§6, cf. Matt. 10:7-10), and Andrew narrates to his own disciples about the time Jesus tested them by sleeping in the boat before he emerged to walk on water and calm the sea (*Acts Andr. Matth.* §8, cf. Matthew 8:23ff). Without an ounce of recognition, Andrew then presses Captain Jesus to reveal (ὕποδείκνυμι) information about his boat piloting skills because the sea is so calm. Jesus demurs, replying that the sea simply recognizes that a just disciple of Jesus is on board (§9). The irony throughout the

⁹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 70.10.

exchange is palpable. Despite testifying on behalf of Jesus, Andrew does not see what is right in front of him. Readers later learn that Jesus has hidden his divinity specifically to reveal (ὕποδείκνυμι) to Andrew in his disbelief that he as God can do anything (§18),¹⁰ and the author thus subtly aligns vision and recognition with faith.

Turning the conversation between Captain Jesus and Andrew toward a recapitulation of the miracles Jesus performed during his earthly ministry, the author develops this ironic episode through a play on secrecy and revelation. Having heard about himself, Captain Jesus demands that Andrew, who is currently being taught a lesson about his own unbelief, answer a question about the unbelief of others. “Why did the faithless Jews (διὰ τί οἱ ἄπιστοι Ἰουδαῖοι) not believe in him (οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν αὐτῷ), saying that he is not God but human?” (λέγοντες ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν θεὸς ἀλλ’ ἄνθρωπος;).¹¹ Before Andrew can reply, Captain Jesus adds, “Reveal it to me (φανερώσον μοι)...for we have heard that he revealed his divinity to his disciples” (ἠκούσαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐφάνερωσεν τὴν θεότητα αὐτοῦ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ).¹² Andrew answers, reassuring Captain Jesus that Jesus had indeed “revealed to us that he was God” (ἐφάνερωσεν ἡμῖν ὅτι θεὸς ἔστιν), exhorting Captain Jesus that he “should not think that he is human” (μὴ νομίσης ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ἔστιν), and narrating a number of other New Testament miracles as proof (§10).¹³ Captain Jesus, however, once he learns that Jesus performed signs in public and in private, demands to know more: “What kinds of miracles did he do in secret? (Ποῖαί εἰσιν αἱ δυνάμεις ἅς

¹⁰ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 88.5–8.

¹¹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 76.10–11.

¹² Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 76.12–13.

¹³ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 76.14–15. Andrew’s narration of miracles is in response to Captain Jesus’s suggestion that perhaps Jesus did not perform any signs in front of them, and he describes how Jesus made the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers clean (cf. Matthew 11:5), turned water into wine (John 2:1ff), and fed the 5000 (Matthew 15:14ff). *Acts Andr. Matth.* 10 (77.1–7).

ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ κρύπτῳ;) Reveal them to me!” (φανέρωσόν μοι αὐτάς).¹⁴ After a moment of resistance, Andrew agrees (§11).

With the stage set for both revelation and occlusion—the two sides of the mimetic paradox—the author plunges the reader into a proleptic narrative within the narrative, narrated by and focalized through Andrew. “It happened that we twelve disciples were going with Jesus into the temple of the gentiles (ἐγένετο πορευομένων ἡμῶν τῶν δώδεκα μαθητῶν μετὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν εἰς ἱερὸν τῶν ἐθνῶν) in order that he might make known to us the ignorance of the devil” (ἵνα γνωρίσῃ ἡμῖν τὴν ἄγνοιαν τοῦ διαβόλου).¹⁵ While this sounds like the set up to an anti-pagan story, perhaps where the temple gods will be shown to be weak and the idols overthrown, what the disciples encounter instead are the chief priests of the Jews. Upon seeing the disciples following Jesus, the chief priests ask, “how it is that you walk around with the one who says, ‘I am the Son of God?’ (πῶς περπατεῖτε μετὰ τοῦ λέγοντος ὅτι Υἱός εἰμι τοῦ θεοῦ;) Surely, God does not have a son, does he?” (Μὴ ἔχει υἱὸν ὁ θεός;). They continue, speculating that God would not consort (ὀμιλέω) with a woman and asking, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph the carpenter? Isn’t his Mother Mary and aren’t his brothers Jacob and Simon?” (μὴ οὐκ οὗτος καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ Μαριάμ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ Ἰάκωβος καὶ Σίμων;) (§12).¹⁶ The questions echo closely a passage in Matthew 13:54–57 and parallels in which these questions serve to discredit Jesus’s claims to prophethood in his own land. As a result, Jesus does not perform any miracles there. But in *Acts Andr. Matth.* readers are already primed to expect miracles because the revelation of miracles is precisely why Andrew is telling the story. From the start, therefore, the author hints that expectations will be upset.

¹⁴ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 77.13–14.

¹⁵ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 78.9–11.

¹⁶ Bonnet, *Acts. Andr. Matth.* 13–17.

In fact, the entrance into the “temple of the gentiles” surprises not only because the apostles encounter the chief priests there, but also because the entire scene that follows plays out against the backdrop of Jesus’ dispute with the chief priests and Pharisees in the Jerusalem temple from John 8. In the gospel account, the dispute centers on the worthiness Jesus’ self-testimony (8:13–14), divine or human identity (8:21–29), and respective relations to Abraham of both Jesus and the chief priests and Pharisees (8:31–47, 56–58). The dispute continues into John 9 when Jesus heals the man born blind, an event which the Pharisees refuse to recognize as a miracle, revealing their own spiritual blindness in the process:

“I came into this world for judgement, in order that those who do not see would see and those who do see would become blind” (ἵνα οἱ μὴ βλέποντες βλέπωσιν καὶ οἱ βλέποντες τυφλοὶ γένωνται). Those who were with him from among the Pharisees heard these things and said to him, “Are we blind as well!?” (μὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς τυφλοὶ ἐσμεν;) And Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin, but now you say, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains (εἰ τυφλοὶ ἦτε, οὐκ ἄν εἴχετε ἁμαρτίαν· νῦν δὲ λέγετε ὅτι βλέπομεν, ἡ ἁμαρτία ὑμῶν μένει) (9:39–41).

The Gospel writer composes the scene with Isa 6:9 as an intertext so that readers understand clearly that physical sight and spiritual sight are not equivalent, and in fact may be at odds. Such realignment serves simultaneously to include and exclude. By swapping physical sightedness, a sign of life, for spiritual, the Gospel writer decouples a physical disability from its purported cause of sin and thereby includes those who had been excluded from the Israelite temple cult because they lacked physical “wholeness”; at the same time, pushing the animacy motif to the realm of spirit still relies on the idea that is better to see than not, and excludes the chief priests and Pharisees accordingly.¹⁷

¹⁷ On “whole/defect” discourse from a disability studies perspective on the Hebrew Bible, see Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Difference* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009); on John 9, see Louise A. Gosbell, “*The Poor, the Crippled, the Blind, and the Lame*”: *Physical and Sensory Disability in the Gospels of the New Testament*, WUNT II 469 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 299–322.

Similar rhetorical work is on display in *Acts Andr. Matth* §13-15 with the sphinx. The dispute that follows will likewise center on Jesus’s divinity, his relationship to Abraham, and the blindness of the chief priests, tapping into a well-trod source of Christian anti-Judaism. But in this narrative, Jesus will not act as his own witness. After the questions of the chief priests, Jesus reassures his disciples, taking them to a deserted place where “he showed [them] his full divinity” (ὑπέδειξεν ἡμῖν τὸν θεότητα αὐτοῦ πᾶσαν) (§12).¹⁸ The disciples, in turn, invite the chief priests back to the temple of the gentiles along with thirty men of the people. Upon their reentry to the temple, Jesus immediately points to two stone sphinxes, one on the left and one on the right, the second of which he commands to “answer, refute the Chief Priests (ἀποκρίθητι καὶ ἔλεγξον τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς) and show them whether I am God or human” (καὶ ὑπόδειξον αὐτοῖς εἰ ἐγὼ θεός εἰμι ἢ ἄνθρωπος) (§13).¹⁹

The sphinx springs to life. It acquires a human voice and begins to argue for Jesus’s divinity against the doubting chief priests. “O Foolish Sons of Israel (ὦ μωροὶ υἱοὶ Ἰσραήλ), for whom their blindness of the heart is not enough (οἷς οὐκ ἠρκέσθη μόνον ἡ τύφλωσις τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν), but who wish to make others blind like they themselves are” (ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐτέρουσ θέλουσιν τυφλῶσαι ὡς καὶ αὐτοί).²⁰ The sphinx continues with dismay, declaiming a series of divine roles that will be proven in the rest of the scene:

This [Jesus] is the one who crafted the human being from the beginning and imparted his breath to all things (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὸν ἄνθρωπον πλάσας καὶ δούς τὴν πνοὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν πᾶσιν, Gen 2:7–8), who moved every immovable thing (ὁ κινήσας πάντα τὰ ἀκίνητα). This is the one who called Abraham, who loved his son Isaac, and who returned his beloved Jacob to his land (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ καλέσας τὸν Ἀβραάμ, ὁ ἀγαπήσας τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ Ἰσαάκ, ὁ ἐπιστρέψας τὸν ἀγαπητὸν αὐτοῦ Ἰακώβ εἰς τὴν γῆν αὐτοῦ, Gen 12:1, 25:11, 50:13). This is the judge of the living and the dead (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κριτῆς ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν, 1 Pet. 4:5) (§14).

¹⁸ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 79.3–4.

¹⁹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 80.3–4.

²⁰ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 80.6–8.

After a second part of the speech, which I will analyze below, the sphinx falls silent and the apostles counsel the chief priests to heed his words. Predictably, they do not, but instead raise the objection that the sphinx is not a reliable witness: it only speaks due to magic (μαγεία). This is an obvious conclusion, they suggest, because the sphinx had claimed that Jesus knew Abraham; the patriarch, they rightly note, has been dead for “not a few years” (ἔτη οὐκ ὀλίγα) (§15).²¹ In response, Jesus asks the sphinx, “Why do they not believe that I have spoken with Abraham?” (Διὰ τί οὗτοι ἀπίστουσιν ὅτι ἐλάλησα μετὰ τοῦ Ἀβραάμ;) and sends the sphinx to the field of Mamre (Gen 23:9, 17; 25:10), where it calls out,

Abraham, Abraham, whose body is in the tomb, but whose soul is in paradise, (Ἀβραάμ, Ἀβραάμ, οὗ τὸ σῶμα ἐν τῷ μνημείῳ, ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ), the one who crafted the human being in the beginning, who made you his own friend (Isa 41:8; Jas 2:23), says the following (τάδε λέγει ὁ πλάσας τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ὁ ποιήσας σε φίλον ἑαυτοῦ): “Get up with your son Isaac and Jacob, and come to the temple of the Jebusites (Ἀνάστηθι ἅμα τῷ υἱῷ σου Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ, καὶ ἔλθατε εἰς τὰ ἱερὰ τῶν Ἰεβουσαιῶν) so we can refute the chief priests so that they might learn that I know you and you me” (ἵνα ἐλέγξωμεν τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς ὅπως γνῶσιν ὅτι ἐπίσταμαι σὲ καὶ σὺ ἐμέ) (§15).²²

The sphinx does as instructed and, after a brief conversation, the patriarchs return to refute the chief priests, who nevertheless remain unpersuaded.

In this episode, the author unambiguously paints a picture of the chief priests, like their biblical models, as spiritually blind and obstinately unfaithful to the God who made them—with chilling consequence. Andrew ends his narration of the miracle performed for the Jews by informing Captain Jesus that Jesus had shown them other mysteries (μυστήρια) as well, but that narrating them might be more than Captain Jesus can endure. In response, Captain Jesus affirms that he could indeed handle hearing more because “a prudent person, upon hearing useful words, rejoices in his heart (φρόνιμος γὰρ ἀκούων λόγους χρηστοὺς ἐυφραίνεται τῇ καρδίᾳ),” perhaps

²¹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 82.4.

²² Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 82.10–15.

punning on the similarity between *χρηστός* and *Χριστός*, and thus heightening both the irony and authority of the tale. Captain Jesus continues, “but, when speaking to those who have become twisted, you will not persuade their soul until death” (διεστραμμένοις δὲ ὁμιλῶν οὐ μὴ πείσης τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἕως θανάτου) (§15).²³ With this remark, Captain Jesus answers his own question from earlier. Why do the “faithless Jews” not believe? Because they are twisted, and they will not understand useful/Christic words until death. With the final line in this episode, the author reasserts the stakes of belief in Jesus: life and death, spiritual and physical animacy.

An Idol Life

While it is unclear whether any particular event or rhetorical goal, such as establishing the apostolic credentials of an episcopal see, was the cause for the composition of *Acts Andr. Matth.*, articulating points of distinction from Judaism was a consistent preoccupation of late ancient Christian preachers and authors.²⁴ There are two hints of a similar concern in *Acts Andr. Matth.* in Jesus’s instructions to the sphinx: 1) Jesus tells it to go to “the double-cave in the field of Mamre” (τὸ σπήλαιον τὸ διπλοῦν εἰς τὸν ἀγρὸν Μαμβρῆ), which is how the Septuagint

²³ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 83.17-84.2.

²⁴ The bibliography on the relationships of Christians and Jews in Late Antiquity, as well as attempts by Christian figures to wrest away interpretive authority over the biblical texts, is of course massive. Influential for my approach are Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), as well as the updated framework offered in Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keaton, and Matthew Thiessen, eds., *The Ways that Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2018); particularly interesting for how the ethnic logic employed by, e.g., Eusebius in *Preparation of the Gospels* to legitimate Christians as the true successors to the biblical Hebrews was turned back against Christians by Julian the Apostate is Ari Finklestein, *Specter of the Jews: Emperor Julian and the Rhetoric of Ethnicity in Syrian Antioch* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018). Older, but more targeted, analyses of how influential Christian leaders sought to draw sharper lines of distinction between Christians and Jews that I have found helpful include Robert Louis Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind; A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971) and *ibid.*, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). For specific examples of Christian anxiety about identity resulting in violence against Jews, see Fergus Millar, “Christian Emperors, Christian Church, and the Jews of the Diaspora in the Greek East, CE 379–450,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 55.1 (2004): esp. 15–23.

translates the Cave of Machpelah (e.g. Gen 25:10) near Hebron, and which was in fact a shared cult site in Late Antiquity among Christians and Jews;²⁵ 2) Jesus instructs the sphinx to tell the patriarchs to “come to the temple of the Jebusites,” a rather perplexing gloss on the earlier identification of the temple as belonging to the “gentiles,” which refers to the pre-Israelite, Canaanite people who populated Mt. Zion before David arrived from his post at Hebron to conquer them, slaughtering the blind, deaf, and lame (2 Samuel [2 Kings LXX] 5:6–10). At the turn of the fifth century, when *Acts Andr. Matth.* was likely composed, Epiphanius and Jerome discuss how Jerusalem is also called “Jebus,” a topic of relevance perhaps as a result of the much more recent appellative amendment from Aelia Capitolina back to Jerusalem, and an ongoing contestation over the character of the city.²⁶ Even when the name of the contemporary city was not in view, the change in the name of the ancient city provided an opportunity for homilists to remark upon transitions from the old, impure and inferior to the new, pure, and superior.²⁷ Since

²⁵ The surrounding area seems to have been full of such sites, such as the Terebinth at Mamre, which was likely the location of an annual festival attended by Jews, Christians, and other cultic worshippers. On the Terebinth and this festival, see Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 2.4 and discussion in Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 86–95. The tomb of the Patriarchs in the Cave of Machpelah was founded as a dedicated cult site, perhaps for Idumeans, under Herod the Great in the 30s BCE (Josephus, *Jewish War* IV.532). It became a Christian pilgrimage destination from effectively the start of Christianization efforts in Palestine, and it is attested as such already by the second quarter of the fourth century when the Bordeaux Pilgrim describes a memorial; a church was built within the precincts late in the fourth century (Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 324). According to the witness of the Piacenza Pilgrim (*Itinerarum* 30), by the sixth century (and probably much earlier), the site was divided between Christians and Jews by a screen down the middle. Christian use of the site is also attested by contemporary graffiti at the site with a cross and a prayer for Saint Abraham to “help” (βοήθη) (Hondius, J.J.E., “SEG 8–240. Hebron [El-Chalil]. In angulo inter mer. et occ. templi Mahum,” in: *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum Online*, current eds. A. Chanotis, T. Corsten, E. Stavrianopolou, N. Papazarkadas. Consulted online on 09 January 2020 http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uchicago.edu/10.1163/1874-6772_seg_a8_240 [First published: 1937]).

²⁶ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 2.2, “Against the Melchizedekians”; Jerome, *Letter* 108, 9.1; *Letter* 46, 3; *Letter* 127, 12. See these and other examples of the reception of the Jebusites in John R. Franke, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament IV* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2005), esp. 341–46.

²⁷ See, for example, Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos* 62.4, where he compares the downfall of Jebus to the old man of Adam (cf. 1 Cor 15:45–9) being thrown down so that Jerusalem (i.e., the people of God) could be built up. The passage in 2 Sam [2 Kgs LXX] 5:6–10 has proven particularly difficult to interpret (e.g., Josephus, *Antiquities* 7.65–69 with discussion in Saul M. Olyan “‘Anyone Blind or Lame Shall not Enter the House’: On the Interpretation of 2 Samuel 5:8b,” *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 60 [1998]: 218–227), but it has also provided an opportunity for some creative argumentation. See Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* IV.36, where, taking up Marcion’s claim that David’s assault on the blind and lame Jebusites is so different from Jesus’ healing of a blind man who was rebuked for addressing him as Son of David (Luke 18:38ff) that David and Jesus could not be related,

one effect of the episode in *Acts Andr. Matth.* 12–15 is to claim the biblical patriarchs exclusively for Christians, it is plausible that the puzzling names for the Jerusalem temple—“the Temple of the Gentiles” and “the Temple of the Jebusites”—can be explained in a similar manner: a Christian author reserves the name of Jerusalem for Christians, aligning David with Jesus his heir and relegating the chief priests of the Jews to the role of conquered Jebusites.

In any case, even if these details do not suggest a concern with a specific instance of Christian/Jewish distinction, it is clear that the author of *Acts Andr. Matth.* uses the chief priests as a metonymy for Jews, constructing their relationship in this scene as one of binary opposition to Christ believers in an effort to demonstrate the superiority of Christian faith. So why portray a stone sphinx whose animation, as Tobias Nicklas remarks, would have been at home among the deeds of the villain Simon Magus in the Pseudo-Clementines?²⁸ I argue that the role played by the sphinx in *Acts Andr. Matth.* 12–15 serves to sever yet another aspect of a shared biblical inheritance from Jews, namely idol polemic. The author thus builds a characterization of animacy that construes life with belief in Jesus as the living God, exploiting the material basis for depicting idols as lifeless.

My argument rests in part on the irony created by having the sphinx, the character who rebukes unbelief, be an idol, as the author reminds readers throughout the episode. The clearest sign of its identity comes when the sphinx says as much in *Acts Andr. Matth.* 14, in the second part of its speech, warning the chief priests “Don’t pay attention to the fact that I’m a marble

Tertullian turns the passage from 2 Sam/2 Kings into evidence of Marcion’s own blindness. The blind persons who resisted David’s advance, then, do not for Tertullian constitute an example that highlights the differences between David and Jesus, but rather are the rude *populus* that prefigures the spiritually blind persons who, at a later time, “do not admit that Christ is the Son of David.” In Tertullian’s argument, the blind Jebusites who resisted David stand for those who will remain blind in not recognizing Jesus, while the blind man who recognizes Jesus is healed (see Ernest Evans, ed. and trans., *Adversus Marcionem*, vol. 2 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972], 466–67).

²⁸ Nicklas, “Zaubertranke,” 498–99.

idol!” (μη πρόσχητέ μοι ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι ψήφινον εἶδωλον).²⁹ Even the choice of a sphinx, however, emphasizes this identity. Not only is the sphinx part animal and thus construed as sub-human,³⁰ its mixed nature rendered the sphinx an ontological zero for some ancient interpreters.

Explicating the image prohibition in the decalogue of Exod 20:4–6 in his *Questions on the Octateuch*, for instance, Theodoret of Cyrrhus utilizes the sphinx to illustrate a distinction between “likeness” and “idol,” both of which were forbidden.

An “idol” (εἶδωλον) has no specific existence (ὑπόστασιν), while “likeness” (ὁμοίωμα) is an image (ἴνδαλμα) and representation (ἀπείκασμα) of something. Accordingly, since the Greeks make up forms that do not exist (ἀναπλάττουσι τὰς οὐχ ὑφεστῶσας μορφάς)—sphinxes, tritons, and centaurs—and since the Egyptians make up dog-faced and bull-headed forms, [Moses] calls the imitations of things that do not exist “idols” (εἶδωλα καλεῖ τὰ τῶν οὐχ ὑφεστῶτων μιμήματα).³¹

As a mixed, imaginary creature, the sphinx is inferior to humans not only due to its animal nature; as an idol it is the literal, ontological opposite of the Living God who “is” by being a creature that “is not.”

The author amplifies the effect of this identification by highlighting its stony materiality, first describing it as “carved” (γλύφας) when Jesus points to it in the temple, and when Jesus

²⁹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth* 80.15–16.

³⁰ In this regard, the sphinx occupies a similar role as Christomaios in the *Acta Andreae et Barthomaei*, analyzed below, pp. 238–45.

³¹ Theodoret, *Quaestiones in Ex 38* (Petruccione, *Questions on the Octateuch*, 1.284, translation revised). Theodoret appears to draw on Origen here, as in the Greek fragment “Cap. XX” in PG 17:16C. Though there were multiple and not mutually exclusive ways to define an idol or the act of idolatry, the thread of idol discourse that emphasized how idols do not have prototypes had a long history within Christian thought—including into the Iconoclast Controversy (see above, p. 92 n. 140)—perhaps based to some extent on Paul’s claim in 1 Cor 8:4 that “an idol is nothing in the world” (οὐδὲν εἶδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ). After Origen and Theodoret, the same distinction between likeness and idol persists in later works such as George the Monk’s *Chronicon*, as well as both the *Suda* and *Lexicon*. On the sphinx specifically as no-thing, cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio 32.28*, who draws an analogue between an unruly democracy and the sphinx as entities that cease to exist as the result of being myriad attributes cobbled together (text in Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses 31-36*, trans. J. W. Cohoon, and H. Lamar Crosby, LCL 358 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940], 198). On these sources and others, see Annewies van den Hoek and John J. Herrmann Jr., “The Sphinx: An Egyptian Theological Symbol in Plutarch and Clement of Alexandria,” in *Pottery, Pavements, and Paradise: Iconographic and Textual Studies on Late Antiquity*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 172 n. 174. More generally on this motif, see Parry, “Image-Making,” 128–31; Resnick, “Idols and Images,” 35–51; Saïd, “Deux noms de l’image en grec ancien,” 309–30.

addresses it with an image term (ἐκτύπωμα): “I say to you who are an image in heaven (Σοὶ λέγω τῷ ἐκτυπώματι τῷ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ),³² you whom the hands of craftsmen carved (ὁ ἔγυψαν τεχνιτῶν χεῖρες): be unstuck from your place and come down” (ἀποκολλήθητι ἐκ τοῦ τόπου σου καὶ ἔλθε κάτω) (§13).³³ In addition to the idol polemic in passages like Ps 113 LXX and Isa 46,³⁴ the references to carving, the hands of craftsmen, and stone all allude to biblical idol prohibitions like that in Leviticus 26:1: “You shall not make for yourselves anything made by human hands, nor anything carved [...] and do not place a stone as a lookout in your land” (Οὐ ποιήσετε ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς χειροποίητα οὐδὲ γλυπτὰ [...] οὐδὲ λίθον σκοπὸν θήσετε ἐν τῇ γῆ ὑμῶν). By alluding to such prohibitions with this language, the author of *Acts Andr. Matth.* further indicates that the statue is on the opposite end of an animacy spectrum, a status which the sphinx itself calls attention to in two ways. First, it highlights its own fashioned and typically breathless existence by identifying Jesus as “the one who crafted (πλάσας) the human being in the beginning and imparted his breath (πνοήν) to all things.”³⁵ Second, immediately after it warns the chief priests not to pay attention to the fact that it is an idol, it explains, “For though we are stones (ἡμεῖς γὰρ ὄντες λίθοι), the priests have given us only one name, namely ‘God’” (ὄνομα μόνον ἔδωκαν ἡμῖν οἱ ἱερεῖς ὅτι θεός).³⁶ It has been falsely called a god, but it knows what it is. It is forbidden, non-existent, a simulation, and made of stony matter characterized by its inanimacy, an idol in name, matter, and form. Put otherwise, the author of *Acts Andr. Matth.* has gone to significant lengths

³² One expects a genitive construction here, i.e., an image of something *in* heaven, but the lack of genitive and the prepositional phrase functioning as an attributive adjective makes this difficult to sustain, at least grammatically. As I will show below, the sphinx, befitting its dual form, has a second function in the scene as one who praises and reveals God, à la the Seraphim in Isa 6. This does not undermine the reading of the sphinx as an image of no-thing, but rather heightens the play between its status as image and idol.

³³ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 80.1-3.

³⁴ See below, pp. 243–45 for closer analysis of how these biblical passages could be deployed.

³⁵ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 80.9-10 cited above. Notably, the author of *Acts Andr. Matth.* alludes to the creation account in Gen 2 rather than Gen 1, where the human being is created “in the image (κατ’ εικόν)” of God.

³⁶ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 81.1-2.

to emphasize that the marble sphinx should be without life, well understood by the scribe of Codex *Pal.vat. 4* (or its exemplar), who copied “lifeless” (ἄψυχος) for “marble” (ψήφινος).

The lack of agency entailed in its spiritless stoniness, name, and unreal form thus render its animation all the more potent since the sphinx is quite active throughout the scene. Though in principle it cannot move, speak, breathe, hear, or see, nonetheless it springs up, specifically to move against the chief priests; it speaks in opposition to them; it hears the commands of Jesus, understanding what the priests cannot, but pays no mind to the charges of magic the chief priests make against it. The text never specifies that the sphinx can see, and so it may still be physically blind, but it both perceives Jesus’s divinity and observes the “blindness” of the chief priests. The specific content of the latter groups’ blindness is the fact that they claim that God is (only) a human, but this renders the comparison of blindnesses no less powerful—in fact the distinction allows them to be ranked. Even a literally blind idol can see that Jesus is God. The chief priests, meanwhile stare at a walking, talking sphinx and fail to observe this conclusion!³⁷ The chief priests, for their part, reprise the role of the Pharisees from John 9, described above: though (or perhaps even because) they see, they remain in sin, blind. Meanwhile, though the sphinx may be blind, it recognizes the divinity of Jesus.

Several additional features in this episode illustrate how the animation of the sphinx organizes idol and Jew into categories of life and death, but inverts the expected formulation, now associating the sphinx with liveliness and the chief priests with lifelessness. First, the

³⁷ The Latin translation of *Acts Andr. Matth. 14*, at least as found in Codex Casanatensis (Franz Blatt, *Die lateinischen Bearbeitungen der Acta Andreae et Matthiae apud anthropophagos. Mit sprachlichem Kommentar*, BZNV 12 [Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1930], 59), underscores the blindness of idols still further, adapting the opening salvo of the sphinx to read, “You are senseless sons of fools! Because the blindness of your hearts does not satisfy you, but you also desire to make others blind like we [idols] are, you...” (*quare insipientes estis filii stultorum, quod non vos sufficit c[a]ecitatem cordis vestri, sed et alios concupiscitis c[a]ecos facere sicut et nos sumus...*) (ll. 4–6). The translator also clarifies that the sphinx “accepted a spirit from the Lord” (*accepto a domino spiritum*) (ll. 3–4), suggesting some discomfort with the idea of a spiritless stone acting on its own.

sphinx’s movement in this portion of the episode increases significantly from simply “leaping up” (ἀναπηδάω) (§14). In *Acts Andr. Matth.* 15 it now walks around (περιπατέω) and goes as far as the field of Mambre. This increased animation likewise signals a lexical alignment with the disciples, whose own locomotive proclivities with Jesus triggered the entire confrontation when the chief priests asked how they could “walk around” (περιπατέω) with Jesus (*Acts Andr. Matth.* 12). Liveliness and Christ affiliation are thus subtly aligned. Second, the lively lifelessness of the idol finds its companion in the bodies of the patriarchs, which, separated from their souls (ψυχαί), are lifeless (ἄψυχοι) as well. However, though their souls are in heaven, the bodies of the patriarchs nevertheless “emerged from the tomb, alive” (ἐξῆλθον [...] ζῶντες), and “journeyed along with the sphinx” (ἐπορεύθησαν... ἅμα τῇ σφιγγί) to the temple to refute the chief priests, who are speechless in response.³⁸ As the sphinx and, eventually, the patriarchs reveal their corporeal animacy, disclosed through movement, speech, hearing, and comprehension of Jesus’ identity, the chief priests move, speak, listen, and understand less, closed off from the life that even idols can share.

Third, the sphinx punctuates its speech in *Acts Andr. Matth.* 14 with an explicit re-evaluation of the place of pagans in idol-polemic. It claims that “the temples are more beautiful than your synagogue” (καλλιονά εἰσιν τὰ ἱερὰ τῆς συναγωγῆς ὑμῶν), adding that “the temples will abolish your synagogues (τὰ ἱερὰ καταργήσουσιν τὰς συναγωγὰς ὑμῶν), so they even become churches of the only begotten son of God” (ὡς καὶ γενέσθαι ἐκκλησίας τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ).³⁹ The temples no longer stand opposed but rather just one step away from being

³⁸ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 83.4, 9–10.

³⁹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 81.10–12. This may hint at a particular point of historical conflict when *Acts Andr. Matth.* initially circulated in the fifth-century Egyptian landscape. Although his account is doubtless overstated, the fifth-century church historian Socrates reports a series of civic conflicts that resulted in the total eradication of Jews from Alexandria during the episcopacy of Cyril of Alexandria in 415 (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* VII.13). See Oded Irshai, “Christian Historiographers’ Reflections on Jewish-Christian Violence in Fifth-Century

churches. Even the pagan priests who serve the idols are superior to the chief priests of the Jews, the sphinx claims:

The priests who serve in the temple purify themselves out of fear of the demons (οἱ ἱερεῖς οἱ λειτουργοῦντες τῷ ἱερῷ καθαρίζουσιν ἑαυτοὺς φοβούμενοι τοὺς δαίμονας). If they have sex with women (ἐὰν γὰρ συνέλθωσιν γυναιξίν), they purify themselves for seven days because they are afraid to enter the temple because of us (καθαρίζουσιν ἑαυτοὺς ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ μὴ εἰσελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ἱερόν δι' ἡμᾶς)—because of the name which they gave us, namely 'God' (διὰ τὸ ὄνομα ὃ ἔδωκαν ἡμῖν ὅτι θεός).

This misplaced piety is superior to active impiety, the sphinx continues.

But you all [the chief priests], if you commit sexual malfeasance (ὁμεῖς δὲ ἐὰν πορνεύσητε), you pick up the law of God and you enter the synagogue of God (αἴρετε τὸν νόμον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ εἰσέρχεσθε εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν τοῦ θεοῦ), you sit and you read it, and yet you have no reverent fear for the glorious words of God (καὶ καθίζετε καὶ ἀναγινώσκετε καὶ οὐκ ἐυλαβεῖσθε τοὺς λόγους τοὺς ἐνδόξους τοῦ θεοῦ).⁴⁰

Whereas misidentifying material creation as God, i.e., “idolatry,” would typically be seen as the cause of other sins such as *porneia* (cf. Wis 14:12–15; Rom 1:21–27), here the idolaters are close to getting it right, while the Jews, who fail to identify the God standing right in front of them, go further astray. Along with the animation of the sphinx comes the elevation of the idolaters and the lowering of Jews.

I have shown throughout these two sections the extent to which the author of *Acts. Andr. Matth.* fashions an ontological argument against idols in characterizing the sphinx, creating a profoundly paradoxical character to testify about the ontological status of Jesus. The sphinx, when it speaks and moves and understands, reveals truth to the Jews, but in the image logic of this author it also occludes the reality of Jesus’s divinity because the chief priests are so fixated on the nature and appearance of the idol (as with the humanity of Jesus) that they conclude it came to life only through magic. It is ironically *because* they recognize the lifelessness of the

Alexandria,” in *Jews Christians and the Roman Empire: The Poetics of Power in Late Antiquity*, eds. Natalie B. Dohrmann and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 137–53.

⁴⁰ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 81.3–10.

idol that they fail epistemologically and ethically, revealing for the reader the lifelessness of their beliefs. The depiction of the sphinx embodies the paradox inherent in divine images.

Living Imitations

The identification of ironic inversion of the ontological argument against idols prompts the reader to recall the deep irony of the entire story, placed within a narrative flashback, focalized through Andrew, who has his own struggles with the perception of truth. Does Andrew fully understand the role of the sphinx or is this two-formed creature likewise the bearer of a complex double role? As discussed above, a “living image” in Christian discourse frequently refers to the holy person who imitated the actions and virtues of Jesus in their own life. The saintly soul, made visible by their actions and depictable in the verbal portrait of their *Vita*, proved to be an ontologically fitting image of God precisely because the saint possessed the psychological/ethical wherewithal to understand how to worship and represent the deity. In turn, the actions and textual icon that presented them also made the holy person imitable by readers of the narrative, reforming them into ontologically fit images to be imitated by others. Accordingly, the author paints the sphinx episode in *Acts Andr. Matth.* §12–15 with shades of John 8–9, which means that the sphinx is portrayed as imitating Jesus’s own witness to and revelation of his divinity. In constructing the scene at the Temple of the Gentiles upon this biblical model, the author characterizes the sphinx as a true and reliable imitation of Jesus, while simultaneously putting a little distance between it and its model, Jesus. The sphinx is both like and unlike that which it re-presents. Moreover, the sphinx itself becomes a model for imitation in its witness to Jesus’s divinity, which both its speech and animated body reveal. This revelatory role also helps explain one of the more obscure details in the episode, namely Jesus’s identification of the

sphinx and its companion in the temple as “the *typos* of heaven” (τὸν τύπον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), which he explains is because “they are like the cherubim and seraphim who are in heaven” (ταῦτα γὰρ ὅμοιά εἰσιν τοῦ χερουβὶμ καὶ τοῦ σεραφὶμ τῶν ἐν οὐρανῶ).⁴¹ The character of Jesus does not explain this likeness any further, but the actions of the sphinx as a living image that reveals Jesus points readers to the biblical role of the cherubim and seraphim as representatives and revealers of God to the prophets.⁴² The sphinx is materially and formally an idol but ethically a living image.

The sphinx’s role as obedient witness likewise functions as a model for imitation even within the wider narrative, where Andrew’s own obedience and belief are called into question. As noted above, the sphinx episode is bracketed on either side by Andrew’s disbelief that he could move fast enough to reach the City of the Cannibals within three days because he is just “flesh” (σάρξ) (§4), and the revelation by Jesus that Andrew had been spiritually blinded in order to demonstrate that Jesus could do anything (§18).⁴³ The intervening narrations of Jesus’s miracles, of course, demonstrate that Andrew already knew this, and in fact had witnessed Jesus accomplish miracles of animation with matter less likely to move than Andrew’s supposedly inactive flesh. Moreover, we can see how the author plots Andrew’s growth throughout the narrative precisely by attending to the different ways that Andrew speaks of flesh and obedience. The relationship between them is underscored nowhere more clearly than when Andrew is most

⁴¹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 79.13–15.

⁴² E.g., Ezek 1:4–14; Isa 6: 1–7; Rev 4:6–8; Ps 80:1. It is also possible, though unlikely, that an iconographic likeness between the angelic beings and the sphinx is intended here, as some 20th century scholars have suggested that depictions of the cherubim in the Jerusalem temple were modeled on sphinxes. This is perhaps supported by the explanation of Jesus’s statement in ms *Oxon Clark* 43, which reads “men made them according to the likenesses of heavenly beings” (καθ’ ὁμοιότητα τῶν οὐρανῶν ἐποίησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι). However, there is no ancient or medieval attestation of this iconographic resemblance (see Raanan Eichler, “Cherub: A History of Interpretation,” *Biblica* 96:1 [2015]: 26–38) and the manuscript reading can be understood as a generic attempt at making sense of Jesus’s identification of likeness, so the “revealer” interpretation I think makes most sense.

⁴³ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 69.1–5, 88.5–8.

like Jesus and least capable of action, thus evoking simultaneously the inanimate and imitative aspects of images that are constructed and undercut in the case of the sphinx.

Just before Andrew enters the city in *Acts Andr. Matth.* 18, Jesus warns him of the tortures that will come his way. He frames Andrew’s suffering explicitly as in imitation of Jesus’s own, which he endured to “show you all a model” (ὕμῖν τύπον ὑποδείξω).⁴⁴ At the conclusion of §24, after Andrew has twice thwarted the *anthropophagoi* from slaying and consuming their own citizens, readers discover the torments Andrew will undergo. Andrew and the Devil have a brief exchange in which the Devil reveals that he cannot see Andrew, suggesting that something about Andrew already exceeds normal, human physicality. Jesus reveals (φανερῶ) himself to Andrew, instructing him to reveal (φανερῶ) himself in turn to the *anthropophagoi* “so they might learn the power of the Devil who is active among them” (ἵνα μάθωσιν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἐνεργοῦντος αὐτοῖς διαβόλου).⁴⁵ With imitation, revelation, and Andrew’s corporeality brought into view, the author plays in §25–28 on the tensive relationship between punitive and epiphanic processions in much the same way as in the martyrdom scenes in *Mart. Mark*, discussed in chapter 3.

First, Andrew’s opponents manage to capture him and debate “by what sort of death” they “should kill him” (Ποίῳ θανάτῳ αὐτὸν ἀποκτένωμεν;).⁴⁶ Some suggest decapitation, others clamor to cook him up and “give his body as food” (δῶμεν αὐτοῦ τὸ σῶμα...εἰς βρῶσιν) to their superiors, but neither, apparently, is sufficiently torturous. Finally, another person in the crowd, whose heart the devil had entered, proposes a third option. They decide, at this individual’s urging, to throw a rope around Andrew’s neck (περιάψωμεν σχοινίον περὶ τὸν τράχηλον) and

⁴⁴ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 89.13.

⁴⁵ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 101.9–10.

⁴⁶ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 101.14–15. Cf. *Mart. Mark* §8: ἐπισκευόμενοι, ποίῳ θανάτῳ αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν.

drag him (διασύρω) around the city, his flesh cleaving to the earth and his blood flowing like water upon the ground.⁴⁷ Like the character portrait of Mark in *Mart. Mark*, Andrew here endures his torture with obedience, showing that he has learned from his faux pas at the beginning of the narrative. On the second day of being dragged around the city in §26, he proclaims that he will “endure” (ὑπομένω) and “not contradict” (οὐδὲ...ἀντιλέγω) Jesus’s commandment (ἐντολή) to persevere. Yet it seems that he has not yet learned the attendant lesson that his fleshy materiality does not hold him back and, unlike Mark, Andrew does not bear his suffering with thanksgiving. Andrew argues that Jesus should really help him out because “you know human flesh” (γινώσκεις τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην σάρκα), thereby recalling his own hesitancy to obey in *Acts Andr. Matth.* 4 due to his fleshy nature.

Andrew’s fixation on flesh then threatens to render him an image of the chief priests in *Acts Andr. Matth.* §12–15 instead of an imitation of Jesus, highlighting the razor’s edge between spiritual life and death that Andrew treads. In the earlier episode, the chief priests had emphasized the matter of Jesus, fixating on his human relationships, and the matter of the sphinx, alleging that “this stone” (ὁ λίθος οὗτος) is the result only of magic, not divine power. They had missed the lifegiving divinity on display in front of them and revealed their own lifelessness in the process. Andrew almost follows suit. On the third day of the street-level spectacle that is his torture (§28), Andrew asks for death because he is so worn out in his bound, motionless state. He argues again that Jesus should understand since he “knows human flesh, namely that it is weak” (γινώσκων τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην σάρκα ὅτι ἀσθενής ἐστιν). Andrew even draws a comparison between his own suffering and that of Jesus, emphasizing physical weakness rather than any potential effects or revelations:

⁴⁷ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 101.15–102.10, 14–16.

“Remember, Lord, you spent three hours on the cross (σὺ γὰρ κύριε μνήσθητι ὅτι ἐποίησας τρεῖς ὥρας ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ) and you became faint-hearted, saying (καὶ ὀλιγοψύχησας λέγων), ‘My father, why have you forsaken me?’” (Πάτερ μου, ἵνα τί με ἐγκατέλειπας; cf. Matt. 27:46). Look, Lord, I’ve been being dragged in the streets and thoroughfares of this city for three days!” (Ἴδου κύριε ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις διασύρομαι ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις καὶ ῥύμαις τῆς πόλεως ταύτης).⁴⁸

Andrew models his suffering on Jesus’s own, imagining that he exceeds it, but he focuses on the matter of his body, even complaining that he has lost much more than hair despite Jesus’s promise that “not one hair from your head shall perish” (Οὐ μὴ ἀπολέσητε μίαν τρίχα ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς ὑμῶν; cf. Luke 21:18).⁴⁹

But readers are now primed to see the impotence of the excuse of his flesh, and Andrew’s obedience saves him from the same, lifeless fate of the chief priests. Indeed, Andrew’s corporeal sufferings bear spiritual fruit—even an epiphany. In response to his complaints, Andrew hears a voice in Hebrew (ἑβραῖστί) telling him to look back at where his flesh had fallen. “Andrew turned and saw great, fruit-bearing trees growing” (στραφεὶς ὁ Ἀνδρέας εἶδεν μεγάλα δένδρα φυέντα καρποφόρα).⁵⁰ Although he has been emphasizing the weakness of his flesh, it is Andrew’s corporeal body itself, suffering in imitation of Jesus, that produces a visual and aural revelation of divine power. Indeed, this power—the fruit of Andrew’s obedient suffering—manifests in the very *anthropophagoi* converts at the end of the narrative, whose own fixation on flesh (albeit of a different kind) is undercut in §32 when they refer to themselves after baptism as “new plants” (νεόφυτοι) who wish to “drink [their] fill from [Andrew’s] fountain” (κορεσθῶμεν τῆς σῆς πηγῆς).⁵¹ By consistently calling ironic attention to flesh, the author demonstrates that

⁴⁸ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 107.9-14. This comparison—or at least the suggestion that Jesus grew faint of heart—appears to have offended a reader of *Par. gr. 1539* (11th century), who smeared out σὺ γὰρ through ἐγκατέλειπας and added a small cross (+) in both margins (see folio 300v). While to my knowledge no other manuscripts contain this erasure, at least one reader of the narrative seems to have found Andrew well off base in the way he models his suffering in imitation of Jesus.

⁴⁹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 108.1–2.

⁵⁰ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 108.11–12.

⁵¹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 114.14–15.

the virtue of obedience can be learned and thus imitated by characters within the narrative, creating a cascade of images and imitations that spills out to readers and is intended to get them to do the same.

Finally, the author stages Andrew's development throughout the narrative with an additional instance of imitation that simultaneously draws the reader back to the episode of the sphinx. In §29, after Andrew witnesses the fruit that his flesh bears, the *anthropophagoi* put him in prison for a third time, at which point Jesus appears and heals him. Andrew gives thanks and looks around. "In the middle of the prison he saw a pillar standing there, and on the pillar was a human-shaped statue made of alabaster" (ὁ Ἀνδρέας εἰς μέσον τῆς φυλακῆς εἶδεν στῦλον ἐστῶτα, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν στῦλον ἀνδριάς ἐπικείμενος ἀλαβαστρινός).⁵² The combination of human form and stony materiality directs the reader to recall both Andrew's human flesh and the marble of the sphinx, and the author uses this confluence to illustrate the change in Andrew's character. Though he had previously expressed doubt regarding what human flesh could do, Andrew now strides up to the statue and embodies the cross: "he stretched out his hands seven times (ἤπλωσεν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἑπτάκις) and said to the pillar and to the statue upon it (καὶ εἶπεν τῷ στύλῳ καὶ τῷ ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἀνδριάντι), 'Fear the sign of the cross!'" (Φοβήθητι τὸν τύπον τοῦ σταυροῦ).⁵³ Andrew subordinates his own materiality through an imitative embodiment of an object that represents Jesus.

Moreover, the author has Andrew draw attention to the statue's materiality when he encourages its obedience, an action constructed to mimic the command of Jesus in *Acts Andr. Matt.* 13. Having instructed it to let water shoot from its mouth "like a great flood" (ὡς κατακλυσμοῦ, cf. Gen 6:17, 9:15, et passim), Andrew addresses the statue directly: "do not be

⁵² Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 109.8–10.

⁵³ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 109.11–12.

afraid, stone, and say ‘I am stone and not worthy to praise the Lord!’” (μη φοβηθῆς ὃ λίθε καὶ εἴπης ὅτι Ἐγὼ λίθος εἰμὶ καὶ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἄξιος αἰνέσαι τὸν κύριον).⁵⁴ There is a delightful paradox in Andrew’s imperative, as he both assumes that the statue can talk and reason, and yet either can or will not follow his instruction due to its stony nature; his address both challenges and affirms the inanimacy of the statue-person.⁵⁵ The author has Andrew resolve this tension by coaxing the statue to act in imitation of stones in the biblical past. “You, in fact, have been honored” (Καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὑμεῖς τετιμημένοι ἐστέ), Andrew tells the statue. “The Lord formed us from earth, but you are pure (ἡμᾶς γὰρ ἔπλασεν ὁ κύριος ἀπὸ γῆς, ὑμεῖς δὲ καθαροί ἐστε); this is why God gave the law to his people on tablets made from you (διὰ τοῦτο ἔδωκεν ὁ θεὸς ἐξ ὑμῶν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ τὰς πλάκας τοῦ νόμου). He did not write on tablets of gold or silver, but tablets of stone. Therefore, statue-person, do this act of providence in the present time!” (οὐ γὰρ ἔγραψεν ἐν πλαξίν χρυσαῖς ἢ ἀργυραῖς ἀλλ’ ἐν πλαξίν λιθίναις. Νῦν οὖν ποιήσον ὃ ἀνδρία τὴν οἰκονομίαν ταύτην).⁵⁶ In response, the statue-person obeys, spewing water from its mouth that is “exceptionally salty” (ἀλμυρὸν σφόδρα) so that it was “devouring human flesh” (κατεσθίον σάρκας ἀνθρώπων).⁵⁷ This action leads finally to the confession and conversion of the *anthrophagoi* in §30.

Andrew’s disobedience on account of his own flesh thus comes full circle within the narrative. Not only has he learned from and imitated the sphinx’s dual obedience and witness to divine power, but now he also models his actions on those of Jesus in animating a statue, one which itself models obedience and reveals divine power in its very animation. Moreover,

⁵⁴ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 109.15–17.

⁵⁵ This play is baked into the very word chosen for “statue” (ἀνδριάς), as noted by R.L. Gordon, “Real and Imaginary,” 10, who remarks, “There was also a word used especially for statues of the human male (*anēr*, stem *andr-*), *andrias*, whose semantic motivation is equally clear: the thing is a man but also not a man.

⁵⁶ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 110.1–5.

⁵⁷ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.*, 110.8.

Andrew does all of this while himself embodying the sign of Jesus. The author thus crafts examples of obedience for their audience to emulate as well as those to avoid within a nexus of material images that act and living humans who flit between spiritual liveliness and lifelessness. What differentiates the living images from the dead ones is obedience to Jesus's commands, which readers of the narrative can in turn imitate and embody in their own lives and actions. Through faith in and obedience to Jesus, modeled by the sphinx, by Andrew, and by the alabaster statue-person, impotent stone and flesh are rendered media of divine power. But it is neither natural nor a foregone conclusion for this author that flesh and stone will play such a role.

Animacy and Inhuman Idolators

I have a few times throughout this dissertation used the term “animacy,” a term I borrow from the interdisciplinary work of Mel Chen, in particular with reference to “animacy hierarchies.” Building on research in cognitive linguistics but set within a wide-ranging cultural analysis, Chen explores the often surprising ways humans rank others—biologically equivalent humans, nonhuman animals, plants, objects like rocks, and abstract concepts—in terms of “animacy,” a slippery concept that goes beyond “life” in an absolute sense to include, for instance, movement, agency, affectivity, sense perception, and sentience. Specific hierarchies are culturally specific, and while no one of these markers of animacy is equivalent to “life,” each derives from our own phenomenological experience of life, and hence animacy tends to be construed and accorded with reference to oneself.⁵⁸ Most important is that animacy hierarchies are irrefutably political and hence related to social and power relations first and foremost.

⁵⁸ Chen, *Animacies*, 24–30.

“Above all,” Chen argues, animacy is “shaped by what or who counts as human, and what or who does not.”⁵⁹

The author of *Acts Andr. Matth.* shows a clear awareness of an animacy hierarchy that places materials like stone at the bottom.⁶⁰ Roughly two-thirds through the narrative, for instance, after Andrew has healed and freed the captives from prison, he proceeds through the city and perches behind a bronze statue (§22). Without their usual food source, the cannibals decide to eat the guards whose death Andrew had caused earlier in the narrative. As the guards are brought out to the trench where cannibals customarily bled and slaughtered their victims, Andrew hears a voice telling him to “see what is happening in this city” (θέασαι Ἀνδρέα τὸ γινόμενον ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ).⁶¹ Andrew looks and prays the evil to be thwarted, but what happens is something more: the executioners are transformed. “Immediately the swords fell from the hands of the executioners, and their hands were turned to stone” (Καὶ εὐθὺς ἔπεσαν αἱ μάχαιραι ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν τῶν δημίων, καὶ ἀπελιθῶσαν αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν).⁶² The demonstration of power reveals the powerlessness of the *anthropophagoi* by ladening them with a new materiality that prevents their action.

But this mode of narrative objectification is comparatively rare in *Acts Andr. Matth.* Typically, the association of idol makers and worshippers with lifeless gods has the effect of deanimating and objectifying these religious others. That very attribution of inanimacy serves as a foundation for authors to imply a second hierarchy among human beings, whereby the idolater is inferior to the Christian on a human, animate level. The idolaters become scarcely human, only

⁵⁹ Chen, *Animacies*, 30.

⁶⁰ Cf. Aristotle’s discussion in *De Anima* II.2 and *Historia Animalium* 588b, above, p. 52. These hierarchies continued to influence an array of psychological theorizations in antiquity, as exemplified in the logics of the texts studied throughout this dissertation, as well as in, for instance, the fascinating discussion of the fall of the soul in Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 28.5–6 (Laplace, *La création de l’homme*, 218–19).

⁶¹ Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 96.13.

⁶² Bonnet, *Acts Andr. Matth.* 97.3–5.

living in the barest sense. What is interesting about the animation of the idol in *Acts Andr. Matth.* §§12–15 is that the liveliness of inanimate stone effectively challenges the animacy hierarchy on which idol polemic is based while constructing oppositional boundaries of life and lifelessness. By granting the sphinx signs of life to witness Jesus’s divinity while portraying the chief priests who denied it as lifeless objects, a role typically played by pagans, the author of *Acts Andr. Matth.* in turn ranks the Jews as inferior, less human even, than the *anthropophagoi* who have no idols and eventually convert.

This is a rather bold deployment of idolatry discourse facilitated by a careful use of narrative conflict, intertextual allusion, parody, and irony—but one that, if the history of reception is any judge, may not have been fully successful. Gregory of Tours, for instance, cuts the sphinx episode entirely in his *Epitome*.⁶³ Meanwhile, the medieval poetic adaptation into Old English, the *Andreas* poem, amplifies the anti-Jewish polemic, but explicitly substitutes an angel for the sphinx, perhaps to grant its speech some additional heft, but concurrently altering the dynamic at work in the scene.⁶⁴ The best metric of evaluation, however, comes less from comparing *Acts Andr. Matth.* to later iterations of the same narrative than from seeing how authors working in a similar period and contexts, with the same characters, dealt with the

⁶³ Gregory, *Epitome* 1 is based to at least some degree on *Acts Andr. Matth.*, though the precise relationship is not fully clear (see the scholarship cited above in n. 1). In his *proem*, Gregory claims that he only removed the “excessive verbosity” (*nimiam verborositatem*) that caused it to be called “apocryphal” (*apocryfus*), so that “the wondrous miracles be enclosed in only one little volume” (*uno tantum parvo volumine admiranda miracula clauderentur*). However, in the case of the *Acts Andr. Matth.* material, at least, the wondrous miracles are rather restrained and the sphinx episode is excluded entirely. The Latin was edited by Bonnett and is reprinted in Jean-Marc Prieur, ed. *Acta Andreae: Textus*, Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum 6 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1989), 567–73.

⁶⁴ Robert Boenig, (trans.), *The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 91–4. See, inter alia, Penn R. Szittyá, “The Living Stone and the Patriarchs: Typological Imagery in ‘Andreas’, Lines 706–810,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 72:2 (April 1973): 167–74; Thomas D. Hill, “Hebrews, Israelites, and Wicked Jews: An Onomastic Crux in ‘Andreas’ 161–67,” *Traditio* 32 (1976): 358–61; on the poem as a whole, see especially Amity Reading, “Baptism, Conversion, and Selfhood in Old English ‘Andreas,’” *Studies in Philology* 112:1 (Winter 2015): 1–23.

dynamics of idols and animacy. Thus, to highlight the distinctiveness of the idol discourse in *Acts Andr. Matth.*, I will briefly examine two Greek narratives, the *Martyrdom of Matthew/Matthias* (*Mart. Matt.*), and the *Acts of Andrew and Bartholomew* (*Acts Andr. Bart.*), which feature the *anthropophagoi* and are set within the same story world as *Acts Andr. Matth.*⁶⁵ By analyzing the roles of idols and the *anthropophagoi* in these narratives we will see a range of purposes for which narrative authors treated images as characters, sometimes animate, sometimes explicitly not, and how they deployed encounters between human characters and images in the frontier between living and lifeless.

Although the *anthropophagoi* themselves in *Acts Andr. Matth.* have a conspicuous absence of idols, which I have argued underscores the potency of the polemic against Jews in that text, the preponderance of idols is a blunt fact in *Mart. Matt.*⁶⁶ In this narrative, Jesus appears to Matthew/Matthias on a mountain and commands him to go to the City of the Cannibals” (τὴν πόλιν τῶν ἀνθρωποφάγων), here called Myrne (Μύρνη),⁶⁷ and plant (φυτώω) in

⁶⁵ On “story world,” see Johnston, “The Greek Mythic Story World,” 283–311; Lundaugh, “The Fluid Transmission of Apocrypha,” 213–27 (both cited above, p. 36). While a story world does not require the stories to be directly connected, but simply perceived by an audience as coherent, in this case the later accounts all likely know *Acts Andr. Matth.*, and in certain cases may know each other, though this is harder to determine.

⁶⁶ The Greek text is in Bonnet, *AAA*, 215–62. The name of the apostle featured in this narrative varies by manuscript and language. Bonnet’s text portrays Matthew (Ματθαῖος [cf. Matthew in the Gospel of Matthew, Μαθθαῖος]), though more recently Andrey Vinogradov has paid new attention to an extended (and in his view likely original) opening to the text in which the apostle is Matthias (Ματθίας) (see “Le début authentique du *Martyre de Matthieu?* Remarques sur le codex Froehner et les *Actes d’André et de Matthias,*” *Apocrypha* 19 [2008]: 202–16). Notably, however, in Bonnet’s text, in §12, p. 230, the apostle is called a “tax collector” (τελώνης) (cf. Matthew 10:3), which would indicate that Matthew is understood to be the subject of the narrative, even while the association with the City of the Cannibals, one summarized in special detail in the Froehner Codex text, would indicate Matthias. In any case, the names were easily confused due to consonantal aspiration, and evidence for transmission of both names is ample (see Otero, “Later Acts of the Apostles 5.1” in *New Testament Apocrypha* [eds. Hennecke and Schneemelcher], 445). Accordingly, I use the abbreviation *Mart. Matt.*, but will include both names for the apostolic subject of this narrative. A translation produced by Alexander Walker is available as “Acts and Martyrdom of St. Matthew,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 8, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886.), rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0822.htm>, but it takes account of only parts of Bonnet’s edition.

⁶⁷ Bonnet organizes the into three recensions, one characterized by P (*Par. gr.* 881) and F (*Froehneri*, but without the introduction published by Vinogradov), the Δ group of V (*Vindob. hist. gr.* 5), U (*Vatic. gr.* 808), and E (*Escorial Y II* 6), and the Latin *Escorial alt b I 4* and *Par. lat* 12598. Manuscripts of the text are not consistent in using this name, with F calling it μυρμήνη and Δ omitting it (Bonnet, 220), an inconsistency repeated in §9 (227),

the ground a staff that will sprout into a fruit-bearing tree. At the root of this tree, Jesus explains, will spring a fountain in which creatures will swim and the *anthropophagoi* will “wash themselves” (ἀπολούσονται), inaugurating a tit-for-tat transformation and exact inversion of what happens to the captives of the *anthropophagoi* in the earlier *Acts Andr. Matth.*: “their bodies will be changed (ἀλλαγῆσονται τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν), and their forms will be transformed like those of the rest of human beings” (καὶ αἱ ἰδέαι αὐτῶν μεταλλαγῆσονται ὡς αἱ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀνθρώπων) (§4).⁶⁸ Matthew/Matthias does as he is instructed (§7), first casting out demons from the wife, son, and daughter-in-law of the city’s king, Fulvanus (§5), and, from a “lofty and steady stone” (τινος ὑψηλοῦ καὶ ἐδραίου λίθου), delivering a speech in which he praises the Christians in the city who had already converted. The *anthropophagoi*, he proclaims, were people “who until now revered the Satyr and were mocked by myriads of those that are falsely-named gods” (οἱ τὸν Σάτυρον μέχρι νῦν σεβόμενοι καὶ ὑπὸ μυρίων ψευδωνύμων θεῶν ἐμπαιζόμενοι). They “were previously formless but are now formed through Christ (οἱ τὸ πρὶν ἄμορφοι, νῦν δὲ διὰ Χριστοῦ μορφούμενοι) (§6).⁶⁹ As we might expect, the conversion to and re-formation in Christianity was preceded by the rejection of other deities, and this shift in allegiance enables their physical transformations, evidently an endowment of a new, fulfilled humanity.

now with Smyrna (or Smyrne) (Σμύρνη) added in E, which is also the reading given by the Δ group of manuscripts at the end in §31 (p. 262).

⁶⁸ Bonnet, *Mart. Matt.*, 220.5–221.8. Cf. *Acts Andr. Matth.* 1, as well as 1 Cor 15:51. In the extended opening from the Froehner Codex, Matthew/Matthias describes how the *anthropophagoi* lamented their appearance to him when he was in their city before: “We are bewailing ourselves, for our form is of speechless fleasheaters, and we are completely animalistic” (θρηνοῦμεν ἑαυτούς, ὅτι ἡ μορφή ἡμῶν ἀλόγων σαρκοφάγων, καὶ ὅλοι ἐσμὲν ἄγριοι) (§8, Vinogradov, “Le début authentique,” 208.31-32). This may explain the lack of description in Bonnet’s edition regarding their appearance prior to transformation, though the author of *Mart. Matt.* may simply have in mind the spiritual, mental and sense-perceptive transformations, as in *Acts Andr. Matth.* §1. In this recap of events in *Acts Andr. Matth.*, Matthias has stayed with Andrew in the city after leaving prison.

⁶⁹ Bonnet, *Mart. Matt.*, 223. 8–9, 14. Cf. Romans 8:29 and 12:2.

The gods that some *anthropophagoi* have rejected according to this later text are represented by material images. Fulvanus, disturbed by the arrival of Matthew/Matthias, seeks to burn the apostle alive. After several stymied attempts to capture him, finally the king orders his soldiers to fasten Matthew/Matthias to the ground and cover him with papyrus and brushwood. The king has “twelve gold and silver gods” (τοὺς δεκαδύω θεοὺς τοὺς χρυσοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἀργυροῦς) likewise fixed to the ground, “securely, so they wouldn’t fall” (ἀσφαλῶς ὅπως μὴ πέσωσιν), in a circle around Matthew/Matthias, evidently to increase the efficacy of the fire or prevent the intervention of Christ, upon whom Matthew/Matthias has been calling (§20).⁷⁰ The author immediately indicates the weakness of these “falsely-named gods,” portraying the king as needing to watch carefully “lest one of the Christians steal one of his gods” (μὴ κλέψῃ τις τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἓνα τῶν θεῶν αὐτοῦ) (§20).⁷¹ Readers are thus encouraged to see how easily overpowered the idols are. Fittingly, all the gods achieve is the revelation of their own weakness in opposition to Christ and his apostle: Matthew/Matthias calls upon Christ and, when the fire is extinguished, Matthew/Matthias is untouched, while “nothing was seen of the gold or silver” (μηδὲν τοῦ χρυσοῦ ἢ ἀργύρου ὄραθῆναι) (§21).⁷² These gods made from corruptible matter are no match for the apostle strengthened by the incorruptible God. At the end of the narrative, now convinced of the power of the Christian God, the king witnesses the miraculous ascension of Matthew/Matthias, is baptized, ordained, and endowed with a new, Christian name, Matthew/Matthias, after the apostle (§27–28). Immediately thereafter, “he entered his palace and smashed all the idols” (εἰσελθὼν ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ αὐτοῦ ἅπαντα τὰ εἰδῶλα συνέτριψεν), signifying the completeness of his conversion. He pens a letter commanding that

⁷⁰ Bonnet, *Mart. Matt.*, 243.7–8, 245.3–5. The reason for bringing out the idols is never stated, but Fulvanus expresses worry that the Christians will try to bewitch (μαγεύω) the fire (244.5–6).

⁷¹ Bonnet, *Mart. Matt.*, 244.4–5.

⁷² Bonnet, *Mart. Matt.*, 247.2.

his people do the same (§29).⁷³ The destruction of idols in this narrative is portrayed straightforwardly by the author as illustrative of the superiority of the Christian god, and demonstrative of conversion.

Conversely, in *Acts Andr. Barth.*, the *anthropophagoi* have a rather different role. About two-thirds through the account,⁷⁴ Andrew and the apostle Bartholomew find themselves on a mountain with Rufus and Alexander (Andrew's disciples, cf. Mark 15:21), anxiously discussing how to proceed in their missionary efforts to the idol-worshippers in the City of the Parthians, whom they had failed to turn to belief in Jesus. Suddenly "a person from the Land of the Cannibals" (ἄνθρωπος τις ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἀνθρωποφάγων) arrives, who, the text explains matter of factly, "was looking for a person to eat" (ἐζήτει ἄνθρωπον τοῦ φαγεῖν) (1.1). As in *Mart. Matt.*, this *anthropophagos* is characterized by his nonhuman features, but the author of this text pushes this trope almost beyond the pale. Though the cannibal is called human (ἄνθρωπος), the author immediately confounds this identification, writing that an angel appeared suddenly, addressing him as you, "person with the form of a dog" (ἄνθρωπε τοῦ κυνὸς μορφὴν ἔχοντος) (1.2).⁷⁵ In the course of their conversation, the *anthropophagos* learns of the "God who created" the universe and everything in it, and the angel tells him to go and find the apostles on the mountain. His

⁷³ Bonnet, *Mart. Matt.*, 259.17–260.20. Fulvanus's actions and letter are witnessed only in the Δ recension.

⁷⁴ The Greek is in Martelli, "Acta Andreae et Barthomaei," 78–97 (facing pages with Italian translation). In comparison to the Arabic, Coptic, and Ethiopic, the Greek version is much shorter, beginning in the extant manuscripts only in the final third of the full narrative when a character named Christomaios approaches. His starring role explains the distinct title of this account in Greek mss, "Narrative of the Holy Christomaios, who traveled with the holy apostles into the City of the Parthians" (Martelli, *AAB*, 78). No translation of the Greek into English yet exists, but see Agnes Smith Lewis, *The Mythological Acts of the Apostles*, *Horae Semiticae* IV (London: C.J. Clay, 1904), 11–25 for a translation of the whole from the Arabic. The text is short and edited with clear subdivisions, so I will cite simply by section numbers.

⁷⁵ It is entirely unclear in what regard this *anthropophagos* has the form of a dog. Maja Kominko, "Ugly as Sin': Monsters and Barbarians in Late Antiquity," in *The Routledge Handbook to Identity and Environment in the Classical and Medieval Worlds*, eds. Rebecca Futo Kennedy and Molly Jones-Lewis (London: Routledge, 2016), 377–378, citing the Coptic *Acts of Bartholomew* (a longer version of *Acts. Andr. Bart.* but consistent with it in these details), takes this line as a warrant to examine the *anthropophagos* as a *cynocephalus*, a race of "dog-headed" people who, like the *anthropophagoi*, populated the imagined outskirts of society in antiquity and the Middle Ages. However, the two monstrous races were not usually conflated.

initial resistance to this command stems from his self-identified differences from them. He lacks free will (γνώμη ἐλευθέρα), does not know human speech (λαλιά), and is worried about what he will eat (1.5). Nonetheless, the angel converts him and seals him in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he becomes meek (1.6).

Unlike the *Mart. Matt.* but like *Acts. Andr. Matth.*, there is no mention of any prior religious practice for the *anthropophagos*. The cannibal is simply “converted” from complete ignorance of God “to Godly knowledge” (μετέβαλλεν εἰς θεογνωσίαν) (1.6). Notably, however, no physical transformation accompanies this conversion, and his looks can kill. The author even calls into question his human identity a second time: “His shape was that of a man (ἦν δὲ ἡ ἰδέα αὐτοῦ ἀνδρὸς) and he was six cubits tall, but he had a face that was wild, and his eyes blazed like burning torches (καὶ εἶχεν τὸ μῆκος αὐτοῦ πήχεις ἕξ, τὸ δὲ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἠγριωμένον, οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ἄπτοντες ὡς λαμπάδες πυρός). His teeth were hanging out of his mouth like a boar, the nails of his hands were curved like scythes, while those of his toes were like a huge lion's (οἱ ὀδόντες αὐτοῦ ἐκρέμαντο ἔξω τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ὡς περ σιάγρου, οἱ ὄνυχες τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ καμπτοὶ ὡς δρέπανα, τῶν δὲ ποδῶν αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ λέωντος μεγάλου). He was of such a nature that no one could look at his face and live” (καὶ τοιοῦτός ἐστιν ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι τινα ἰδεῖν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ καὶ ζῆσαι) (2.2). When he encounters the apostles, one is stricken speechless (ἄφωνος) by his appearance (2.4), and Andrew “becomes as if dead” (γέγονεν ὡσεὶ νεκρός) before running away with Bartholomew and abandoning their disciples to actually die (2.5).

This vivid description works on several levels. Not only is it delightfully weird and, no doubt, entertaining to ancient readers,⁷⁶ the sketch simultaneously plays on and undercuts the

⁷⁶ For one account of how sensational details fulfilled a public “greed for the new and unheard-of,” see Gerlinde Huber-Regenich, “Hagiographic Fiction as Entertainment,” trans. Richard Stonemann, in *Latin Fiction:*

notion, as found in *Mart. Matth.*, that the acceptance of Christianity precedes physical transformation.⁷⁷ Christ appears to Andrew and Bartholomew and chastises them, reminding them that he “made every form of human being” (ἐποίησα πᾶσαν μορφήν ἀνθρώπου) (2.7). The *anthropophagos* is already human despite his appearance. Moreover, the author makes clear that the *anthropophagos* is unambiguously Christian. When asked his name, he tells Andrew that he is called Christomaios (Χριστομαῖος), and the apostle remarks that “your name contains a great mystery, and this is honorable; for the capacity to understand a name like this belongs to Christians” (μυστήριον μέγα ἔχει τὸ ὄνομά σου καὶ ἔτιμόν ἐστι τοῦτο· χριστιανῶν γὰρ ἐστι τὸ ἀκούειν τοιούτου ὀνόματος) (2.10). His monstrous appearance strikes onlookers dead or disabled, but knowledge of his Christian identity restores them to life.

We should pause briefly to consider an implication of the analysis to this point: the *anthropophagoi* are recurring characters without a stable identity. In *Acts. Andr. Matth.* their religious practices are ambiguous at best; in *Mart. Matth.* they were (and others still are) pagan idolaters; and in *Acts. Andr. Bart.* the solitary *anthropophagos* is converted as soon as he enters the scene, but once again it does not seem to have been a conversion *from* anything. This should caution us against too quick an identification of the cannibals in *Act. Andr. Matth.* with Greco-Roman heroes or depictions of “paganism” more broadly, as I have suggested.⁷⁸ After all,

The Latin Novel in Context, ed. Heinz Hofmann (London: Routledge, 1999), 158–79 (quote at 163 with reference to *Acts. Andr. Matth.*). However, by contextualizing apocryphal acts in the paradoxographical tradition, Janet E. Spittler, “The Development of Miracle Traditions in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles,” in *Between Canonical and Apocryphal Texts: Processes of Reception, Rewriting, and Interpretation in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, WUNT 419, ed. Jörg Frey, Claire Clivaz, and Tobias Nicklas (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 357–80, cautions against equating “astonishment” with “fabulous” and untrue.”

⁷⁷ Cf. Kominko, “‘Ugly as Sin,’” 378: “...physical appearance could reflect the beauty of the soul or, on the contrary, it could deceptively cover spiritual ugliness.”

⁷⁸ See above, n. 3, for MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer*. Jason König, “Novelistic and Anti-Novelist Narrative in the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*,” in *Fiction on the Fringe: Novelistic Writing in the Post-Classical Age*, Mnemosyne, Supplements 310, ed. Karla Grammatiki (Leiden: Brill, 2009), in an astute essay on the relationship of *Acts. Andr. Matth.* and another apocryphal narrative, the *Acts of Thomas*, to the Greco-Roman novels and “non-Christian genres,” asks “how early Christian fiction characteristically represents its relationship with pagan, Greco-Roman culture” (121). The presence of cannibalism, for him, suggests a self-

antagonists in late ancient Christian narratives did not always fit cleanly into a Christian-Pagan-Jew triad, a fact which forced some rather interesting boundary-policing. Monstrous others like the *anthropophagoi*—who embody crossed animacy boundaries—are almost definitionally polysemic.⁷⁹

Moreover, while dehumanized physical appearance and the wrong religious practices align in *Mart. Matt.*, for instance, to assert narratively the new humanity that comes with conversion, in *Acts Andr. Bart.* the dynamics are flipped. In fact, the playfulness this author shows in (mis)aligning life, death, humanity, and Christianity pays off later in the narrative when Christomaios the *anthropophagite* Christian defends the apostles from the persecutory efforts of the Parthian idolaters, his beastly form coming to the rescue against wild beasts sent by the governor (3.8–10). The conflict is set up by the devil announcing to the governor that the apostles have come to make the gods of the Parthians abandon their worshippers (3.2). After witnessing the might of Christomaios, things get worse for the Parthians: a fire descends around the city and the trapped inhabitants accordingly decide that they are “ready to turn to the knowledge of God” (ἐπιστρέφειν εἰς θεογνωσίαν), so Andrew sends Bartholomew to hear their pronouncement. Bartholomew promises to raise the fire and not let them “die from fear of that man’s form” (ἀποθανεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου τῆς μορφῆς τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐκείνου) expressly so that they will “forsake the idols made by human hands” (ἵνα ἐγκαταλίπετε τὰ χειροποίητα εἰδωλα) and believe in Jesus (4.1).

reflexive engagement with Greco-Roman literature broadly, and hence the *anthropophagoi* implicitly serve as embodiments of pagan identity (especially 132–33).

⁷⁹ See Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 134–142; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–25. I hope to return to this issue in future work.

The Parthians follow through. They gather their gods into one place, and Andrew stomps on the ground, causing it to split, “and the idols went down into the subterranean abyss” (κατήλθον τὰ εἰδῶλα εἰς τὰ καταχθόνια τῆς ἀβύσσου) (4.3), after which they are baptized by Christomaios (5.1). As in *Mart. Matt.*, the turning over and destruction of idols plays a key role in dramatizing the conversion of the apostles’ key antagonists. But not only is Christomaios himself not a pagan, he plays a significant role in the conversion of those who are. The apparent misalignment of his dehumanized appearance and proper religious beliefs works both to upset expectations and suggest that the barbarous *anthropophagos*—a figure whose distance from civilized society often helped ancient Mediterranean writers in antiquity work out the boundaries of their own cultural identities—is more reasonable and human than the idolaters.⁸⁰ Although Christomaios *seems* sub-human and is associated with causing death, he actually brings life; the Parthian idolaters, despite appearances, turn out to be less than human, at least until they destroy their idols.

With this play between life and death expressed through animality, humanity, and idolatry, the author of *Acts Andr. Bart.* capitalizes on a basic animacy hierarchy to portray the *anthropophagos* as animalistic and without human language—as less than human—and, paradoxically, to reconfigure the relationship to spiritual animacy. Because even the *anthropophagos* on the outskirts of humanity is included among those Jesus created—and indeed

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 6.20, or the inclusion of the *anthropophagoi* among the uncivilized races shut behind the Caspian Gates in some versions of the so-called *Alexander Romance* (the text history famously is complicated, but see, e.g., the extended letter to his mother and tutor in Book II.20-40). Broadly on cannibals and society in antiquity, see, inter alia, Agnès A. Nagy, *Qui a peur du cannibale?: Récits antiques d’anthropophages aux frontières de l’humanité* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), esp. 107–151. For Christian participation in this kind of ethnographic project of empire, see Kominko, “‘Ugly as Sin,’” 373–389. For the charge of cannibalism as related to barbarism with a focus on early Christian apologies, see Andrew McGowan, “Eating People: Accusations of Cannibalism Against Christians in the Second Century,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2:4 (Winter 1994): 413–42 and, on constructions of “barbarian” in Roman polemic against early Christians and the role of cannibalism therein, Stamenka E. Antonova, *Barbarian or Greek? The Charge of Barbarism and Early Christian Apologetics*, *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions* 187 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019).

is domesticated by his belief—readers who share these assumptions see the enlivening effects of their own religious orientations, as well as the de-livening effects of those who do not share them. The implicit acceptance of the animal as being less than human is leveraged by the author here to distance idolaters farther still from the superior, lively state of the Christian authors and readers. Incorporating the sub-human, that is, effectively functions to affirm Christian hegemony because the assimilation completely dehumanizes those who are narratively depicted as lower still than the sub-human, even as the apostolic misunderstanding of Christomaios’s nature simultaneously cautions the reader against being too confident of their own place in the hierarchy.

We can observe this play out narratively in *Mart. Matt.* and *Acts. Andr. Bart* with the help of idols. The description of the king’s gods as silver and gold in *Mart. Matt.* 20–21 alludes directly to biblical anti-idol polemic such as that found in Ps 113 LXX. There, “the idols of the gentiles” (τὰ εἰδωλα τῶν ἔθνῶν)—in contrast to “our God” who “is in heaven” (ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν...ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) and “does whatever he pleases” (πάντα, ὅσα ἠθέλησεν, ἐποίησεν)—are described as “silver and gold, the works of human hands” (ἀργύριον καὶ χρυσίον, ἔργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων). Like Clement of Alexandria’s comparison of the Serapis cult statue in Alexandria to an oyster,⁸¹ the point in this passage of the psalm is to underscore the weakness of the idols and their worshippers.

They have mouths but will not speak (οὐ λαλήσουσιν); eyes but will not see (οὐκ ὄψονται). They have ears but will not hear (οὐκ ἀκούσονται); noses but will not smell (οὐκ ὀσφρανθήσονται). They have hands but will not grope (οὐ ψηλαφήσουσιν); feet but will not walk (οὐ περιπατήσουσιν); they will make no sound in their throats (οὐ φωνήσουσιν ἐν τῷ λάρυγγι αὐτῶν). Those who make them (οἱ ποιοῦντες αὐτά) are like them, as are all who trust in them (οἱ πεποιθότες ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς). (Ps. 113:13–16 LXX).

⁸¹ Clement, *Protrepticus* 4.51.2–5 [Stählin 39, 19–40], as discussed above at p. 183 n. 51.

Unlike the God of the Psalmist, the idols cannot do anything at all. As result of their specific, spiritless materiality, they are, in spite of their lifelike bodies, lifeless. And so too, argues the Psalmist, are their creators and worshippers, who by analogy are as weak and spiritually dead as the idols are physically. Through invocation in the *Mart. Matt.* of themes familiar from this passage, the author encourages readers to view the king’s gods as inanimate in their materiality and the king himself as spiritually dead due to his trust in them.

The weakness of these gods is dramatized all the more acutely by their destruction in the very fire with which Fulvanus was trying to kill Matthew/Matthias. The dead representations of gods that do not give life die again while the living apostle of the living God lives on. Interestingly, the author has the king respond to this demonstration of divine power initially not with recognition but dismay. He exclaims, “Alas—the gods perished!” (Οἴμοι, ὅτι ἀπόλοντο οἱ θεοί), and speculates that perhaps “stone and clay gods are better” (κρείττονές εἰσιν οἱ λίθινοι καὶ ὀστράκινοι θεοί) since they cannot be melted and are not as valuable (§21).⁸² His reasoning demonstrates a misunderstanding of the most common form of ontological argument, helping to characterize the king as in fact like the idols. While he seeks gods that will endure and remain in his presence, he still searches for them blindly in lifeless matter; gold and clay are different, but both are useless. It is only later, after Fulvanus has witnessed Matthew/Matthias ascend to heaven, that the king joins the Christian *anthropophagoi*, taking on a new name to fully enter his new life and smashing his idols in response. Finally, his letter pulls together the connection between idols and death: he threatens that if anyone is found still “serving idols or hiding them”

⁸² Bonnet, *Mart. Matt.* 247.3, 5–6. In the Δ recension, there is even greater emphasis on the created quality of these gods, as Fulvanus remarks that his “forefathers were so worn out and made the gods with great labor—and now, look, they were destroyed by a single magus!” (τοσαῦτα ἔκαμον οἱ προπάτορές μου καὶ ἐποίησαν ἐν κόπῳ πολλῷ τοῦς θεοῦς, καὶ νῦν ἰδοῦ ὑπὸ ἐνὸς μάγου ἀνηλώθησαν).

(θραπέυων εἰδῶλα ἢ ἀποκρύβων αὐτά), then they will be executed (§29).⁸³ In the conceit of this narrative, idols lead to death, both physically and spiritually. The rejection and destruction of these lifeless gods leads to new life and a transformed humanity, even for characters as stereotypically monstrous and reeking of death as the *anthropophagoi*.

The author of *Acts Andr. Bart.* does not mention the specific materials that comprise the Parthians' idols, but a similar dynamic is at play in that work as well. Bartholomew's proclamation that the idols are "made by human hands" (χειροποίητα, 4.1) alludes to an array of biblical prohibitions and prophetic predictions of their destruction. Throughout Isaiah, for instance, χειροποίητα are taken as synonymous for idols, illustrated clearly by Isa 46:5-7 when the deity asks:

To whom have you likened me? See, you who have employed your own craftsmanship, you who deal in deceit (τίνοι με ὁμοιώσατε; ἴδετε τεχνάσασθε, οἱ πλανώμενοι). Those who contribute gold from a purse and silver on a balance will set it on a scale. After contracting a goldsmith, they made works of human hands (χειροποίητα), and, once they bow down, they venerate the works. They carry it on their shoulders and go (πορεύονται), and if they set it up, it remains in place, never being moved (ἐὰν δὲ θῶσιν αὐτό, ἐπὶ τοῦ τόπου αὐτοῦ μένει, οὐ μὴ κινηθῆ). Whoever cries out to it, it will never listen (καὶ ὅς ἂν βοήσῃ πρὸς αὐτόν, οὐ μὴ εἰσακούσῃ); it will never save him from evils." (Isa 46:5-7).

As in the Psalm passage, the prophet here emphasizes the lack of divine creator who alone could bestow animacy, which results in the inactivity of χειροποίητα. Such lifeless statues are described in contrast to the living God, with an added insinuation of deceit. The charge of idols being manufactured and hence weak is again reliant upon the purported lack of animacy entailed in their materiality. The author of *Acts Andr. Bart.* arranges the animacy hierarchy such that rejection of these lifeless materials is necessary for inheriting life.

Indeed, immediately after Bartholomew calls upon the Parthians to reject the "idols made by human hands," they proclaim that they now "believe in the living God," thus implicitly

⁸³ Bonnet, *Mart. Matt.* 260.14–16.

acknowledging that the idols were not living, despite the fact that these idols seem to show at least one sign of life: they talk. But it is deceit. As the people gather the idols, the author deploys the trope that they are animated by demons, who “cried out, wailing, ‘Our license to speak freely departs today!’” (ἔκραζον ὀλολύζοντες ὅτι ἀπῆλθεν ἡ παρρησία ἡμῶν σήμερον) (4.3). The attribution of this speech to demons preserves the animacy hierarchy that keeps stone or metal or wooden idols on the bottom by asserting that they only spoke before by deception. Like the χειροποίητα carried around by their worshippers, the idols had only simulated life. By implication, the life of the Parthians who had previously listened to them was counterfeit as well. After the idols sink to hell, the citizens undergo a miraculous baptism, and many are raised from the dead. The lifeless idols die while the Parthians come to new life.

In contrast to *Acts Andr. Matth.*, the *Mart. Matt.* and *Acts Andr. Bart.* deploys ontological, epistemological, and demonological arguments against pagans in a relatively straightforward—if no less creative—manner. The idols are worshipped as pagan gods by the inhabitants of Myrne and the City of the Parthians, and this misapprehension seems largely caused by demonological deceit. The authors’ viewpoints are moreover made clear through commonplace but nonetheless carefully chosen biblical tropes that emphasize the impotence of both the idols and those who make and worship them. Conversely, the inanimacy of idol and idolater both helps the authors make claims about the potential for transformation with Christian conversion and the powerfully “humanizing” effects of turning to the living God. Idols, which by their actions sometimes defy the expected boundaries of animacy, help these authors draw lines around who is fully human and who is not.

Conclusions

I have argued in this chapter that the author of the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals* draws explicit attention to the materiality of certain characters—most emphatically the miraculously animated sphinx in §12–15—and uses assumptions about the inferiority of material agency to upset audience expectations. Even other narratives in the same story world as *Acts Andr. Matth.* deploy forms of ontological, demonological, and epistemological argument about the inadequacy of idols to underscore the inanimacy of those who worship them—they are less human than even inhuman *anthropophagoi*. In *Acts Andr. Matth.*, however, it is by emphasizing the inanimate aspects of the animate sphinx’s being, form, and name—the ways in which it is the polar opposite of the living God—that the author both calls attention to polemic against idols shared with Jews (embodied metonymically in the chief priests and men of the people) and attempts to demonstrate the utterly inferior status of these religious rivals. The sphinx, befitting its hybrid nature and received propensity for riddles, both reveals and occludes the truth; it is a walking, talking paradox. Animal, human, inanimate, and animate, it is an image of the cherubim and seraphim, while also an explicitly lifeless idol. It confounds and yet leads the way for Andrew and readers to imitate it in obedience and witness. There is no doubt that animate statues were at home in the “miraculous landscape of the ancient Mediterranean,” as Janet Spittler concludes,⁸⁴ but the role statues play in *Acts Andr. Matth.* is decidedly unusual. In scripting a starring role for the sphinx and thrusting the apostles, chief priests, and *anthropophagoi* into competing relations with it, the author of this narrative sought to fashion self and other in particularly bold ways.

⁸⁴ Spittler, “Development of Miracle Traditions,” 370.

This miraculous animation in some ways supports the animistic worldview that Peers advocates for and other new materialists ascribe to, but not entirely. To be sure, the sphinx and the alabaster statue-person both smashed right through any firm subject/object or spiritual/corporeal binaries, but their characterization rather ironically ends up affirming the priority and value of the psychological/ethical image over the material as the privileged response to the ontological distance between divinity and matter. The miracle in each case is their animation, but it is *what* they do and how—not merely that they do it—that proves their status as divine rather than demonic images. Correct understanding and the ability to overcome the ontological argument come about by psychological/ethical transformation. Access to God and revelation come through obedient imitation and witness.

But this was perhaps too bold an attempt. Even the later, so-called “second recension” of *Acts Andr. Matth.* published recently by Andrey Vinogradov on the basis of four manuscripts,⁸⁵ demonstrates some discomfort with the portrayal of the sphinx in the earlier version. Among the many differences, the sphinx episode is transposed to a setting within the city itself and there are now two animated sphinxes, which together serve as a more typical display of divine power over the weakness of the other idols worshipped by the *anthropophagoi*. The two sphinxes come down together and speak “in one voice” (ἐν μιᾷ φωνῇ) to refute the “Gentiles of many tongues” (ἔθνη τὰ ἀλλόγλωσσα) with a double testimony. They mock the gods of the *anthropophagoi*, proclaiming that “they are not gods, but splinters, and vain works of human beings” (οἱ οὐκ εἰσιν θεοί, ἀλλὰ πελεκήματα καὶ ἔργα ἀνθρώπων μάταια).⁸⁶ In response, the statues of Pan and the Satyr turn to dust on the spot, vanquished. The *anthropophagoi* depart and ask Apollo, “the most

⁸⁵ Andrey Vinogradov, “Die zweite Rezension der *Actorum Andreae et Matthiae apud Anthropophagos* [BHG 110B],” *Christianskij Vostok* 3 (2002): 11–105 (Greek text 19–78, with Russian translation following). Vinogradov suggests tentatively that many of the narrative changes are based off the account in *Mart. Matt.* (§18).

⁸⁶ Vinogradov, “Die zweite Rezension,” 52.

mantic of all the gods” (πάντων θεῶν μαντικώτατε), about what happened. The statue of Apollo remains unmoved (τὸ ἄγαλμα ἀκίνητον), but replies, “because we gods are made of stone, we cannot do anything to benefit you” (ἡμεῖς γὰρ οἱ θεοὶ λίθινοι ὄντες οὐ δυνάμεθα ὑμῶν οὐδὲ ὀφελῆσαι).⁸⁷ While the effect of objectifying the apostles’ opponents is much the same as in the earlier version, the point, perhaps paradoxically, is to prove the powerless, useless nature of material images. In the earlier *Acts Andr. Matth.*, conversely, the sphinx is indisputably *useful*; Captain Jesus even says as much upon hearing the “useful words” (λόγοι χρηστοί) about it at the end of §15. As an idol, the sphinx is an exception that proves the rule.

The *Acts Andr. Matth.* certainly did not form part of either iconophile or iconoclast florilegia in the eighth and ninth centuries, but unraveling some of its riddles reveals the variety of creative redeployments of arguments about images and idols that were operative in late antiquity. The sphinx and alabaster statue-person cannot be taken for granted as indicative of an idolatrous strain nor of opposition to material images; these characters do not reveal that everyone knew matter was animate. Rather, as rhetorically crafted literary characters, they show the power of human agency in shaping and manipulating the ways that “others” could be seen through animacy as described in narrative. By deploying the narrative poetics of Christian living image discourse to depict material images as well, the author of *Acts Andr. Matth.* grounds the ethical image that provides both the subject and the medium for imitation in the material image. The human characters and the stony statues are both pulled into a frontier situated between the opposition of living and dead. The sphinx and the statue are only dubiously “Christian images,” but we might well conclude that acts of narrative animation like those in this dynamic and rather popular apocryphon contributed to the construction of a world in which images of the saints and

⁸⁷ Vinogradov, “Die zweite Rezension,” 53.

Christ, simultaneously active subjects and passive objects, accompanied daily life. I will return to this complex mimetic interplay in the next chapter, as we turn to an analysis of late ancient bleeding images of Christ and Mary.

5.

It's a Bloody Miracle!Blood, Icons, and Imitation in *The Story of the Image in Berytus*

During the Fourth Session of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, just a short time before parts of *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15 were read aloud for all to hear, Peter of Nikomedia announced that he had brought a volume of the writings of Athanasius of Alexandria containing a “Discourse about a miracle of the icon of our Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, that happened in the city of Berytus” (Λόγος...περὶ τῆς εἰκόνοσ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν γενομένου θαύματος ἐν βηρυτῶ τῇ πόλει).¹ This purported homily, which I will call the *Story of the Image in Berytus (Imag. Beryt.)*,² would be widely copied, expanded, and disseminated, first as a staple of the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, and then in conjunction with the “rediscovery” of the eponymous icon in 975 (the blood having arrived already in 967/8).³ The key scene in the narrative consists primarily of an extended narrative in which an

¹ Lamberz, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 4), 316–330 (quote on 316).

² The text (CPG 2262; BHG 780–88b), extant in some 143 mss (according to the online database pinakes as of June 7, 2022), goes by several different though reasonably similar titles in both scholarship and the manuscripts; Migne, who published three versions (PG 28: 797–805, 805–12, and a Latin version at 813–24), himself called the text by three different names: the table of contents lists *Historia imaginis Berytensis*, but then the first two texts are referred to as *de miraculo beryti edito* and *de passione imaginis de nostro Jesu Christi*, respectively, perhaps to distinguish between the two Greek recensions. CPG unifies this diversity of titles under *narratio de [cruce seu] imagine Berytensi*; I have selected the English gloss “story” to capture λόγος and διήγησις, the two most common variants of the incipit in mss I have surveyed (for διήγησις see, e.g., Ott. gr. 1, fol. 172v). The recension read at Nicaea II (PG 28: 805–12, BHG 780–82), which we can call the α group following István M. Bugár, “Images of Jews and Christians in the Seventh Century: The *Narratio de Imagine in Beryto* and its Context,” *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010): 35 n. 6, seems to match the older of the two. Unfortunately, Migne does not identify the manuscript he uses for this recension (saying only that it is “ex ms. Palatino vetustissimo”). Accordingly, and because we have no evidence of the narrative circulating in a longer form prior to Nicaea II (see below), I have chosen to base my analysis of the α text on the critical edition from Nicaea II in Lamberz, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum* (Acts 4), 316–330, providing section numbers from Migne in the text and page/line numbers from Lamberz (Acts 4) in the notes.

³ On the arrival of the icon in Constantinople, see Leo the Deacon, *Historia* X.4–5 (PG 117 893–97), with brief discussion in Ch. Walter, “Iconographical Considerations,” in *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos and Related Texts*, eds. Munitiz et al. (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1997), lx. See Migne PG 28: 797 n. 8 for ms incipits indicating liturgical use (Bugár, “Images of Jews and Christians,” 35; Vladimir Baranov, “The Iconophile Fathers,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, [ed. Parry], 344; Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, 277 n. 151. On the tenth-century expansion, see Ernst von Dobschütz, “Eine Fastenpredigt über

icon of Jesus is crucified by the Jews of Berytus (Beirut). Staging a mock reenactment of the passion, the story reaches its climax when the Jews of Berytus pierce the icon with a lance and blood and water pour from its side, re-presenting the miracle of John 19:34.

Modern scholars have long denied the Athanasian authorship of this homiletic narrative, with Montfaucon, Migne, and von Dobschütz almost mocking the attribution to the fourth-century bishop of Alexandria.⁴ A more affirmative date and authorship, however, have proven elusive. There is practically no trace of *Imag. Beryt.* prior to its being read at Nicaea II, though Alexakis has shown conclusively that the narrative was at least part of an earlier iconophile florilegium dated to 770 (which was in turn used as part of an even larger florilegium compiled in Rome in 774/5),⁵ and thus the text may have circulated for some time previously. Moreover,

das Christusbild von Beryt,” *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 45 (1902): 381–407. Bugár’s γ group is sufficiently diverse that it is difficult to date as a whole (cf. the categorization of the various versions of this narrative in Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 281** n.2). The earliest Latin version of this account was produced in 873 by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, evidently as part of his translation of the Acts of Nicaea II (published in PG 28: 813–824) includes an expanded prehistory whereby the image at the center of the story is an eyewitness, as it were, to Jesus’s death, having been made by Nicodemus, who handed it over to his teacher Gamaliel, who in turn passed it on to Jacob and to Simeon, and so on (see PG 28: 818). On the reception and diffusion of the Latin versions of the narrative, which have been better studied, see especially Michele Bacci, “The Berardenga Antependium and the *Passio Ymaginis* Office,” *Journal of The Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 61 (1998): 1–16; and Michele Bacci, “‘Quel bello miracolo onde si fa la festa del santo Salvatore’: studio sulle metamorfosi di una leggenda,” in *Santa Croce e Santo Volto: Contributi allo studio dell’origine e della fortuna del culto del Salvatore (secoli IX–XV)*, ed. Gabriella Rossetti (Pisa: GISEM, 2002), 7–86.

⁴ Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 280** n. 2 speculates that the Athanasian ascription may have come about due to the similarity between the stabbed and bleeding image in *Imag. Beryt.* and the mention in the *Quaest. ad Ant.* 39 (see above, Introduction, pp. xx) of “holy icons” (αἱ ἁγία εἰκόνες) that “bled” (ἔβλυσαν), but regards Athanasian authorship “absolutely out of the question” (ist absolut ausgeschlossen) and does not attempt to date the text with any precision. For evidence, he points to a handful of manuscripts and discussion in Peter Lambeck’s mid-17th century *Commentariorum de augustissima bibliotheca Caesarea Vindobonensi* I.124–32 and especially to Bernard de Montfaucon’s *S. Athanasii opera omnia* II.2, 343; the latter, at least according to Isaac de Beausobre’s summary reviews in *Bibliothèque germanique* XXVII, 96, is reported to have remarked that if the fathers at Nicaea II had been moved to tears by *Imag. Beryt.* (cf. Lamberz [Acts 4], 330. 3–5), the narrative “had brought [Montfaucon himself] only to laughter” (ihn habe er nur zum Lachen gebracht). Migne, PG 28 796, for his part, issued an unusual warning about the authorship of *imag. Beryt.* (*Admonitio in historiam imaginis berytensis*), which he does not do with other Athanasian writings deemed ‘spuria,’ such as the *Historia Melchisedec* or the *Quaest. ad Ant.* The denial is partially based on the fact that attribution to Athanasius is not universally present in manuscripts, and, though I am inclined to join the consensus view, it is worth noting that scholars have provided little to no additional evidence for classifying *Imag. Beryt.* as “Pseudo-Athanasia.” Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, 277 n. 151, for instance, simply states, “The story related in this text is manifestly a fiction, and the ascription to Athanasius is equally incredible.”

⁵ Alexakis, *Par. gr.* 1115, esp. 170–72.

the considerable number of textual variants indicates that manuscripts of the *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea* were not the sole source of knowledge for this narrative.⁶ As part of his argument that image and prototype were conflated to a greater and more frequent extent in Late Antiquity, Kitzinger ascribes *Imag. Beryt.* tentatively to the seventh century (which Bugár has worked to corroborate for different reasons) but the art historian is nevertheless highly suspicious of iconophile invention in the mid to late eighth century.⁷ Dynamics of both the seventh and eighth centuries, accordingly, have since served as possible contexts for the narrative, with correspondingly different results for interpretation of the character of the Jews and the significance of the blood. Do the Jews of Berytus stand in for contemporary Jews amid seventh century Jewish and Christian polemics?⁸ Do their actions represent the assault, as it were, on Christian lands by Muslim armies—including the conquest of Berytus (Beirut) in 630?⁹ Does the

⁶ According to Bugár, “Images of Jews and Christians,” 35 n.6, the variants in the β and γ groups suggest that “not all versions derive from the acts of Nicaea,” though the brevity of his essay leaves a full accounting of the text history and what it may indicate about dating a continued desideratum.

⁷ On the seventh century, see Kitzinger, “Cult of Icons,” 118 n. 147, with doubt expressed in that same note and especially at 101 n. 59. Migne, PG 28 796, von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 280** n.2, and Kitzinger, “Cult of Icons,” 101 n.59 all note that Sigebert of Gebloux, an eleventh century Benedictine monk, included an entry about the Berytus miracle in his important *Chronicle*, which describes the events as occurring “In the time of Emperor Constantine and his wife Irene” (*Tempore Constantini imperatoris et Hyrenae uxoris ejus*) (PL 160 145A). Although each of these scholars postulates a different date (Migne somewhat puzzlingly states that this is Sigebert’s entry for 365 [perhaps meaning 746 CE insofar as Sigebert’s *Chronicle* does not begin until 381 CE], while von Dobschütz adduces references to 750 CE and Kitzinger confidently claims that Sigebert places the events of the story in 765), each falls within the reign of Constantine V (though Irene died in 750), as well as the reign of Frankish leader Pepin the Short, mentioned by Sigebert one sentence prior to the events in Berytus. Lamentably, Sigebert’s source for this date is utterly unclear, which makes it hard to trust as possible evidence for iconophile invention in the manner that Kitzinger does. For Bugár’s corroboration, see “Images of Jews and Christians,” 37–9.

⁸ Bugár, “Images of Jews and Christians,” 35–40.

⁹ David M. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 4; Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, 277 n. 151 claims, somewhat similarly, that “this myth is likely to date after the Arab conquest when fantasies about the cities of Syria were more likely to circulate unchallenged.”

crucifixion of the icon serve to associate the Byzantine Iconoclasts with “literalist Jews”?¹⁰ Do the fluids have liturgical symbolism?¹¹ Are they a type for Christ’s two natures?¹²

Largely missing from existing analysis is close study of the narrative as a whole.¹³ How does the collapse of the prototypal body of Jesus and his lifeless image, entailed in the eruption of blood and water, work within the narrative and to what ends? Unlike *Cos. Dam.* 30, 13, and 15 in chapter 2, which also served as evidence in iconophile florilegia for patristic approval of icons and their potential for lively miracles, the text of *Imag. Beryt.* read at Nicaea II does not seem to have been significantly shortened at the council. Similarly, it has not been quite as often taken for granted as evidence of popular beliefs about images.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the quotation of the full narrative in the *Acts of Nicaea II* has not necessarily led to fuller scholarly analysis. Rather, as in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, the fact of the miracle has dominated interpretation, obscuring the ways this author dramatizes theological and cultural confrontations between Christians and Jews. Thus, having in the previous chapters shown different ways that narrative authors in the fourth to sixth centuries creatively undercut and reinscribed cultural,

¹⁰ Katherine Aron-Beller, “Byzantine Tales of Jewish Image Desecration: Tracing a Narrative,” *Jewish Culture and History* 18:2 (May 2017): 219–22 and Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 47–50. This association was common enough in iconophile polemic (see, e.g., Theodore the Studite, *Refutation and Subversion of the Impious Poems* 16 [Cattoi, *Theodore the Studite*, 161]; James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study of the Origins of Antisemitism* [Cleveland and New York: World Publishing, 1961], 291–94 provides a litany of examples, though several date to well after the Iconoclast Controversy); sources such as the *Adversus Constaninum Caballinum* and the ninth century Chludov Psalter make plain the charge iconoclasm amounted to a re-crucifixion in and of itself (see Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 48–50) for discussion). Surprisingly, Brubaker and Haldon do not treat *Imag. Beryt.* at all, despite largely following Speck in suggesting that references to images in anti-Jewish texts are, on the whole, iconophile interventions (Brubaker/Haldon, “The Sources,” 270–710).

¹¹ Aron-Beller, “Jewish Image Desecration,” 224.

¹² Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 47.

¹³ For a partial exception see Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 45–48, though his tendency to keep his analysis at the level of the “legend” writ large rather than analyzing particular textual iterations, and thus combining different textual strands (cf. his treatment of Mandylion traditions, pp. 38–40, 126–30), leaves much to be desired.

¹⁴ Kitzinger is the clear exception, as the narrative features in his examples about “beliefs and practices, which attribute magical properties to an image” entail the elimination of distinctions between image and prototype, “at least temporarily” (“Cult of Images,” 100–1). Cf. Maria Vassilaki, “Bleeding Icons,” in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium: Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, eds. Antony Eastmond, Liz James, and Maria Vassilaki (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 127, who rightly notes that Byzantine stories of bleeding images do not necessarily “enable us to see how they were experienced in Byzantine society.”

religious, and ontological differences through the deployment and overturning of expectations surrounding living and lifeless images, in this final chapter I analyze a text from the seventh or eighth century to explore the deployment of a very particular vital sign: blood. How, I ask, do the icon and the specific act of an image bleeding—a sign both of life and of death—enable the author of *Imag. Beryt.* to portray the Jews' conversion?

To answer this question, I begin with a close reading of the account to show how the author seeks to make the bloody miracle of the icon a genuine wonder of Christ by placing it within a prophetic and providential landscape. The author of *Imag. Beryt.*, I argue, uses techniques of time, space, and characterization to portray the events as the mimetic double of the biblical crucifixion and thereby make the icon a living image by virtue of more than its paradoxical vitality. At the same time, through this mode of storytelling, the audience is placed in the odd position of identifying with the figure of the Jews. The narrator of the account, however, highlights only the identification between Christ and the image, a relationship which Theodore the Studite picks up on in the ninth century. In the second section of the chapter, I show how Theodore is able to deploy *Imag. Beryt.* for his arguments about icons and homonymy by carefully excerpting the crucifixion episode from the fuller narrative. In a way surprisingly similar the effects of florilegal excerption in the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, I contend, scholars' focus on the elision of body and icon that blood seems to imply stems at least in part from the use of *Imag. Beryt.* in the context of the Iconoclast Controversy.

There are, however, other options. Accordingly, in the third and fourth sections I turn with fresh eyes to a comparison between *Imag. Beryt.* and two other narratives that feature bleeding images and Jewish assailants, Gregory of Tours's *Glory of the Martyrs* 21 and a Coptic *Homily on the Virgin* attributed to Theophilus of Alexandria. Contrary to the tendency in

scholarship to focus solely on the bloody point of similarity, my analysis reveals how the distinct settings, circumstances of discovering the icon, and the outcomes of the miracle support viewing the narratological function of blood in different lights as well. By closely attending to themes of guilt, condemnation, death, and repentance in *Glory of the Martyrs* and *Homily on the Virgin*, I demonstrate how the blood from icons in these two narratives mediates between spiritual—and sometimes physical—life and death, sometimes indicating condemnation but other times redemption.

This conclusion about the sign of blood is instructive as I return to *Imag. Beryt.* to examine the biggest point of difference between the narrative of the crucified icon and the two other bleeding icons: the fact that in the former water comes out with the blood. The blood and water, I show, clear the way in this new miracle for an outcome that differs from the New Testament narrative on which the miracle story is so clearly based. The Jews are no longer blind to the divinity of Jesus, but see and pursue baptism. While this sort of conversion fantasy could be composed at almost any point in the long history of Christianity, I argue that the complicated affirmation and negation of the Jews as “Christ-killers” *Imag. Beryt.* displays makes most sense in the context of the forced baptism of Jews under Heraclius in the seventh century or shortly after. The icon, the blood, and the character of the Jews all dance between and on both sides of the animate/inanimate boundaries to simultaneously destabilize and reify religio-ethnic difference.

Seeing Double

Imag. Beryt. unfolds in three main sections, framed in turn by three extended narratorial interventions by the purported homilist. In the first narrative movement (§2–3), the narrator

establishes how an icon of Jesus came into the possession of a local Jew; the second (§4) features the extended crucifixion of the icon; and the third (§6–7) describes the miraculous healing of the sick and demon possessed in the city, and the consequent conversion of the Jews of Berytus. But to start with the events of the plot is to overlook the importance of the voice of the narrator for understanding this account.

In the opening exhortation of *Imag. Beryt*, the persona of the narrator primes the reader through prophetic allusion and a play between corporeal and spiritual senses to expect events that are simultaneously new and old. “Lift the eyes of your mind” (Ἄρατε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς διανοίας), the narrator begins, “and see this new spectacle, which has occurred now” (καὶ ἴδετε τὸ καινὸν θέαμα τοῦτο ὅπερ γέγονε νῦν).¹⁵ This novelty, the narrator concedes, is “not at all strange for God” (ἐπὶ μὲν θεοῦ οὐδὲν ξένον), since “being God, he can do everything” (θεὸς γὰρ ὧν πάντα δύναται). But the biblical character of the foreshadowed miracle is marked as surprising: “seeing that [the miracle happened] in *our* days and among *us*, every heart of those who hears will be amazed!” (ὅτι δὲ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἡμῶν καὶ ἐφ’ ἡμῶν, ἐκστήσεται πᾶσα καρδία τῶν ἀκουόντων), the narrator exclaims. Yet, the way this miracle will fit like a puzzle-piece into a scriptural panorama also renders it legible. Switching into a still more biblical register with language echoing Jeremiah’s chastisement of Israel for turning away from the Lord (Jer 2:12), the narrator remarks that “truly, heaven *was* amazed at what has been dared” (ὄντως ἐξέστη ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐπὶ τῷ τετολμημένῳ), adding, in an allusion to Ps 76:17 LXX, that “the abyss has been shaken up once again” (ἐταράχθησαν πάλιν ἄβυσσοι). Moreover, “the sun was darkened and the moon and stars likewise because of what happened (ὁ ἥλιος ἐσκοτίσθη καὶ ἡ σελήνη καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες ὁμοίως ἐπὶ τῷ γεγονότι). But, on the other hand, all the powers of heaven were once

¹⁵ Lamberz (Acts 4), 316.18–318.1.

again gladdened because of what was arranged providentially by the Lord” (ἀλλὰ πάλιν ἠυφράνθησαν ἐπὶ τῷ οἰκονομηθέντι ὑπὸ κυρίου πᾶσαι αἱ τῶν οὐρανῶν δυνάμεις).¹⁶

The pairing of the darkened sky and powers of heaven, in turn, evokes Matt 24:29 and Mark 13:24–5 (citing Isa 13:10 and 34:4), each of which describes what will happen with the coming of the Son of Man, fulfilled with the darkness that accompanies Jesus’s death.¹⁷ But while in the biblical text the powers of heaven are “shaken,” here, with reference to Ps 76:17, it is the abyss that is shaken while the powers are instead “gladdened.” The present miracle is in direct continuity with an echoing, prophesied past, but also distinct, perhaps a fulfillment of the prior miracle. Without describing a single plot point, the narrator foreshadows a new fulfillment of the coming and crucifixion of Jesus through a litany of biblical allusions. In addition, the need for readers to pay attention to the movement between past and present is confirmed by the narrator’s final exhortation. Neatly inverting Mark 4:12/Isaiah 6:9, where “those outside” are said to look but not see and listen but not understand,¹⁸ the narrator instructs the audience, “By understanding, understand and incline your ear—that is, the ear of the heart more over the external ear, and listen” (συνιέντες σύνετε καὶ τὸ οὖς ἡμῶν κλίνατε, πρό γε τοῦ ἔξω τὸ τῆς καρδίας, καὶ ἀκούσατε) (§1).¹⁹ The allusions have the effect of simultaneously anchoring the reader in biblical time and unmooring them from it through emphasis on the present. At the same

¹⁶ Lamberz (Acts 4), 318.3–8.

¹⁷ Matt 24:29: “And immediately after the tribulation of those days *the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of heaven will be shaken*” (Εὐθέως δὲ μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων ὁ ἥλιος σκοτισθήσεται, καὶ ἡ σελήνη οὐ δώσει τὸ φέγγος αὐτῆς, καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες πεσοῦνται ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλευθήσονται); cf. Mark 13:24–5, which is nearly identical. Matt 27:45: “And it became dark over the entire land from the sixth hour to the ninth (ἀπὸ δὲ ἕκτης ὥρας σκότος ἀγένετο εἰ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἕως ὥρας ἐνάτης); cf. Mark 15:33 and Luke 23:44–5, which adds specifically that “the sun failed” (τοῦ ἡλίου ἐκλιπόντος). Interestingly, Codex Vaticanus here heightens the paradox of the miracle by describing that “it became dark... though the sun was *shining*” (σκότος ἐγένετο... τοῦ ἡλίου ἐκλάμποντος).

¹⁸ Mark 4:11b–4:12: “Everything comes to those outside in parables (ἐκείνοις δὲ τοῖς ἔξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὰ πάντα γίνεται), in order that although seeing they might see and not perceive, and though hearing they might hear and not understand, lest they turn, and it be forgiven to them” (ἵνα βλέποντες βλέπωσιν καὶ μὴ ἴδωσιν, καὶ ἀκούοντες ἀκούωσιν καὶ μὴ συνιῶσιν, μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἀφεθῇ αὐτοῖς).

¹⁹ Lamberz (Acts 4), 318.910.

time, by appealing to their eyes of the mind and their ear of the heart, the narrator also prompts the audience to tune their hermeneutical radio dials for understanding a message both in and beyond the words of the text.

Following this scripturally rich introductory framing, the narrator dives into the story proper by identifying the setting of the story as Berytos, which is “lying on the borders of Tyre and Sidon” (ἐν μεθορίοις Τύρου καὶ Σιδῶνος κειμένη), and thus strengthening the tie between the events of the narrative and the life of Jesus in the gospel texts of Matt 15:21 and especially Mark 7:31, where Jesus travels south from Tyre toward the sea of Galilee and the Decapolis in the south nonsensically *by way* of Sidon to the north.²⁰ In the gospel accounts, the mentions of Tyre and Sidon serve to alert readers to the fact that within the symbolic geography of these texts, Jesus was performing miracles in Gentile territory, not Jewish.²¹ In *Imag. Beryt.*, the narrator describes how in Berytus “there were many multitudes of Jews” (πλήθη πολλὰ ἦν τῶν Ἰουδαίων) with a large synagogue,²² but the connection to biblical geography as well as biblical time may bring to mind a designation of Berytus as not properly a Jewish city, a detail that sets the scene for the events that follow.²³

The care with which the narrator locates the narrative in time and space, however, at first appears to contrast with the way the characters of the narrative are drawn as nameless individuals without any obvious biblical exemplars. “A certain Christian rented from someone a room in a

²⁰ Mark 7:31: “And having departed again from the regions of Tyre, he went through Sidon toward the Sea of Galilee in the middle of the regions of the Decapolis” (Καὶ πάλιν ἐξελθὼν ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων Τύρου ἦλθεν διὰ Σιδῶνος εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ὁρίων Δεκαπόλεως).

²¹ See, e.g., Cameron Evan Ferguson, *A New Perspective on the Use of Paul in the Gospel of Mark* (London: Routledge, 2021), 67 and 83–4 n. 27. For other New Testament characterizations of Tyre and Sidon as Gentile cities, see Matt 11:21–4 and Acts 12:20–3.

²² Lamberz (Acts 4), 318.12–13.

²³ The “Gentile” character of Tyre and Sidon is enhanced by the location of these cities in Canaanite and other non-Israelite territories (see, e.g., Gen 10:19, Jos 19:29, 2 Sam 5:11, and Ez 26–8). The narrator adds that the city is under the tax jurisdiction of Antioch (Lamberz [Acts 4], 318.10–11), well-known for its Christian-Jewish tensions in the fourth century, the purported setting for *Imag. Beryt.* following the attribution to Athanasius.

house” (χριστιανός τις ἔλαβεν ἐνοικῶ κελλίον παρὰ τινος), the narrator begins, an abode which just so happened to be next door to the synagogue. The icon at the center of the story, which in the Latin versions of *Imag. Beryt.* has a prestigious lineage and connection to biblical times, is here fairly generic: “while dwelling in it [the room], he fixed an icon of our Lord Jesus Christ, which had been painted reverently and featured the whole of our Lord Jesus Christ, opposite his couch” (ἐν ᾧ κατοικῶν ἀντικρὺ τοῦ ἀκουβίτου αὐτοῦ ἔπηξεν εἰκόνα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· ἐν σεμνοῖς μὲν ἦν ἐζωγραφημένη, ὁλόστατον δὲ ἔχουσα τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν).²⁴ Even the conditions under which the story’s climactic conflict will take place are first described as unremarkable. Because he needed a bigger space, the narrator describes, the Christian simply moved to a different part of the city and, “because when he moved all his belongings he was forgetful...he neglected the icon of the Lord out of forgetfulness, as I said” (καὶ μετάρως πάντα τὰ αὐτοῦ κατὰ λήθην...τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ κυρίου ἀφῆκε λησμονήσας, καθὼς ἔφην).²⁵

And yet, the voice of the narrator also insists that beyond this mundane forgetfulness there is a greater plan at work. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ providentially arranged for this, so, I, at least, am persuaded” (τοῦτο δὲ ἡ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὠκονόμησε χάρις, ὡς γε ἐγὼ πείθομαι), the narrator argues, “since he *wishes for all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth* (τοῦ θέλοντος πάντας ἀνθρώπους σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν

²⁴ Lamberz (Acts 4), 318.13–16. On the lineage of the icon in the Latin version, see above, p. 252 n. 3. Several major manuscripts of *Imag. Beryt.* as it appears in the *Acts* (Brit. Lib. Harl. 5665, Taur. B.II.9, Marc. Gr. 166, and the important florilegium, Mosqu. Synod. Gr. 197) give here “painted on planks” (ἐν σανίσι... ἐζωγραφημένη) in place of “reverently” (ἐν σεμνοῖς or σεμνῶς). In neither case is it particularly clear why the author sets up a μὲν...δέ contrast between reverence or medium of the painting and the fact that the image is evidently of the “whole” (ὁλόστατον) of Jesus, which appears to be a hapax legomenon. The sense of ὁλόστατον is accordingly somewhat obscure, but, given the events that follow, the most compelling interpretation is that this was an icon that featured Jesus’s entire body, though not necessarily an icon of the crucifixion (as noted by Aron-Beller, “Tales of Jewish Image Desecration,” 221; Bacci, “*Passio Ymaginis*,” 4; Bacci, “*Quel Bello*,” 43.

²⁵ Lamberz (Acts 4), 318.17, 21–22 and quote at 320.1–2.

ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν, 1 Tim 2:4), showing his wonders to the reverent and all who believe in him—for the testing of the impious but the strengthening of the faithful” (δεικνύων τὰ θαυμάσια αὐτοῦ τοῖς σέβουσι καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύουσιν, εἰς ἔλεγχον μὲν τῶν ἀσεβῶν, στήριγμα δὲ τῶν πιστῶν) (§2).²⁶ The narrator’s insistence upon God’s providence in this still forthcoming miracle continues the theme of ironic doubling the author has developed through the introductory sections of the account. The miracle is both old and new; it takes place in a city that is Jewish and yet Gentile; the Christian moves and forgets the icon, but it is also divine providence. Small wonder that the narrator instructed the audience to lift the eyes of the mind and incline the ears of the heart to properly understand as they are shown Christ’s wonders in a verbal presentation. This doubling extends to the fate of the icon as well. To be sure, the Christian “neglected” it or “left it behind” (ἀφῆκε), but since the act was ultimately God’s, by forgetting the Christian also “set up” (ἀφῆκε) the icon for other viewers.²⁷

Once the Christian leaves, “a certain Jew takes up residence in that house where the image of the Lord stood” (Ἰουδαῖος δὲ τις λαμβάνει ἐνοικίῳ τὸν οἶκον ἐκεῖνον, ἔνθα ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ δεσπότου ἴστατο). Strikingly, despite moving all his belongings into the house and staying there, the Jewish character “did not observe the icon of the Lord that was standing there” (μὴ θεωρήσας τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ κυρίου ὅτι ἴσταται ἐκεῖ) apparently failing even to apprehend (κατανοεῖν) “that place” (τὸν τόπον ἐκεῖνον) where it resided alongside him.²⁸ His initial inability to perceive the icon calls to mind for readers anti-Jewish tropes of spiritual blindness,²⁹ but, intriguingly, it appears to be his physical eyes that fail him. Having invited over his compatriot (σύνεθνον) for a

²⁶ Lamberz (Acts 4), 318.17–21; cf at 320.1–2, where the narrator protests their own narration, saying both that the Christian left the icon behind due to forgetfulness and interjecting that “the arrangement was God’s” (οἰκονομία δὲ ἦν θεοῦ).

²⁷ LSJ III and Lampe 6 s.v. ἀφίημι for “neglect”; for “set up” or “set forth,” see LSJ II.1e (“dedicate [to the gods]”) and Lampe 5 (“place”).

²⁸ Lamberz (Acts 4), 320.2–5.

²⁹ See above, e.g., pp. 214–24.

meal, suddenly “the invited Jew lifted his eyes” (ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὁ Ἰουδαῖος ὁ κληθείς)—paralleling the narrator’s instructions to “lift the eyes of the mind” (ἄρατε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς διανοίας)—“and saw the icon of our Lord Jesus Christ” (εἶδε τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ δεσπότου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). In response, he exclaims in outrage to the one who invited him, “You are a Jew! How is it that you have the icon of such a person as this!?” (σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὢν πῶς τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ τοιούτου ἔχεις;), before unleashing a slew of insults against Jesus which the narrator refuses to repeat.³⁰

The narrator’s contrived staging in the first half of this scene and the suddenness of the ironic epiphanies puts the audience in the perhaps uncomfortable position of identifying with the character of the blaspheming Jew. This character enacts at the story level what the narrator invites readers to do: lift the eyes and see (ἴδετε, εἶδε). But as may be expected at this point, this uncomfortable identification is not entirely straightforward. Upon also seeing the icon, the Jew living in the home insists that “up until now, I did not see this icon!” (μέχρι τοῦ παρόντος οὐκ εἶδον τὴν εἰκόνα ταύτην), an assurance that the invited Jew finds implausible as he falls silent (σιωπάω) and departs to bring an accusation against (διαβάλλω) the accidental owner of a Christian icon “to his chief priests” (πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς αὐτοῦ) (§3).³¹ After receiving the Jew’s accusation, the chief priests and elders along with “a great crowd of their people” (ὄχλον πολλὸν τοῦ ἔθνους αὐτῶν) go on the next day to the house of the accidental confessor of Christ. There, “they see the icon of the Lord standing” (ὀρῶσι τὴν τοῦ κυρίου εἰκόνα ἵσταμένην) and, “exceedingly angry, drove off the Jew who lived in that house, excommunicating him from the synagogue” (θυμωθέντες σφόδρα τὸν μὲν Ἰουδαῖον τὸν οἰκούντα ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ ἐκείνῳ

³⁰ Lamberz (Acts 4), 320.7–9).

³¹ Lamberz (Acts 4), 320.13–15.

ἀποσυνάγωγον ποιήσαντες ἤλασαν).³² The Jew who did not lift his eyes is cast out and disappears from the narrative; the one who did—and who “informed” on his compatriot to others (or did he do something positive when he “made known” [καταμηνύω] what he saw?)—gets to see “this new spectacle” (τὸ καινὸν θέαμα). The narrative identification with “the accusing Jew” is simultaneously positive and negative.

Nevertheless, the unseeing Jew serves a providential purpose. In John 9, Jesus’s disciples ask him whose sin was responsible for the condition of a man born blind, his own or his parents. Jesus answers, “neither this man nor his parents sinned, but [he was born blind] in order that the works of God might be revealed in him” (οὔτε οὗτος ἤμαρτεν οὔτε οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, 9:3). After Jesus heals him, “the Jews” (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) refused to believe that the man had been born blind and received sight (9:18), so they eventually “cast him out” (ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω, 9:34), having previously “made a pact that if anyone confessed [Jesus] as Christ, he would be excommunicated” (συνετέθειντο... ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ χριστόν, ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται, 9:22). This act of exclusion leads to a damning conversation between Jesus and the Jews in which he remarks on their own (spiritual) blindness.

The author of *Imag. Beryt.* cleverly alludes to this episode, but he inverts the tenor of the works revealed in the blind man and, in a sense, answers the question about whose sin caused such blindness: both the blind man *and* his parents. As soon as the Jew is driven out, the other Jews, who refused to listen to his protests, “took down the icon of our Lord Jesus Christ and said (τὴν δὲ εἰκόνα κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καταγαγόντες ἔφησαν), ‘just as our fathers mocked him then, so too let us mock him’ (καθὼς καὶ οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐνέπαιζαν αὐτῷ ποτε, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐμπαίζωμεν αὐτῷ). They begin “to spit on the icon on the Lord and they struck it on the

³² Lamberz (Acts 4), 320.20–322.2.

face (ἐμπτύειν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς εἰκόνας τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ ἐρράπισαν αὐτὴν κατὰ πρόσωπον), the lexical choices echoing passages from the passion accounts,³³ and declare that “let us do to his icon everything that our fathers did to him” (ὅσα ἐποίησαν αὐτῷ οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν, πάντα ποιήσωμεν τῇ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ). After another round of mocking, the crowd continues, “We heard that they nailed his hands and feet—let us do to the same to him” (ἠκούσαμεν ὅτι ἤλωσαν αὐτοῦ τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας, τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς ποιήσωμεν αὐτῷ); they proceed to “fix nails in the hands and feet of the icon” (κατὰ τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας τῆς...εἰκόνας ἔπηξαν ἤλους).³⁴ Again, “we heard that they gave him vinegar and gall to drink with a sponge. Let us also do so to him” (ἠκούσαμεν ὅτι ὄξος καὶ χολὴν ἐπότισαν αὐτὸν μετὰ σπόγγου, ποιήσωμεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἡμεῖς).³⁵ Again, “We have learned that our fathers *struck his head with a reed*, let us also do the same thing” (μεμαθήκαμεν ὅτι καλάμῳ ἔτυψαν τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν, τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ἡμεῖς ποιήσωμεν).³⁶ Again, finally, they remark, “We understand perfectly that they pierced his side with a lance; let us leave nothing undone but add this as well” (ὡς ἀκριβῶς μανθάνομεν ὅτι λόγχῃ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῦ ἔνυξαν, μηδὲν παραλείψομεν, ἀλλὰ προσθῶμεν καὶ τοῦτο).³⁷ True to

³³ Cf. Matt 26:67; 27:29-31 and Mark 15:19-20.

³⁴ The closest gospel verse is John 20:25, where Thomas avers that he will not believe Jesus has been raised unless he touches “the mark of the nails” (τὸν τύπον τῶν ἤλων), but the lexical parallels are not particularly close. The author here may be using a testimonia collection, which would explain the divergences and harmonizations from any particular gospel text. Ps 21:17 LXX (“Many dogs have encircled me, a gathering [or: synagogue] of evildoers held me in, they punctured my hands and feet [ὅτι ἐκύκλωσάν με κύνες πολλοί, συναγωγὴ πονηρευομένων περιέσχον με, ὄρυξαν χεῖράς μου καὶ πόδας]) was a commonly adduced prophetic text for Jesus’s crucifixion in the Gospels and then from at least Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho* 97.3) on, including multiple times by Athanasius in e.g., *De incarnatione verbi* 35.4; *Epistula ad Marcellinum* 7; *Expositiones in Psalmos* 21. Similarly, the Ps. Athanasian *Quaest. ad Ant.* 137 features an extensive rundown of avowed prophetic testimony from the Old Testament proving that Jesus was the Messiah for use against Jews who claim he was a false messiah (PG 28: 696A); cf. Ps. Epiphanius, *Testimonia* 51.5 (in Robert V. Hotchkiss, ed. and trans., *A Pseudo-Epiphanius Testimony Book* [Missoula, Society of Biblical Literature and Scholar’s Press, 1974], 50–1), which in Vat. Gr. 970 is in fact preceded by *Quaest. ad Ant.* 137 (Hotchkiss, *Testimony Book*, 1). For additional sources and literature on testimonia collections, see Martin C. Albl, “‘David Sang About Him’: A Coptic Psalms ‘Testimonia’ Collection,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 66:4 (2012): 398–425, esp. 413, but he does not mention *Quaest. ad Ant.* For the relationship between that Ps. Athanasian text and the *Imag. Beryt.*, see above, p. 252 n. 4.

³⁵ Cf. Matt 27:34, 48; Mark 15:36; John 19:29, Ps 68:22.

³⁶ Cf. Matt 27:30; Mark 15:19.

³⁷ Cf. John 19:34a.

their word, they compel one of their number to “Lift the lance and thrust it against the icon, that is, the side of the lord” (ἄραι τὴν λόγχην καὶ κροῦσαι κατὰ τῆς εἰκόνης τῆς πλευρᾶς τοῦ κυρίου). Immediately, then, an abundance of blood and water gushed out from it (εὐθέως οὖν ἀνέβλυσε πλῆθος αἵματος καὶ ὕδατος ἀπ’ αὐτῆς) (§4).³⁸ Despite, or perhaps because of, the obvious *imperfection* of their understanding—the piercing of Jesus’s side and several other reenacted events were not, in fact, performed by “their fathers,” but by the Roman soldiers³⁹—the works of God are revealed in them. Their spiritual blindness, like that of the unseeing Jew they cast out, brings about this new, foreshadowed coming of the Son of Man.

In plotting this scene, the author continues to develop the theme of ironic doubling by characterizing the chief priests and elders and crowd of the Jews as simultaneously witting and unwitting imitators of their fathers. The miraculous eruption of the blood and water, moreover, both fulfills and upsets reader’s expectations. On the one hand, the miracle is utterly predictable, the culmination of this mimetic passion. On the other hand, neither the wood nor the figure of the Jews are supposed to change their nature. Building upon the epistemological and psychological/ethical arguments, the author portrays the character of the Jews as lacking in understanding, full of false knowledge about what they have learned. They demonstrate the state of their souls—full of sin, like the souls of their fathers—through their (un)ethical imitation and, perhaps most strikingly, by treating the icon like idolators do: as something alive and as the prototype itself. Moreover, through pronominal variation and the use of direct speech, the author places this ontological confusion the Jews’ very mouths. They mock *him* but strike *it* (αὐτήν); they want to do to *his icon* (τῆ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ) what their fathers did but aim to put nails in *his* hands and feet (αὐτοῦ τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας). Their lack of understanding about the past is

³⁸ Cf. John 19:34b. Lamberz (Acts 4), 322.2–324.4

³⁹ Cf. Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 48.

echoed in their present actions as they fail to understand how the lifeless matter of the icon will feel no pain and its prototype will receive no punishment as a result of their fruitless crucifixion.

Yet, the miracle shows that the Jews are also paradoxically correct in their misapprehension, which the narrator also signals with his own pronominal alteration: though in describing the action of the Jews in this scene the speaker consistently describes their assault as happening to the icon, near the end of the episode, the Jews are described as “having taken a reed, they struck the head of the *Lord*” (λαβόντες κάλαμον ἔτυπτον εἰς τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ δεσπότου).⁴⁰ Afterwards, the narrator reverts to emphasis on the lance piercing “the *icon* of the side of the Lord” (κατὰ τῆς εἰκόνοσ τῆς πλευρᾶσ τοῦ κυρίου) and the blood and water gushing “from *it*” (ἀπ’ αὐτῆσ), but, for moments, as focalized primarily but not exclusively through the speech of the mimetic Jews, lifeless and living, image and prototype become one while past and present unite. The lifeless nature of the icon’s matter must have been alive since it, like Jesus on the cross, did what dead things do not do and poured out blood and flowing water. The icon is both living and lifeless, a paradoxical duality set up by the author’s development of ambiguous doubling in time, space, and characterization, to be understood only by those readers and listeners who lift the eyes of the mind and incline the ear of the heart.

Florilegial Excerption and the Rest of the Story

Earlier in this dissertation, I observed how two seventh century authors, Leontius in his *Apology Against the Jews* 5 and Ps. Athanasius in *Quaest. ad Ant.* 39, sought to differentiate the veneration of icons from pagan idolatry by insisting that Christians did not confuse the material object for the person whose memory it provoked while simultaneously looking for ways to

⁴⁰ Cf. PG 28 809A, where the Jews strike “the head of the icon” (τὴν κεφαλὴν τῆσ εἰκόνοσ).

portray icons as more than lifeless representations.⁴¹ Ps. Athanasius, famously, appealed to miraculous instances of gushing blood and myrrh.⁴² Leontius appealed to miracles as well, but leaned on the emotional power of icons, using their metonymic function as a link between his own position and that of his interlocutor:

Just as Jacob, once he had received Joseph’s bloodied cloak of many colors from his sons (καὶ ὡσπερ ὁ Ἰακώβ δεξάμενος παρὰ τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ χιτῶνα ποικίλον ἡμαγμένον τοῦ Ἰωσήφ), kissed it with tears and pressed it to his own eyes (κατεφίλησε μετὰ δακρῶν καὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις ὀφθαλμοῖς τοῦτον περιέθηκεν)—not loving or honoring the garment as he did this, but rather believing that he kissed Joseph and held him in his hands *through* it (οὐ τὸ ἱμάτιον ἀγαπῶν ἢ τιμῶν τοῦτο ἐποίησεν, ἀλλὰ δι’ αὐτοῦ νομίζων τὸν Ἰωσήφ καταφιλεῖν καὶ ἐν χερσὶν αὐτὸν κατέχειν)—in this way too do all Christians, when we clasp or kiss an icon of Christ or an apostle or a martyr in the flesh, believe that we are holding Christ himself or his martyr in the soul (οὕτω καὶ Χριστιανοὶ πάντες, εἰκόνα Χριστοῦ ἢ ἀποστόλου ἢ μάρτυρος κρατοῦντες καὶ ἀσπαζόμενοι τῇ σαρκί, τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτὸν τὸν Χριστὸν νομίζομεν ἢ τὸν μάρτυρα αὐτοῦ κατέχειν).⁴³

What Leontius here states, it seems, the author of *Imag. Beryt.* depicts. The icon both is and is not Christ himself, whether in flesh or in spirit.

This, at least, is what Theodore the Studite tries to demonstrate in the ninth century by appealing to the icon’s miraculous hemorrhage. In the middle of his *Second Antirrheticus*, framed as a dialogue between an “Orthodox Christian,” who defends the veneration of icons, and a “Heretic,” who criticizes and questions the practice, the two verbal combatants get into a scuffle about whether what applies to the cross ought to also apply to icons.⁴⁴ As part of a long argument about homonymy in which the “Orthodox” discussant argues that if names for the cross apply also to depictions (ἐκτυπώματα) of the cross, then “the point also holds in the case of

⁴¹ See above, pp. 79–81.

⁴² Ps. Athanasius, *Quaest. ad Ant.* 621C.

⁴³ Leontius, *Apologia* 5 (Déroche, 67.47–52).

⁴⁴ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.10–24. The text is found in PG 99 352C–388D (translations in what follows are my own).

Christ and his image” (οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ εἰκόνοσ τὸ θεώρημα),⁴⁵ the Heretic observes that “there is a whole lot of emphasis on identity” (πολλὴ ἡ ἔμφασις τῆσ ταυτότητοσ), in the interlocutor’s argument. The objection homes in on the ontological and epistemological critiques: “you suggest that the copy is nothing other than the prototype itself! (οὐδὲν ἄλλο φαίησ εἶναι τὸ παράγωγον ἢ αὐτὸ δὴ τὸ προτότυπον). For how did every knee bow, or how *could* every knee bow, in the heavens and on earth and under earth, to the *icon* of Christ?” (Ποῦ γὰρ ἔκαμψεν ἢ κάμψειεν τῆ Χριστοῦ εἰκόνι πᾶν γόνυ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων;).⁴⁶

In response to this rather pressing question, the Orthodox Christian turns to the by now commonplace appeal to the imperial image, first from “the decathlete Athanasius” (ὁ πολὺαθλοσ Ἀθανάσιοσ), whom the Orthodox cites as saying, “In the image of the emperor, there is the appearance and form of the emperor, and in the emperor, there is the appearance of the image (Ἐν τῆ εἰκόνι τοῦσ βασιλέωσ τὸ εἶδοσ καὶ ἡ μορφὴ ἐστί· καὶ ἐν τῷ βασιλεὶ δὲ τὸ ἐν τῆ εἰκόνι εἶδοσ ἐστί). And again, the image could say: ‘I and the emperor are one’” (καὶ πάλιν Εἶποι ἅν ἡ εἰκὼν, Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺσ ἓν ἐσμην).⁴⁷ Then, citing a variation of the passage from Cyril of Alexandria that clarifies “I am in the emperor and the emperor is in me, according to the appearance of the form” (Ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ Βασιλεῖ, καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺσ ἐν ἐμοὶ, κατὰ τὸ τῆσ μορφῆσ σχῆμα),⁴⁸ the Orthodox Christian concludes that every knee indeed should bow down to his image “because it is in Christ” (ὡσ ἐν Χριστῷ οὔσῃ). He clarifies, “What is said applies only with respect to the name and to the identity of veneration (κατὰ τοῦνομα μόνον τὸ λεγόμενον καὶ τὸ ταυτὸν τῆσ προσκυνήσεωσ), not to the matter (οὐ τῆσ ὕλησ), which cannot take part in the

⁴⁵ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.17 (361B). The argument about homonymy is focused in *Antirrheticus* II.14–17, but it continues on into II.20, as I will show. On the history of homonymy and its use by Theodore, see Erismann, “The Depicted Man,” 331–34; see above, p. 93 n. 142.

⁴⁶ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.17 (361D), cf. Phil 2:10.

⁴⁷ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.18 (364A); cf. Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 3.5.

⁴⁸ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.18 (364A–B); cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (the edition is without section numbers, but see PG 75 184D–85B).

veneration at all even if the one depicted in it is seen being venerated” (ἥτις οὐδὲ μετέχειν δύναται τῆς προσκυνήσεως, κἄν ἐν αὐτῇ ὁ εἰκονιζόμενος ὁρᾶται προσκυνούμενος).⁴⁹

Perhaps sensing that this statement rested more on fiat than argument, or that the imperial image comparison was initially used as an analogy for the ontological relationship between the Father and Son in trinitarian debates,⁵⁰ Theodore in the guise of the Orthodox Christian then seeks narrative proofs in addition to these theoretical ones. He cites first a passage from Sophronius’s *Miracles of Cyrus and John* wherein the narrator describes how he and his party came before a *Deeisis* icon populated by a throng of saints, including Cyrus and John, to ask—initially without success—for the healing of a youth. These two saints appear, prostrating themselves and praying before the icon three separate times to no avail until finally they exclaimed, “Since he is merciful, Christ has been moved and acquiesced; he uttered ‘Grant him [healing] before the icon’” (ὁ Χριστὸς σπλασχνισθεὶς ὡς οἰκτίρμων ἐπένευσε καὶ, Δότε αὐτῷ πρὸ τῆς εἰκόνας, ἐφθέγξατο).⁵¹ The Orthodox Christian concludes from this divine about-face that “the martyrs fell before the icon, as if they were venerating Christ himself” (τῇ εἰκόνι προσέπιπτον οἱ μάρτυρες, ὡς αὐτῷ Χριστῷ προσκυνούοντες) and, even more strikingly, the saints’ report of divine speech was in fact direct speech from the icon itself. “From the icon came out a voice as if out of Christ himself, acquiescing to their request” (ἀφ’ ἧς καὶ φωνὴ ὡς ἐξ αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐξελέγηθη κατανεύσασα τὴν αἴτησιν).⁵²

⁴⁹ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.18 (364C).

⁵⁰ In addition to Motia, *Imitations of Infinity*, 89–98 and Peppard, “Presence of Christ in Statues,” 249–51 (cited above, p. 77 n. 99), Gerhard Ladner, “The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953), 1–34, remains an invaluable guide on the transformation of this analogy from the fourth and fifth centuries to the eighth and ninth.

⁵¹ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.18 (365A); cf. Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Sancti Cyri et Joanni Miracula* 36 (in Lamberz [Acts 4], 376–78).

⁵² Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.18 (365A).

The Heretic objects that this was merely an epiphanic vision (θεωρία) and that the visionary acts of the saints cannot be taken as dogmatic instructions for everyone, but the Orthodox interlocutor shoots back that the dogmatic claim is precisely what the narrated episode demonstrates.⁵³ Nevertheless taking the bait, the Orthodox speaker cites another example, this one purportedly by a figure with dogmatic authority, to cinch the argument for calling the icon and the prototype one. “Indeed, the blessed Athanasius also introduces something here still more miraculous (εισηγεῖται δὲ τι κἀνταῦθα καὶ παραδοξότερον ὁ μακάριος Ἀθανάσιος): the features of the copy share so much with the prototype (ὡς τοσοῦτον τὰ τοῦ παραγώγου κοινωνεῖ τῷ πρωτοτύπῳ) that even the Passion of the icon of Christ was seen as a Passion of Christ himself” (ὥσον καὶ τὸ πάθος τῆς εἰκόνης Χριστοῦ, πάθος ὀφθῆναι αὐτοῦ δὴ Χριστοῦ).⁵⁴ He cites the opening line of *Imag. Beryt.* before skipping to the crucifixion scene and narrating how the Jews had mocked and struck and pierced the side of the icon with a spear with the result that the blood and water gushed from it.⁵⁵ Fascinatingly, the Heretic responds by appealing to precisely the same mitigating factor as had Patriarch Tarasios in the *Acts of Nicaea II*: citing the Pauline admonition from 1 Cor 14:22, “signs are for unbelievers, not believers” (τὰ γὰρ σημεῖα τοῖς ἀπίστοις, οὐ τοῖς πισεύουσιν). But whereas Tarasios had argued that God therefore “performed a sign through the icon to draw them to the faith of us Christians” (σημεῖον ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τῆς εἰκόνης, ἵνα αὐτοὺς ἐλκύσῃ πρὸς τὴν πίστιν ἡμῶν τῶν Χριστιανῶν),⁵⁶ the Orthodox character in the dialogue comes to a different conclusion:

The point is that even if signs do not happen now (ἀλλ’ ὅτι εἰ μὴ καὶ νῦν γίνεται σημεῖα), the copy shares equally in the veneration of the prototype (κοινωνοῦ ἔστιν ὁμῶς τὸ

⁵³ *Antirrheticus* II.18–9 (365A).

⁵⁴ *Antirrheticus* II.19 (365B). Cf. Cattoi, pp, who translates τὸ πάθος as “suffering,” which I think misses the specificity of the ‘suffering’ on display and it also introduces a whole slew of issues surrounding whether the icon can suffer independently and implies that Christ, no longer in the body, might be harmed by the passion of the icon. Theodore, I presume, would not open the position of the Orthodox Christian up to these implications.

⁵⁵ *Antirrheticus* II.19 (365B–D).

⁵⁶ Lamberz (*Acts* 4), 330.10–1.

παράγωγον τῆς τοῦ πρωτότυπον προσκυνήσεως); and, in reverse, the prototype shares equally in the veneration of the copy (ὡς καὶ ἔμπαλιν τὸ πρωτότυπον τοῦ παραγώγου); the veneration for both of them is one and the same, as it was said in the case of the life-giving cross and the representation of the same” (καὶ ἀμφοῖν μία ἡ προσκύνησις καθὰ εἴρηται, ἐπὶ τοῦ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐκτυπώματος).⁵⁷

The miracle of the blood and water, he argues, proves that the prototype really was dishonored by the actions of the Jews.⁵⁸

We can observe here Theodore’s attempt to control the interpretation of *Imag. Beryt.* by selecting only the central, iconic scene and deploying it to argue that homonymy between icon and prototype in effect overshadows the ontological distance between them while also preserving it. In the scripted debate, the Heretic is rendered almost speechless, able only to reply meekly that “this miracle was seen by Jews” (Ἰουδαίοις ὄπται τὸ θαύμα) and thus counts for less. In the conclusion to his citation of *Imag. Beryt.* the Orthodox Christian states that he will “pass over speaking of the healings that happened because of the bubbling up from the side for those who took advantage of it” (ἐὼ γὰρ λέγειν τῶν ἐκ τῆς βλύσεως τῆς πλευρᾶς ἰαμάτων γεγενημένων τοῖς ἀπολούσασιν)⁵⁹ in such a way that readers are to conclude that these healings would prove his point still further, but we might wonder if Theodore was worried the rest of the narrative would actually undermine his argument. Without the first part of *Imag. Beryt.*, the play between understanding, the senses, and the role of providence does not complicate the Jews’ actions, and

⁵⁷ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.20 (368A).

⁵⁸ Cf. Theodore the Studite, *Letter 532 to Emperors Michael and Theophilus in defense of icon veneration* (text in Georgios Fatouros, ed., *Theodori Studitae Epistulae: Pars altera textum epp. 71–564 et indices continens*, vol. 2, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 31.2 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011], 795–804). Theodore makes a four-part argument, first from synodal orthodoxy (796.20–799.114), from “the voices of the saints” (αἱ τῶν ἁγίων φωναί) (799.115–802.201), the ecumenical council of Nicaea II (802.202–803.251), and finally an argument that all of nature is full of divine ἀναθήματα for Christ. Theodore cites *Imag. Beryt.* in almost verbatim fashion and in support of the same argument (τὸ γὰρ τοι τιμᾶσθαι ἰσόρροπον δῆλον ὅτι τοῦ προσκυνεῖσθαι ὁμολόγηται) (145–47), but concludes in a slightly different manner. “The story is dependable, O wisest of men: on the one hand that *the signs are for unbelievers, not for believers* (Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, ὃ σοφώτατοι, τὸ μὲν, ὅτι τὰ σημεῖα τοῖς ἀπίστοις, οὐ τοῖς πιστεύουσι), but on the other hand, so that we might also know that the prototype has been insulted by the assault on the icon (τὸ δέ, ὡς ἂν καὶ ἡμεῖς γνοιήμεν ὅτι τῇ τῆς εἰκόνης ὕβρει ἐφύβρισται τὸ πρωτότυπον) (172–74).

⁵⁹ Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* II.19 (365D).

indeed, it is interesting to note how Theodore in the guise of the Orthodox Christian has to emphasize the distance in time between himself and the events of the narrative, which is in direct contradiction to the narrator’s strategy of collapsing time and space. But even if the full *Imag. Beryt.* would not have necessarily undermined Theodore’s argument about homonymy, it is not clear the Heretic’s point that signs are for unbelievers—which echoed that of Tarasios at Nicaea II—could have been so easily brushed aside in a less controlled literary environment. Moreover, the ending of the narrative shows that the author had a rather different purpose for the surprising animacy of the icon than proving that it shared veneration with Jesus himself.

Immediately upon the narration of the blood and water gushing from the side of the icon, the narrator reinserts himself to affirm that the present miracle is indeed like the past.

Addressing Christ and asking, “Who, save you, God, does such fearsome and portentous deeds? (τίς πλὴν σοῦ θεός ποιῶν φοβερὰ καὶ ἐξάϊσια;) ... Truly did your holy powers above shudder at this—and still do now!” (ἔφριξαν ἀληθῶς καὶ νῦν αἱ ἄνω ἅγιοι δυνάμεις σου ἐπὶ τούτῳ), the speaker declares that this miracle demonstrates God’s mercy (ἔλεος):

For long ago, for us and for our salvation, the unfleshed became enfleshed from the Virgin Mary and you were crucified in that flesh although you were impassive with respect to divinity (πρώην γὰρ δι’ ἡμᾶς καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν σαρκωθεὶς ὁ ἄσαρκος ἐκ παρθένου Μαρκίας ἐσταυρώθης ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ σαρκὶ ἀπαθὴς ὢν αὐτὸς θεότητι). Now, again, O Lord, you have been re-crucified in the icon (νῦν δὲ πάλιν ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι ἀνεσταυρώθης, ὃ δέσποτα), for the testing of the impious and all the unfaithful, as well as for the strengthening of those who believe in you in truth” (εἰς ἔλεγχον μὲν τῶν ἀσεβῶν καὶ πάντων τῶν ἀπίστων, στηριγμὸν δὲ τῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ εἰς σὲ πιστευόντων) (§5).⁶⁰

While the narrator seems with this quasi-creedal affirmation to confirm Theodore’s assertion that “the Passion of the icon” can be predicated of Christ himself, the parallel crucifixions are also parallel acts of salvation. If the first was “for us,” this second one appears to have taken place for

⁶⁰ Lamberz (Acts 4), 324.4–6, 9–12.

the sake of the narrative’s “them.” Indeed, returning to the account, the narrator picks up the narrative after the blood and water have gushed from the side of the icon. Suddenly, this sign becomes an opportunity for “testing” not only *of* the impious, but also *by* them: “Since those who revere him keep on babbling that he did many healings” (ἐπειδὴ θρυλοῦσιν οἱ σεβόμενοι αὐτόν, ὅτι ἰάσεις πολλὰς ἐποίησε), the Jews reason, “let us take this blood and water now and bring it to the synagogue (λάβωμεν νῦν τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ ἀπαγάγωμεν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν). And we will gather all the people who are ill and anoint them with it—let us see if the things that are said are true” (καὶ συνάξωμεν πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ χρίσωμεν αὐτοὺς ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἴδωμεν, εἰ ἀληθῆ εἰσι τὰ λεγόμενα).⁶¹ They bring a drinking cup (βίσις [βῆσις]) to the side of the icon and collect the liquids from the wound (σφαγὴ), mocking the idea that they will have any effect. Nonetheless, they bring forward “a man with paralysis whom they knew from birth” (παράλυτον ὄν ἐκ γενετῆς ἤδεισαν), continuing the allusion to Jesus’s healing of the man blind “from birth” (ἐκ γενετῆς) in John 9:1, and anoint (χρίω) him with the liquids.⁶²

Predictably—for the reader if not the characters—the ironic anointing brings the man to a state he has never before experienced. “Immediately, the man leapt up and sprung to, completely healed!” (παραχρῆμα ἀνεπήδησε καὶ ἤλατο ὑγιασθεὶς καθόλου ὁ ἄνθρωπος).⁶³ Next, the narrator describes, “they brought in those who suffered from eye ailments, and in like manner they too saw again once they had been anointed” (εἶτα ὀφθαλμιῶντας ἤγαγον, κἀκεῖνοι ὁμοίως χρισθέντες ἀνέβλεψαν). Those with demons follow, leading to a “great and boundless tumult” (ταραχὴ τε μεγάλη καὶ ἄπειρος) in the city in response to the correspondingly “boundless wonders” (τὰ ἄπειρα θαύματα).⁶⁴ All the Jews in the city were moved and were bringing down to

⁶¹ Lamberz (Acts 4), 324.18–22.

⁶² Lamberz (Acts 4), 326.3–4. Cf. Acts 14:10 and 3:8.

⁶³ Lamberz (Acts 4), 326.4–5.

⁶⁴ Lamberz (Acts 4), 326.6–8.

the synagogue all the paralytics, those with crooked and withered limbs, and lepers for the restoration of their bodies and movement (§6). As a result, and in one voice, the chief priests and all the Jews of the city “believed in our Lord Jesus Christ (ἐπιστευσαν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν), crying out ‘Glory to you, Christ (κράζοντες δόξα σοι, Χριστέ) whom our fathers crucified and who was crucified now by us in your icon’” (ὄν οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐσταύρωσαν, ὁ καὶ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν νῦν σταυρωθεὶς ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι σου). Have mercy and receive us!” (ἴλεως ἡμῖν γενοῦ καὶ δέξαι ἡμᾶς).⁶⁵

However, before, the multitudes can run to the bishop of Berytus to explain what happened and “beg to be considered worthy of holy baptism” (τοῦ ἁγίου βαπτίσματος ἀξιωθῆναι ἰκέτευσον),⁶⁶ the narrator remarks that “shouts were being sent up and wonders were being performed while the chief priests were anointing” (αἱ βοαὶ ἀνεπέμποντο, καὶ τὰ θαύματα ἐτελοῦντο τῶν ἀρχιερέων χριόντων) “and everyone was being healed and given life” (καὶ πάντων θεραπευομένων καὶ ζωοποιουμένων) (§6).⁶⁷ With this beguiling statement, the narrator underscores two points that have been obscured by scholarly focus on the miracle of the bleeding image. First, he makes clear that the miracles themselves, while noteworthy, are not necessarily the main point despite how much time is spent narrating them; it was a common trope that the Jews had seen many miracles before often to no avail. The new wonder is that these bouts of healing and lively reanimation among the population worked to their intended effect: the recognition, confession, and glorification of Christ. Indeed, as they run to the bishop “the multitudes” were again “crying out” (πλήθη κράζοντα), making a declaration of the oneness of

⁶⁵ Lamberz (Acts 4), 326.15–6.

⁶⁶ Lamberz (Acts 4), 328. 6–7.

⁶⁷ Lamberz (Acts 4), 326.18–9.

God the Father and Christ his only begotten son. They conclude, “We know that he is God, and we believe in him” (αὐτὸν θεὸν οἶδαμεν, τούτῳ ἡμεῖς πιστεύομεν) (§7).⁶⁸

Second, by making the healing and lifegiving effects of the anointing only the first part of this demonstration of divine providence, the author links but also subordinates physical animacy to spiritual vivacity. The narrator describes how the multitudes—now truth tellers rather than slanderers—engaged in their own act of narration. They show the icon to the bishop and “relate the things they did to the icon of the Lord (ἃ ἐποίησαν τῇ τοῦ κυρίου εἰκόνι): how the blood and the water came out in tandem from the side of the icon (τέ τε αἷμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ ὁμοίως ὅπως ἐξελήλυθεν ἐκ τῆς πλευρᾶς τῆς εἰκόνοσ), and the occurrences of the boundless wonders” (τῶν τε ἀπείρων θαυμάτων τὰ γεγονότα). So many multitudes want to be baptized that it takes the bishop and entire body of the clergy “many days” (πολλὰς ἡμέρας) to complete the process, and in the meantime, the narrator states that they converted the physical spaces as well as the people. “They consecrated the synagogue as a church of our savior Christ, and at their exhortation made their remaining synagogues into *martyria*” (τὴν τε συναγωγὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ ἀφιέρωσεν, ἐκείνων δὲ παρακαλεσάντων καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς συναγωγὰς αὐτῶν μαρτύρια πεποίηκε)—material witnesses to the events of the narrative.⁶⁹ “And so,” the narrator concludes, “there was great joy in that city (οὕτως χαρὰ μεγάλη γέγονεν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ), not only for the bodies that were healed and given life (οὐ μόνον σωμάτων ἰαθέντων καὶ ζωοποιηθέντων), but also for so many souls that returned from the dead to eternal life” (ἀλλὰ καὶ τοσούτων ψυχῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐπανελθόντων) (§7).⁷⁰ The Berytus Jews were spiritually what the sick and ailing were physically: dead even while they lived.

⁶⁸ Lamberz (Acts 4), 328.1–3.

⁶⁹ Lamberz (Acts 4), 328.8–10.

⁷⁰ Lamberz (Acts 4), 328.10–2.

The stated purpose of the narrator in telling this tale, as reiterated in his closing words, is for his audience to “know the power of our God and Savior” (ἵνα γνόντες τοῦ ἡμετέρου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος τὴν δύναμιν) and thus “be made more firm in faith in him and rejoice at his magnificent deeds that occur even now” (τῆ εἰς αὐτὸν στερωθῆτε πίστει καὶ ἀγαλλιαθῆτε ἐπὶ τοῖς μεγαλείοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς καὶ νῦν γεγενημένοις) (§8).⁷¹ The grounds for this joy and strengthened faith are twofold: first, the miraculous animation of the lifeless icon, and second, the miraculous spiritual animation of the Berytus Jews. The two events are imbricated by more than their proximity to each other in the narrative arc, however. For the author of *Imag. Beryt.*, the icon reflects the spiritually inert state of its assailants. The icon is by nature inanimate and depicts a figure who, we should recall, is in the gospel account already dead when the Roman soldier comes to pierce his side (John 19:34). It is only in this paradoxical moment of death that the icon also shows signs of life. The Jews, for their part, are characterized as simultaneously living and lifeless images in their own right, imitating their fathers whose sin causes blindness to the true God depicted in front of them. To show that Christ is present and active in the world, still working salvation in his love for humanity (φιλανθρωπία), the author draws two paradoxical images in conflict, each astride the frontier between life and death.

A close reading of *Imag. Beryt.* reveals that considerably more is at stake for this author than Theodore the Studite necessarily wants there to be, given his own argumentative interests. In some ways, though, Theodore would win the day. Less than half a century after Theodore’s death, the so-called *Letter of the Three Patriarchs* would enlist the Berytus Icon into its ranks of miraculous icons that justify the practice of venerating all icons of Christ and the saints. Here, in a lineup with the Image of Edessa, the Virgin at Lydda, and at least two other bleeding images,

⁷¹ Lamberz (Acts 4), 328.14–6.

the Berytus icon merits only short mention—and notably only “a fountain of blood flowing with life” (αἵματος πηγή...ζωήρρυτος) now gushes out, not water—but the brevity would have impact on scholarly interpretation.⁷² Maria Vassilaki, in a short essay on bleeding images, would conclude from the *Letter of the Three Patriarchs* that in the period immediately after Iconoclasm, “the icons that bled when wounded simply behaved like human bodies, like the living bodies of their prototypes.”⁷³ Peers, in his largely stimulating discussion of *Imag. Beryt.*, concludes something similar. “These fluids are the fullest degree to which Christ and the icon are identified as one, even if the identification is incomplete.” The icon reacted “to threat in almost exactly the same way as the original body did.”⁷⁴ These conclusions are valuable, and they help us to understand a vital aspect of Byzantine icon piety. But this focus on the re-embodiment of the prototype in the icon also keeps the eye, as it were, on the icono-clasm these stories relate and how attacks on the image constitute assaults against the prototype, which is precisely the argument Theodore the Studite wants to advance in his *Antirrheticus II*. Is this intimate relation of icon and prototype right down to an animate convergence of icon and the body of the prototype all we can learn from these accounts?

Mirror Images?

Surprisingly common to scholarship on *Imag. Beryt.* is the presumption that it and other bleeding images are reworkings of a single story. Olster, for instance, somewhat incomprehensibly regards the miracle in *Imag. Beryt.* to be a modification of a story about an

⁷² *Epistula de imaginibus* 7.12 (in Munitiz, et al., *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, 46).

⁷³ Vassilaki, “Bleeding Icons,” 124.

⁷⁴ Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 46.

Antiochene Jew who urinates on an icon of Mary in 593.⁷⁵ Peers simply treats all the versions of *Imag. Beryt.*, including the tenth-century reworking of the narrative into a homily about fasting and almsgiving, as a single legend and picks details as convenient from different versions for his argument about the somatic features of icons in Byzantium.⁷⁶ Aron-Beller, who argues that stories of Jewish image desecration reflect “the Christian need to affirm and gratify their veneration of sacred images,” analyzes accounts from Gregory of Tours’s *Gloria martyrum*, composed in Gaul around 570 (see below), to several anecdotes in the ninth century Byzantine *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, as a single “developing narrative.”⁷⁷ Perhaps behind this tendency is once again Kitzinger, who, as part of his few comments on *Imag. Beryt*, assigned it to a later date than the story Gregory of Tours tells on the grounds that it “is so much more elaborate”; conversely, another narrative told in the Coptic *Homily on the Virgin* (see below) “is so much less coherent” than *Imag. Beryt*. “that it should probably be regarded as a derivative of the latter.”⁷⁸ Three different narratives become an origin, an elaboration, and a derivation of an ur-legend.

However, the conversion of the Jewish characters at the end of the *Imag. Beryt* diverges so significantly from the earlier of two parallels commonly adduced for bleeding images, namely *Glory of the Martyrs* 21,⁷⁹ that there is little reason to think of them as related in any way but by

⁷⁵ Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response*, 4 and 22 n.1 citing the tenth-century historian Agapius of Hierapolis, *Kitab al-unvan = Histoire universelle / écrite par Agapius (Mahboub) de Menbidj*, trans. A. A. Vasiliev, *Patristica Orientalis* 8 (Paris: Didot, 1912), 438–39. Olster also mistakenly cites the longer, very likely later (β group) text from Migne PG 28: 797–805 in support of his discussion of the seventh century.

⁷⁶ Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 45–8.

⁷⁷ Beller, “Jewish Image Desecration,” 209.

⁷⁸ Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 101 n. 59.

⁷⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Liber in Gloria martyrum* (text in Bruno Krusch, ed., *Gregorii Turonensis Opera: Gregorii episcopi Turonensis libri octo Miraculorum*, vol. 1 pars. 2, *Monumenta Germaniae historica* [Hanover: Hahn, 1885], 451–84. Translations of *Gloria martyrum* 21 are my own.

analogy, let alone as mirror images of each other.⁸⁰ Transitioning from a retelling of the miraculous plant that grows at the base of the statue of Christ at Paneas, allegedly donated by the woman with the issue of blood after her healing in Mark 5:25–35 and parallels, Gregory remarks in a clever riff on 2 Cor 3:3 that such honorific and miraculous images are alive and well, as it were, in his own time, too. “For even now in this time” (*Nam et isto nunc tempore*), he explains, “Christ is regarded with such love through perfected faith that believers among the people who keep his law in the tablets of the heart (*per credulitatem integram tanto Christus amore diligitur, ut, cuius legem in tabulis cordis credentes populi retinent*) fix his painted image in churches and homes as well for the commemoration of excellence in visible tablets” (*eius etiam imaginem ad commemorationem virtutis in tabulis visibilibus pictam per ecclesias ac domos adfigant*).⁸¹

The story Gregory tells leans on the dual character of the image as simultaneously revelatory and occlusive. He describes how the “eternal enemy of the human race was jealous” (*inimicus semper humani generis aemulus*), and thus used a Jew who “had often looked at a painted tablet of this sort” (*huiuscemodi imaginem in tabulam pictam...saepe vidisset*) and was offended by its presence. “Behold that seducer” (*Ecce seductorem illum*), he proclaims, “who humbled me and my people” (*qui nos genusque nostrum humiliavit*). Through this identification, Gregory has the Jew in his own voice collapse any sense of difference between the Jews of the gospels and those of Gregory’s time, much as *Imag. Beryt.* does. Here, however, the similarity works to a considerably different end, as the Jewish character—ironically portrayed, perhaps, as himself a seducer who engages in a nighttime deed.⁸² In the dark of night, the man sneaks into

⁸⁰ Bugár, “Images of Jews and Christians, 37 remarks on the unlikelihood of any direct relationship between these three narratives, but he does not go into much detail. On the distinctions between analogy and homology in the comparison of myths and textual traditions, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison Between Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 36–53.

⁸¹ Gregory of Tours, *Gloria martyrum* 21.1–4 (the entire passage is in Krusch, 501).

⁸² Gregory of Tours, *Gloria martyrum* 21.5–6.

the church, stabs the image with a dagger (*telum*), and abducts it, concealing it under his clothing and taking it home “to burn it up in a fire” (*flammis parat exurere*). Blood, however, begins to flow from the image where it was stabbed, completely drenching the thief, revealing his character as an “enemy scout” (*iniquus speculator*), and causing him to hide the stolen painting.⁸³ The Christians arrive at their church the next day to find the image missing, but follow the now-manifest trail of blood to the Jew’s house where they find the image in “the corner of a small room” (*in angulo cellulae*). Having returned it to the church, “they buried the thief beneath stones” (*furem lapidibus obruerunt*).⁸⁴ By putting in the mouth of the Jew the charge that Jesus was a seducer, Gregory has this character describe the icon as a seductive counterfeit and thus deploy an idolatry commonplace about being unfaithful to God.⁸⁵ Of course, in the logic of the narrative, it is a false accusation and a misperception that reveals the spiritually blind status of the assailant who cannot recognize the true god and in fact is hostile to him, requiring punishment. Like the chief priests in *Acts Andr. Matth.*, he is blind unto death. If sudden and enthusiastic conversion is one type of conquest fantasy, this is another, altogether less optimistic one.

Within a century or so, the *Coptic Homily on the Virgin* (*Hom. Virg.*) attributed to and in the purported voice of Theophilus of Alexandria would also employ a bleeding image to advance its rhetorical aims.⁸⁶ The *Homily*, reportedly delivered on the 16th of Mesore for the feast day of

⁸³ Gregory of Tours, *Gloria Martyrum* 21.7–13. According to Gregory, the Jew does not notice the blood until he gets home because he was making his way “through the shadows of a cloudy night” (*per obscurae noctis tenebras*). Aron-Beller, “Jewish Image Desecration,” 213 and 227 nn. 25–7, suggests this plays on the association of the Jew with blindness.

⁸⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Gloria Martyrum* 21.18–19.

⁸⁵ Aron-Beller, “Jewish Image Desecration,” 210–11 notes this idolatry commonplace and briefly analyzes *Gloria Martyrum* 21, but does not draw the connection between them.

⁸⁶ The *Coptic Homily on the Virgin* is found in William H. Worrell, ed., *The Coptic Manuscripts in the Freer Collection* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1923), 249–322. The section numbers of the text correspond to the ms pages, i.e., 60–96. The dating of the text, as with many analyzed in this dissertation, is difficult to determine. The manuscript colophon provides the surest date, setting a *terminus pro quem* of 975, and the narrative itself is likely to have been composed after 567, the date of a *Homily on the Assumption* delivered by Theodosius of

Mary’s assumption, includes as “a few words of praise” (ⲗⲉⲛⲕⲟⲓ ⲛⲉⲣⲓⲛⲟⲥ) a narrative that seems in some ways to have quite little to do with Mary at all.⁸⁷ The narrator reports that on a prior 16th of Mesore, a “Hebrew” (ⲡⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲛⲗⲃⲣⲁⲓⲟⲥ) entered the great church during the synaxis and gathered a crowd, whom he forced to work for him.⁸⁸ This Hebrew also took possession of a storehouse (ⲟⲩⲁⲡⲟⲩⲕⲏ), a little south of the city (Alexandria), which had formerly been occupied by a Christian and his family until the Hebrew priced them out. The narrator explains,

The Christian, when he had hastily loaded up his little children and his goods, departed, not knowing where he was to go (ⲡⲉⲭⲣⲓⲦⲓⲆⲓⲆⲟⲥ ⲁⲉ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲣⲓⲦⲁⲗⲁⲓ ⲛⲉⲕⲕⲟⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲏⲣⲉ ⲗⲛ ⲟⲩⲱⲧⲟⲣⲧⲣ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲕⲥⲕⲏⲩⲉ ⲁⲕⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲕⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲛ ⲕⲉ ⲉⲩⲛⲁⲙⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲦⲱⲛ). Because of the perturbation which was upon the Christian and his little children (ⲁⲕⲱ ⲗⲓⲧⲙ ⲡⲉⲗⲃⲁ ⲉⲦⲗⲓⲕⲱⲕ ⲛⲟⲓ ⲡⲣⲟⲙⲉ ⲛⲭⲣⲓⲦⲓⲆⲓⲆⲟⲥ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲕⲕⲟⲓ ⲛⲕⲥⲕⲏⲩⲉ), he forgot somehow a little tablet of wood, very precious, upon which the icon of our virgin Lady was drawn, set up on top of a wall within the storehouse (ⲁⲕⲣ ⲡⲱⲃⲱⲗ ⲗⲟⲓⲡⲟⲛ ⲛⲟⲩⲕⲟⲓ ⲙⲡⲟⲕⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲦⲧⲁⲛⲩ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲉ ⲧⲗⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲛ ⲧⲛⲭⲥ ⲙⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲥⲏⲗ ⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲉⲦⲧⲁⲛⲩ ⲉⲣⲗⲁⲓ ⲉⲕⲛ ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲉ ⲛⲥⲁⲗⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲧⲁⲡⲟⲩⲕⲏ).⁸⁹

Alexandria that is the first to mention a separate Coptic feast for the Assumption of Mary on the 16th of Mesore, which is also the date celebrated in the *Homily on the Virgin*; before Theodosius’s *Assumption*, Coptic texts refer to a single Dormition and Assumption feast taking place on 21 Tobe, some 206 days prior. For the text and translation of the *Discourse* see Forbes Robinson, ed., *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels*, Texts and Studies IV.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 90–127; for discussion of the date and Dormition traditions, see Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003), 57–63. Worrell himself (*Freer Collection*, 125–26) is wary of trying to determine a date, but suggests that the other text in the manuscript, a *Homily on the Archangel Michael* attributed to Celestine of Rome, may have been composed prior to the Islamic conquest of Egypt in 641 on the basis its reference to an image the emperor, but the possibility of historical fiction makes this an unreliable datum, and it is of questionable use for dating the *Hom. Virg.* in any case. Despite this uncertainty, Bugár, “Images of Jews and Christians,” 27 n. 23 declares with confidence that the *Hom. Virg.* “appears to predate the Arab conquest,” citing Worrell nonetheless, as well as Katarzyna Urbaniak-Walczak, “Zwei verschiedene Rezensionen der Homilie über die Auferstehung der Jungfrau Maria von Theophilus von Alexandrien,” *Göttinger Miszellen* 101 (1988): 73–4, but this short essay proffers no evidence for dating. Recently, Paul C. Dilley, “Christian Icon Practice in Apocryphal Literature: Consecration and the Conversion of Synagogues into Churches,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 23 (2010): 293 stated that the text is “dated on internal evidence to the 6th c.,” but frustratingly shares none of this evidence with the reader. Likewise, sixty years prior, E.H. Kantorowicz, *Varia Variorum: Festgabe für Karl Reinhardt* (Muenster and Cologne, 1952), 188 n. 36 made an offhand reference to this text dating from the seventh century but provided no argument or evidence. Perhaps as a result, Kitzinger, “Cult of Images,” 101 n. 59 suggested that it “should probably be seen as a derivative” of *Imag. Beryt.* and shares Worrell’s skepticism about any date prior to 975. I am inclined to place this homily in a seventh century context along with the *Imag. Beryt.* due to its thematic similarities to the *Homily on the Assumption* of Theodosius (especially reflection upon the moment of death), the fact that Sahidic Coptic faded out as a literary language by around 800, and for reasons described below, but my reading does not depend on this specific dating.

⁸⁷ I largely follow the translation of Worrell, *Freer Collection*, 359–79, updating the archaic English where appropriate. The text will be cited as *Hom. virg.* (ms page.column.lines); Worrell, pp. [Coptic], pp. [translation]. *Hom. virg.* 76.1.26; Worrell 280, 367. My thanks are due to Greg Given for assistance in formatting the Coptic according to modern conventions.

⁸⁸ *Hom. virg.* 78.1; Worrell, 284, 369.

⁸⁹ *Hom. virg.* 80.1.10–80.2.11; Worrell, 288–89, 369–70 (translation slightly revised).

The Hebrew wishes to clean the storehouse, so he brings in workmen, who find the icon of Mary, kiss its hands and feet, and continue to venerate it until the Hebrew comes in and learns what they're doing. Angry, he “seized the tablet of wood in their hands and shattered it, and broke it into small pieces, and cast it into a basket filled with ashes” (ἀφάμαρτε ἡτποσε ἡωε ες ἡτοστογ ἀφογωσπ̄ς ἀφασ ἡ λακῆ λακῆ ἀγω ἀφογχε ἡμος εζραῖ εγβηρ εφμεζ ἡκῆρῆς), compelling one of the workmen take the basket to dispose of the icon and ashes in the water.⁹⁰

The narrator breaks in for a moment, anticipating protest:

Believe me, brethren, for believing and very god-fearing men testify unto me (πιστεγε ναῖ ὦ ἡσνηγ χε ἀγῆρ ἡἡτρε ναῖ ἡσι ζενρωμε ἡπιστος ἀγω ἡῆρζοτε ζητῆρ ἡπνογτε εματε χε): when the workman took up the basket, blood flowed continually from the basket in which was the icon of the Virgin, which the Hebrew had destroyed (ἡτερε πρωμε ἡ ρκατης τωογν ζα πβιρ ἡπε πεσνογ λο εφωογο εβολ ζῆ πβιρ παι ετερε θικων ἡ τπαρθενος ἡζητῆρ ται ἡτα ρεβραιος ογωσπ̄ς), so that the body of the workman was soaked with blood from the blood of the icon of the holy Virgin Mary in the bottom of the basket (ζωσδε ἡτε πωμα ἡπρωμε ἡῆρατης ζωρῆ ἡσνογ εβολ ζῆ πεσνογ ἡθικων ἡτπαρθενος ετογλαβ μαρια ες ἡπεσπ̄τ ἡπβιρ), so that everyone that saw him marveled at the matter (ζωσδε ἡογον ἡιμ ἡταγῆαγ ερογ ρωπῆρε ἡπζωβ).⁹¹

While the assault on the icon still takes place at the hands of the Hebrew character, in this narrative it is a pious Christian who becomes drenched in blood and found out as a result. Indeed, “certain believing rulers” (ζεναρχων ἡπιστος) seize him upon witnessing the basket dripping with blood and accuse him of theft, murder, and an attempt to get rid of the body! The man laments his misfortune, proclaiming that he wishes it had “been only a man of our kind” (ογρωμε πε ἡτῆζη), and reveals that the “blood belongs to the painting of our Lady, the Holy Theotokos, Mary” (πεσνογ παῖ ετετῆἡαγ ερογ πα τσογραφια πε ἡτῆχς τηρῆ τεθεοτοκος ετογλαβ μαρια) who “is at the bottom of the basket” (εις ζηητε λοῖπον ες ἡπεσπ̄τ ἡπβιρ).⁹² The rulers decide that this is beyond their jurisdiction and turn him over to the bishop, who restores the icon and reports that he and the other bishops witnessed the icon’s “face to be sad, as if weeping tears of blood” (ἀἡαγ επ̄εζο εφωοοπ ζῆ ογοκῆ ζωσ χε εσριμε εσταβε σνογ εβολ).⁹³

⁹⁰ *Hom. virg.* 82.1.9–16; Worrell, 292, 370.

⁹¹ *Hom. virg.* 82.2.6–83.1.9; Worrell, 293–94, 371.

⁹² *Hom. virg.* 83.2.12–84.1.11; Worrell, 295–96, 371.

⁹³ *Hom. virg.* 85.1.1–5; Worrell, 298, 372.

The bishop relates how he and the other bishops brought the icon into the church, cleaned it, and put the fragments back together before setting it up on the wall. Then, remarking proleptically that when people with all sorts of diseases and demons greet this icon (ἀσπάζε ἡτιζικῶν) in faith they are and will forever be healed,⁹⁴ the bishop gives a very particular example. Having brought the Hebrew into the church, the bishop relates how he chided him for some time about repentance. Suddenly, the man’s “mind received illumination” (ἀπῆνους κι ούοειν).⁹⁵ He requests forgiveness and acquiesces to “become a Christian” (ἐτραῶπε ἡχριστιανός) because “the Lord desires not the death of the sinner, so that he may turn about and live (Ezek. 33:11)” (νεφούεω πμογ γαρ αν ἡπῆρῆνοβε ἡθε ἐτῆκτοφ ἡφωῆξ).⁹⁶ When the bishop asks if he believes that Christ is the son of God and in the Trinity, the man, echoing the father of demon-possessed boy in Mark 9:24, replies that he believes yet exclaims, “help my unbelief!” (βοηθια ἐτατηῆτατ). In response, the bishop says that he recited many other passages of scripture but that man specifically “believed because of the great wonder which had proceeded from the icon of the holy virgin Mary” (ἀφιστεγε ἐτβε τνοσ ἡῶπηρε ἡταῶωπε εβολ ζῆ οἰκῶν ἡτπαρενος ἐτογααβ μαρια).⁹⁷ He baptizes him with his family and gives him the Eucharist. Three days later, the narrator reports, the man had found rest and gone to the Lord, reckoned among the number of the Christians and forgiven for his sin of breaking the icon.

Although the miracle of a bleeding image demonstrates divine power by upsetting expectations about the gulf between matter and divinity in each of *Imag. Beryt.*, *Gloria Martyrum* 21, and *Hom. virg.* there are more significant differences than similarities across the three accounts. In addition to the unparalleled play between mimetic Jews and the mimetic icon in *Imag. Beryt.*, the settings of the icons in each narrative are markedly different, as are the circumstances under which the images are discovered. In Gregory’s story, the Jew had often looked upon the image (perhaps feeling seduced), in *Imag. Beryt.*, the image had somehow

⁹⁴ *Hom. virg.* 85.2.5–22; Worrell 299, 372.

⁹⁵ *Hom. virg.* 87.2.14–5; Worrell 303, 373.

⁹⁶ *Hom. virg.* 88.2.20–89.1.3–7; Worrell, 305–6, 374.

⁹⁷ *Hom. virg.* 89.2.6–12; Worrell, 307, 374.

evaded discovery until just the right moment, and in the Coptic Homily, it was left behind due to the very actions of the Hebrew who would assault it, and he was not the first to discover it. Similarly, and importantly, the function of the blood within the narratives differs. In Gregory, the blood is revelatory in a very literal sense: having frightened the Jew who stabbed the image, the blood causes him to engage in further deception only to be found out by a trail of blood leading to his home. The bleeding icon reveals the character of its assailant—his deception, his violence, his lack of understanding—as well as the power and will of God. The blood plays no role after the discovery and restoration of the icon. In the *Hom. Virg.*, the blood reveals the assault as well, but initially it *conceals* the identity of the assailant, as the innocent workman is initially accused as murderer. When the truth is made clear, the blood also signals the virgin's lament, as the blood comes in the forms of mournful tears, evidently for the presumed fate of the Hebrew sinner. The issue of blood likewise is the reason par excellence that the Hebrew believes, but, notably, it is simply cleaned away and plays no role in the ongoing miracles that the icon is said to facilitate. In the *Imag. Beryt.*, the blood and water, conversely, are the sole healing agent and perhaps even outshine the icon. After the flow of liquids, the icon effectively fades from the scene. The chief priests and elders eventually show it to the bishop when they make their confession of faith, but its fate otherwise goes without remark.

Blood of Life, Blood of Death

However, despite these crucial differences, which underscore the importance of extended narratological interpretation, there is one important theme that all three narratives share: in each, the context surrounding the confrontations between a Jewish antagonist and a bleeding image demonstrates a marked concern with the tension between death and life. As noted above, the author of *Imag. Beryt.* portrays the crucifixion reenactment as event full of paradoxical living death, and the narrator underscores in the aftermath of this event how many bodies were given life and many souls “returned from death to life.” In Gregory's story, of course, the antagonist is

executed, a fate echoed, interestingly, in two other image miracles from Gregory’s oeuvre. In Miracle 9, a Jewish child who had taken communion with his Christian school friends is thrown into a fiery furnace by his glass-blower father for his treachery. In a replay of the three Hebrew youths from Daniel 3, the boy remains untouched, covered by the cloak, it turns out, of a woman whose icon he had seen on the altar of the church: Mary; the Father, for his part, is thrown into the oven and completely consumed.⁹⁸ Immediately after the story of the bleeding image, in *Glory of the Martyrs* 22 Gregory tells of another icon in the Narbonne cathedral with Jesus on the cross wearing nothing but a linen loincloth. A “terrifying person” (*persona terribilis*) appears to the priest in a dream, complaining that the priests get to wear nice garments but everyone can see him naked. The priest doesn’t understand the vision and ignores it until the person appears for a third time, threatening “a swiftly coming death” (*velox interitus*) if left uncovered. Fortunately for the priest, the bishop hears and covers the icon with a curtain, averting disaster.⁹⁹

While we might chalk up the conjunction of icons and violent death in *Gloria martyrum* to the tropes of miracle collections or anti-Judaistic invective, the juxtaposition of bleeding image and death is rendered yet more starkly in the *Hom. virg.* In fact, in addition to the converted Jew dying at the end, the entire narrative about the bleeding icon of Mary is nestled almost disjunctively within homiletic encouragements to imitate Mary’s virginity through cultivation of virtues, lest one face consequences after death. The homilist brings his audience to the moment “when the man lies down for his last illness and is distraught, thinking of all the things in which he has been engaged and the evils he has done” (ετερη προμη νανηκοτκ επιωωνε νρωτορτρ εφμεεγε εβολ ενενταρωωπε νρητογ τηρωγ μη ν πετθοογ νταρααγ).¹⁰⁰ The voice fails, fever consumes the whole body; the countenance changes (πεκρο ωιβε), and the hands become weak as “the eyes see those beings who are about to pursue them with trouble and

⁹⁸ Gregory of Tours, *Gloria martyrum* 9 (Krusch, 494–95; see the full English translation in Raymond van Dam, ed., *Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Martyrs*, Translated Texts for Historians, Latin Series III [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988], 29–32).

⁹⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Gloria martyrum* 22 (Krusch, 501; van Dam, 41).

¹⁰⁰ *Hom. virg.* 67.1.22–67.2.5; Worrell, 262–63, 363.

torment” (ΝΕΚΒΑΛ ΝΑΥ Ε ΝΕΤΝΑΕΙ Ν̄ΣΩΚ Ζ̄Ν ΟΥΩΤΟΡΤ̄Ρ Μ̄Ν ΟΥΖΒΑ).¹⁰¹ “O wretched man that I am!” (ὦ πταλαίπορος ἀνοκ πρῶμε), the homilist voices for the audience, “Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?” (ΝΙΜ ΠΕΤΝΑΖΜ̄ΝΤ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄Μ ΠΣΩΜΑ Ν̄ΠΙΜΟΥ).¹⁰²

Hom. virg., including the narrative of the bleeding icon of Mary, participates actively in a discourse of what Ellen Muehlberger has called the “postmortal,” in which homilists and other literary figures take their audience to the “moment of reckoning” and reimagine that moment as a beginning rather than the end.¹⁰³ Although periods of punishment and bliss in the liminal period between death and the final resurrection were far from unknown—evinced, for instance, by the tour of hell in the second-century *Apocalypse of Peter*—in the later fourth century preachers seem to have begun portraying the “moment of reckoning,” as it were, with increasingly vivid and embodied detail. Personifying the dying individual, homilists such as Augustine and Jacob of Serugh, Ps. Cyril of Alexandria and Shenoute of Atripe sought to “shape their audience’s thought in deep ways” by “inducing them to create an experience of [death] that they can imagine to be their own.”¹⁰⁴ Like in the *Hom. virg.*, these men described how suddenly the voice becomes withered, the throat closes up; breathing comes in fits and starts and the eyes fail. At a moment’s notice, the angel of death strike’s the sinner’s body, to snatch one away like a thief its prize, causing the soul to depart and look back with regret and pain at its pitiful life in the body and the terrors that await it.¹⁰⁵ By creating “a memorable sensory approximation of a future event,” Muehlberger argues, these and other homilists transformed questions about death from theoretical to practical, experiential investigations that drove ethical reflection.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, for the author of the *Hom. virg.*, the Hebrew-turned-Christian serves as an *argumentum a fortiore* for his Christian audience. Partway through the framing exhortation of *Hom. virg.*, the narrator makes an analogy to the troubles of a man who rents a house. If he is

¹⁰¹ *Hom. virg.* 68.1 and 72.2.10–14; Worrell, 264, 363 and 273, 366.

¹⁰² *Hom. virg.* 72.2.20–5; Worrell 273, 366.

¹⁰³ Ellen Muehlberger, *The Moment of Reckoning: Imagined Death and its Consequences in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 16–21.

¹⁰⁴ Muehlberger, *Moment of Reckoning*, 70, 91.

¹⁰⁵ I have drawn these descriptions from Muehlberger’s analyses across *Moment of Reckoning*, 65–104.

¹⁰⁶ Muehlberger, *Moment of Reckoning*, esp. 101–2.

rich, the bishop argues, then it matters not when the landlord comes to collect, because both will be happy and satisfied with the man's ability to pay. If he is poor, then the man will always be in grief, not only because of his angst at paying, but because of the resulting consequences: his children may starve and leave him or he may die in poverty and wretchedness; the landlord will cast him out and he will seek fruitlessly for a dwelling place, wasting days with adultery, stealing, slandering, coveting, refusing to pay laborers, and the like.¹⁰⁷ “Truly, this is the manner of the wretched man” (γαῖ ἕωωϑ τεθεε ἡπρωμε ἡταλαῖπορος), the homilist concludes. “When his time slips from him without his knowing it (ῥωαν πεφογοειω ογεινε ἡτοοτῆ ἡπατῆειμε ωαρε): God casts him out of his house, which is his poverty-stricken body” (πνογτε νοχῆ εβολ ῃἡ πῆἡ ετε πῆσωμα πε ἡεββιἡἡ).¹⁰⁸ Later in the text, in the story, the Hebrew is brought into the church and the bishop relates that he chided him, encouraging him to repent for “this great abomination, to shatter the icon of the holy Virgin Mary” (ἡππινος ἡ ἡῃωβ ἡβοτε ακογωῃἡ ἡτῆικων ἡτπαρῆενος ετογααβ μαρια).¹⁰⁹ The assault on the icon, of course, was only the latest of his many sins. In fact, the Hebrew personifies both the wicked landlord and the wretched tenant. He evicts the Christian family and leaves them in a state of aimless confusion, deprived of their greatest treasure, he steals labor, he slanders. Moreover, like the poor man, liable to be cast out of his wretched body at any moment, the bishop reminds him, “you will depart from the body and it shall be as if you had never been born into this world at all. If you do not repent before you die, your dwelling place will be the abode of all sinners” (ἡσα ογκογῆ εκναει εβολ ῃἡ σωμα ἡῃῃε εωδε πογῃποκ επικοσμος επτηρῆ αῃω εκωαν μετανοι ἡπατῆμογ πεκμαῃωωπε πε πμα ἡἡῃῃῃε).¹¹⁰ As the homilist hopes will happen for his audience, the bishop's scare tactics work on the Hebrew: he changes both his beliefs and behavior before he dies, forgiven for

¹⁰⁷ *Hom. virg.* 69.1.6–71.2.8; Worrell, 266–71, 364–5.

¹⁰⁸ *Hom. virg.* 70.2.14–23; Worrell, 269, 365, revised to highlight the parallel made the “poor man” and the “poor body.” Cf. 2 Cor 5:1–10.

¹⁰⁹ *Hom. virg.* 86.1.25–86.2.4; Worrell 300–1, 372.

¹¹⁰ *Hom. virg.* 86.2.19–87.1.4; Worrell 301–2, 373.

“even the sin of the breaking of the icon” (ἀγὼ πνοβε ἡθίκων ἀφκααφ ναφ εβολ).¹¹¹ If even the Hebrew could repent and get right, the narrator implies, then so could the wayward Christian.

This emphasis on repentance, I submit, also explains the role of the blood in *Hom. Virg.* After the extended commentary on death and the horrors that await the sinner, the homilist finds unsurprising purchase in the value of Mary’s intercession. “Behold then, my beloved (σε ᾧ ναμερατε): it is because of the multitude of our sins that I have mentioned these things to you today at the feast of the Queen and Mother of our Life, our Lord Jesus Christ” (ετβε περογο ἡ νανοβε ἀϊτῖ ἡπῖρπμεεγε ἡναῖ ηητῆ ἡποογ ρῖ πωα ἡτῖρω ἀγὼ τηααγ ἡπενογῶνῃ τηρῆ πεν̄χ̄ς ἡ πε̄χ̄ς).¹¹² Continuing the theme, the homilist exclaims, “Let us raise our hands to the heaven and beseech our virgin mother, the holy Mary, our ambadress (μαρῆφι ἡνενσιχ ερραι ετπε ἡτνσοπσῖ ητῆμααγ ἡπαρθενος τθαγια μαρια τῆπρεσεγτης). For she is influential and will exhort her only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, on behalf of all of us” (ογρικανος γαρ τε ἀγὼ σναπαρακαλει ἡπεςμονογενης ἡωηρε ἡ πε̄χ̄ς ερραι εχων τηρῆ).¹¹³ Again, now addressing Mary instead of the listener, “O, our Lady-Mother Mary (ᾧ τῆ χ̄ς ἡμααγ μαρια)... we know indeed that you are nearer to God, your beloved son, than all the saints (ἡσοογν γαρ χε τῖρεν ερογν επνογτε πογωηρε ἡμεριτ παρα νετογααβ τῖρογ). When you supplicate him on our behalf, he is just in everything and holy (ῖωαν παρακαλει ἡμοφ εχων ογδικαῖος πε ρῆ ρωβ ηημ ἀγὼ εφογααβ); and he will forgive us all our faults and acts of negligence and enable us to do his will” (ἀγὼ εφνακω ναη εβολ ἡνενωωωτ τῖρογ ἡῆ ηενταναμελει ερρογ ἀγὼ ηεφτι θε ναη ἡτῆ ῖπῖογω).¹¹⁴ Moreover, at the conclusion of the central narrative, the homilist makes appeal to the analogy of the imperial image, but with a twist.

If violence is committed against someone, and he goes and takes hold of the image of the emperor, then no man will be able to oppose him (ἀγὼ εγωανχι ογα ἡσον̄ς ἡφειῖ ηῖαμαρτε ἡθίκων ἡπῖρο ἡῆ λααγ ναφτῖ ογβηφ), even though the emperor is nothing but a mortal man (καῖ γαρ ογρωμε πε πῖρο εωαφμογ), and he is taken to a court of law (ἀγὼ σεχι ἡμοφ εγμᾶῆτῖραη). Let us therefore, beloved, honor the icon of our Lady the

¹¹¹ *Hom. virg.* 90.1.11–3; Worrell, 308, 374.

¹¹² *Hom. virg.* 74.1.8–16; Worrell, 276, 366.

¹¹³ *Hom. virg.* 75.1.17–75.2.5; Worrell, 278–79, 367.

¹¹⁴ *Hom. virg.* 75.2.15–76.1.13; Worrell, 279–80, 367.

true Queen, the Holy Theotokos Mary (ΑΝΘΗ ΔΕ ΖΩΩΝ Ω ΝΑΜΕΡΑΤΕ ΜΑΡΤΙΤΙ ΕΘΟΥ
ΝΤΖΙΚΩΝ ΝΤΝΧΣ ΤΗΡΗ ΤΡΡΟ ΝΑΛΗΘΥΝΗ ΤΕΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΣ ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΜΑΡΙΑ).¹¹⁵

Following the logic of the analogy, the homilist does not precisely conclude, like Theodore the Studite above, that “the image and I are one.” Rather, relying on the knowledge of this commonplace, the homilist argues that to grasp and honor the icon of Mary will win a defendant their day in court, as it were, and the aid of the top legal mind in heaven.

It is significant, then, that when the workman takes the bleeding image and is stopped by the secular rulers, the latter decide to send him and the icon to the bishop, from one court to another (“they seized him and took him to the episcopal residence” [ΑΓΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΗΜΟΙ ΔΥΧΙΤΩ
ΕΤΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΟΝ]).¹¹⁶ When they restore the icon and set it above the altar in a place of authority, by no mere coincidence, the bishops report that they saw “the countenance of the painting (ΠΡΟ
ΝΤΣΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ) ...to be sad, as if weeping tears of blood” (ΕΦΩΘΟΙ ΖΗ ΟΥΟΚΗ ΖΩΣ ΧΕ ΕΣΡΙΜΕ
ΕΣΤΑΒΕ ΣΝΟΙ ΕΒΟΛ).¹¹⁷ In the mid-sixth century homily *On the Dormition of Mary* by Theodosius, Mary, confronted with her impending death, remarks upon the terrors that await the sinner. “Shall I be saved from such as these?” (ΖΑΡΑ ΤΗΝΑΟΥΧΑΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΞΕΝ ΠΑΙΟΥΟΝ ΗΠΑΙΡΗΤ), she worries. “But they tell me that three teardrops extinguish” (ΑΛΛΑ ΠΕΧΩΟΥ ΧΕ ΩΔΡΕ ΝΤΕΛΤΙΛΙ ΗΕΡΜΗ
ΩΩΕΜ) the unquenchable fire that awaits, so those who weep for their sins are blessed.¹¹⁸ In the *Dormition* homily, Mary encourages the apostles to weep over their own sins; in *Hom. virg.*, it is Mary’s tears on behalf of the Hebrew that save him from the terrors of death described by the bishop. After all, as the bishop states, “God is merciful; he will forgive you since the holy Virgin Mary was from among the Jews” (ΟΥΩΔΑΝΕΤΗΥ ΠΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΥΝΑΚΩ ΝΑΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΠΕΙΔΗ ΟΥΕΒΟΛ ΖΗ
ΝΙΟΥΔΑΪ ΤΕ ΤΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΜΑΡΙΑ).¹¹⁹ Through the use of narrative framing devices and a strong narratorial voice, therefore, the author of *Hom. Virg.* Changes the meaning of the Hebrew’s insistence that he believed because of the wonder of the icon. In fact, it is not even clear to readers that the Hebrew ever sees the image bleed since it is brought to the church,

¹¹⁵ *Hom. virg.* 90.2.12–91.1.4; Worrell, 309–10, 375.

¹¹⁶ *Hom. virg.* 84.2.2–4; Worrell, 297, 372.

¹¹⁷ *Hom. virg.* 84.2.24–85.1.5; Worrell, 297–98, 372.

¹¹⁸ Robinson, *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels*, 96–7.

¹¹⁹ *Hom. virg.* 87.1.11–7; Worrell 302, 373.

cleaned, and set up before he enters. Even if he believes because of the miracle itself, it was also the tears and intercession of Mary that saved him, granting him forgiveness and the ability to do God's will. And, as the Hebrew obtained this mercy, "I had wished to speak yet more" (λοῖπον νιοῦωω εοῦεω̄ πωαχε εβολ επερογο), the narrator claims, "...in order that we may all obtain mercy in the presence of the Lord" (ἵναβινε ἵογνα τηρῆ ἡ πῆτο εβολ μπ̄χ̄ς).¹²⁰

The blood that overflows from the assaulted icon of Mary does not just suggest the magical conflation of icon and prototype; it reflects the horrors of death that await the Hebrew as a result of his actions. When Mary cries, however, it also reflects the new life that awaits him.

Baptism in not just Blood

It is difficult to conclude, given the lack of commonplaces that characterize concern with the postmortal, that the death and repentance of the sinner is the key concern of the author of *Imag. Beryt.*, but this does not prevent the comparison to *Gloria martyrum* 21 and *Hom. virg.* from being instructive for interpreting the significance of the blood in *Imag. Beryt.* In fact, what is perhaps the strongest point of similarity between *Imag. Beryt.* and *Hom. virg.*—the assaulted, bleeding image—is also a point of difference. When the icon of Jesus is crucified, it is not just blood that comes out, but blood and water both. We should recall that in John 19:34 Jesus has already died when his side is pierced. Soldiers approach to break the legs of those crucified to hasten their deaths, but upon finding that Jesus was already deceased, they stab him with the lance and the blood and water flow out. As I argued earlier in this chapter, the moment in *Imag. Beryt.* when the icon comes to life, therefore, when it is most like its prototype Jesus, is not only a sign of life for this inanimate image, but also, ironically, an affirmation of its lifelessness. The author plays quite astutely with tropes of life and death, presence and absence, portraying an icon

¹²⁰ *Hom. virg.* 92.1.10–19; Worrell, 312, 376.

that is both at the same time. By characterizing the chief priests and elders of the Jews as spiritually inanimate imitators of physically and spiritually lifeless prototypes, who attack the ambiguously animate icon of Jesus, the author subtly suggests they embody a similar status, both alive and dead at the same time.

This reading is supported by comparison to various examples from patristic exegesis of John 19:34. In the late third century, for instance, Hippolytus of Rome had argued that the blood and water showed that “the body, though dead in the human manner, possesses a great power of life in it” (καὶ νεκρὸν τε ὄν τὸ σῶμα κατὰ τὸν ἀνθρώπινον τρόπον, μεγάλην ἔχει ζωῆς ἐν αὐτῷ δύναμιν). He explains, “For blood and water were poured forth from him—these things which are not poured forth from dead bodies (ἃ γὰρ οὐ προχεῖται τῶν νεκρῶν σωμάτων, ταῦτα ἐξ αὐτοῦ προεχέθη, αἷμα τε καὶ ὕδωρ)—in order that we might know that the power that dwelled in the body possessed so much power for life that it did not appear dead like the others [sc. the robbers] (ἴν’ εἰδείημεν, ἠλίκον ἢ κατασκηνώσασα δύναμις ἐν τῷ σώματι πρὸς ζωὴν δύναται, ὡς μήτε αὐτὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅμοιον φαίνεσθαι νεκρὸν), but was able to pour out for us the causes of life (ἡμῖν δὲ τὰ ζωῆς αἷτια προχεῖν δύνασθαι).¹²¹ Hippolytus’s testimony unfortunately breaks off shortly after this tantalizing statement about Christ’s living-dead body, but it is likely that these “causes for life” were the sacraments as they would be commonly interpreted by others.

Chrysostom, for instance, in one of his many homilies on the Gospel of John, reasoned that “these fonts did not come forth superficially or by chance, but rather because the Church is put together from the two of them (οὐκ ἀπλῶς δὲ οὐδὲ ὡς ἔτθγεν αὗται ἐξῆλθον αἱ πηγαί· ἀλλ’

¹²¹ Hippolytus of Rome, *De duobus latronibus* 1–2 (text in H. Achelis, ed., *Hippolyt's kleinere exegetische und homiletische Schriften*, GCS 1.2. [Leipzig: Teubner, 1897]: 211. Retrieved from: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/Iris/Cite?2115:022:0>. I have found this and most of the following passages with the aid of Joel C. Elowski, ed., *John 11–21*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 4b (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 326–29; translations are my own.

ἐπειδὴ ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων τούτων ἡ Ἐκκλησία συνέστηκε). He explains that “those who have undergone initiation understand: being on one hand regenerated by water, they are, on the other hand, nourished by blood and flesh (ἴσασιν οἱ μυσταγωγούμενοι, δι’ ὕδατος μὲν ἀναγεννώμενοι, δι’ αἵματος δὲ καὶ σαρκὸς τρεφόμενοι). From this do the Mysteries begin in order that, when you approach that awe-inspiring cup, you approach as if drinking from the side itself” (ἐντεῦθεν ἀρχὴν λαμβάνει τὰ μυστήρια, ἴν’ ὅταν προσίης τῷ φρικτῷ ποτηρίῳ, ὡς ἀπ’ αὐτῆς πίνων τῆς πλευρᾶς, οὕτω προσίης).¹²² Cyril of Alexandria, a few decades later, reasoned similarly in his extensive *Commentary on John*. Explaining that the soldiers pierced Jesus’s side because of some doubt about whether or not he was truly dead, he describes,

Then the side gushed forth the blood mixed with water, an image and first-fruit of the mystical blessing and holy baptism (ἡ δὲ μεμιγμένον ὕδατι τὸ αἷμα διέβλυσε, τῆς μυστικῆς εὐλογίας καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου βαπτίσματος εἰκόνα καὶ ἀπαρχήν), as though what happened was something laid down for us by God (ὡσπερ τινὰ τιθέντος ἡμῖν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸ γεγενημένον). For truly does holy baptism belong to Christ and is from Christ (Χριστοῦ γὰρ ὄνως ἐστὶ, καὶ παρὰ Χριστοῦ τὸ ἅγιον βάπτισμα), and the power of the mystical blessing sprung up for us from the holy flesh” (καὶ τῆς μυστικῆς εὐλογίας ἡ δύναμις ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας ἡμῖν ἀνέφυ σαρκός).¹²³

A few decades earlier, while affirming that the baptismal explanation of the blood and water was particularly common,¹²⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem had provided a number of other interpretations as well. For instance, he describes how the water pouring forth onto the cross fulfilled a biblical typology whereby Moses had sweetened the water with wood (cf. Ex 15:22–7),¹²⁵ and how the first of Moses’s signs, the changing of the river Nile into blood (cf. Ex 7:14–

¹²² John Chrysostom, *hom. in Jo.* 85.3 (text in PG: 59 465).

¹²³ Cyril of Alexandria, *Com. in Jo.* 12.19 (text in PG: 74 677A–B).

¹²⁴ E.g., Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses illuminandorum* 3.10.5–6, which argues that blood and water both came out “in order that in times of peace some might be baptized with water, while others in times of persecution be baptized with their own blood” (ἵνα οἱ μὲν ἐν καιροῖς εἰρήνης ἐν ὕδατι βαπτισθῶσιν, οἱ δὲ ἐν καιροῖς διωγμῶν ἐν οἰκείοις αἵμασι βαπτισθῶσι) (text in W.C. Reischl and J. Rupp, eds., *Cyriilli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia* [Munich: Lentner, 1848–1860, repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1967], retrieved from: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/Iris/Cite?2110:003:44939>).

¹²⁵ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses illuminandorum* 13.20.10–1.

25), was matched by Jesus's last sign, namely, the water and blood pouring out together.¹²⁶

Strikingly, Cyril also speculates that the blood and water both gushed forth

on account of believers and unbelievers (διὰ τοὺς πιστεύοντας καὶ τοὺς ἀπιστοῦντας): Pilate, for his part, was saying, 'I am innocent' and he was washing his hands off with water, but those who were shouting were saying, 'His blood is upon us' (ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πιλάτος ἔλεγεν· ἀθῶός εἰμι, καὶ ὕδατι ἀπενίπτετο τὰς χεῖρας· οἱ δὲ ἐπιβοῶντες ἔλεγον· τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς) (cf. Matt 27:24–5). So the two came from the side—the water, perhaps, for the one who did the judging (ἦν οὖν τὰ δύο ἐκ τῆς πλευρᾶς, τὸ ὕδωρ ἴσως τῷ κρίνοντι), the blood for those who did the shouting (τοῖς δὲ ἐπιβοῶσι τὸ αἷμα). And again, it can be understood in another manner (καὶ πάλιν ἄλλως νοητέον): the blood is for the Jews, the water for Christians (Ἰουδαίοις μὲν τὸ αἷμα, χριστιανοῖς δὲ τὸ ὕδωρ). For the condemnation by blood is for the former on the grounds that they plotted (ἐκεῖνοις μὲν γὰρ ὡς ἐπιβούλοις ἢ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος καταδίκη), but the salvation through water is for you who believe now (σοὶ δὲ τῷ πιστεύοντι νῦν διὰ ὕδατος σωτηρία). Nothing has happened without purpose (οὐδὲν γὰρ εἰκῆ γέγονεν).¹²⁷

Both of Cyril's interpretations in this passage focus on dividing Jews from Christians and interpreting the blood as marking the damnation of the former. Moreover, they remain condemned, an especially unenviable state in light of the final interpretation Cyril proffers.

“There is yet another reason for the side: the woman who was formed from the side became the founder of sin (ἔστιν καὶ ἄλλη τῆς πλαυρᾶς αἰτία. γυνὴ γέγονεν ἀρχηγὸς ἀμαρτίας ἢ πλασθεῖσα ἐκ πλευρᾶς) (cf. Gen 2:18–22). But Jesus, who came to grant reconciliation to men and women alike (ἀλλ' ὁ ἐλθὼν Ἰησοῦς ἀνδράσιν ὁμοῦ καὶ γυναιξὶ χαρίσασθαι τὴν ἀμνηστίαν), was pierced in the side on behalf of women, in order that he might undo the sin” (ἐνύγη τὴν πλευρὰν ὑπὲρ γυναικῶν, ἵνα λύσῃ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν).¹²⁸

Interpreters like Ephrem and Augustine saw in this connection between the sides of Adam and Jesus the fact that their respective wives emerged from their sides—Eve from Adam's

¹²⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses illuminandorum* 13.21.1–4.

¹²⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses illuminandorum* 13.21.5–12.

¹²⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses illuminandorum* 13.21.20–4.

rib and “the Church” from Christ’s blood¹²⁹—but the seventh century *Quaest. ad Ant.*, most famous for its question about icon veneration, discussed above and in chapter 1, explicates the feature of this interpretive commonplace in the way perhaps most relevant for understanding *Imag. Beryt.* Near the end of the text’s final *apokrisis*, a lengthy compendium of testimonies and arguments with which “to persuade [the Jews] that Christ is indeed God” (αὐτοὺς πείσαι... ὅτι καὶ Θεός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός), the answerer explains how Jesus “was pierced in the side by a lance to heal the one who was created from the side of Adam (λόγῃ τὴν πλευρὰν νύττεται, ἵνα τὴν ἐκ τῆς πλευρᾶς τοῦ Ἀδάμ κτισθεῖσαν θεραπεύσῃ), to stop the flaming sword that turns against us καὶ τὴν φλογίνην ῥομφαίαν τὴν καθ’ ἡμῶν στρεφομένενην παύσῃ), and to open for us the road to paradise” (καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῖν τοῦ παραδείσου ἀνοίξῃ).¹³⁰ The final assault against God’s body is what opens the way back from the fallen body of Adam.

These different interpretations of the blood and water pouring from Jesus’s side share a common feature, namely, that they signal the transition from spiritual death to life and open the way to baptism, which is exactly what the author portrays in *Imag. Beryt.*¹³¹ The Jews of Berytus begin in a state of misunderstanding, slander, and anger, assaulting a lifeless icon and casting out its accidental owner in their rage. In doing so they reveal their likeness to their fathers and their ongoing guilt for the crucifixion of Christ. However, with the outpouring of blood and water from a paradoxically living and lifeless icon of a paradoxically living and dead God, the icon both reflects the spiritual inanimacy of the Jews who assault it and, by manifesting the same sign

¹²⁹ Ephrem, *Commentary on Tatian’s Diatesseron* 20.11; Augustine, *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus* 120.2 (see Elowsky, *John 11–21*, 328 for both passages).

¹³⁰ Ps. Athanasius, *Quaest. ad Ant.* 137 (PG 28 684–700); cf. above, p. 263 n. 34.

¹³¹ Aron-Beller, “Jewish Image Desecration,” 20, notes almost in passing the importance of the water for the baptisms that follow, but she splits without argument the significance of the two liquids, “with the miraculous blood confirming an authentic reaction of Christ through the painting, and its waters symbolizing the redemptive waters of baptism that brought about the conversion of the Jews.”

of postmortem life as did Jesus, the author creates the reason and conditions for these new crucifiers to step through toward the recognition and acceptance of life in Christ. Why?

Although anti-Judaism was a staple of much Christian literature, the seventh century saw onslaught of such literature, from the *Teaching of Jacob Newly Baptized* to the *Trophies of Damascus*, and even the writings of Leontius of Neapolis, concerned often with the place of Jews within both Christianity and the Roman Empire writ large. The proliferation of these themes was no doubt related to the tumultuous events of the seventh century. In 614, the Persians conquered Jerusalem, only for it to be taken back by the Byzantines 14 years later, after which Emperor Heraclius passed a law in 632 compelling baptism for all Jews in the empire.¹³² In the 630s and the decades that followed, Arab armies under Umar swept through the near east, Egypt, and north Africa. These events and the texts composed in their wake reflected and contributed to an acute apocalypticism throughout the Mediterranean and near east in this period.¹³³ This was a moment of reckoning turned up to eleven: the end could come at any time and death was liable to snatch one up. God would reckon to each their due. Life, death, and the postmortal swirled

¹³² See Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 192–228 on the five-years aftermath of the Persian Wars and imperial instability, as well as Carl Laga, “Judaism and Jews in Maximus Confessor’s Works: Theoretical Controversy and Practical Attitude,” *Byzantinoslavica* 51 (1990): 177–88 and Sarah Gador-Whyte, “Christian-Jewish Conflict in the Light of Heraclius’ Forced Conversions and the Beginning of Islam,” in *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to Early Islam*, eds. Wendy Mayer and Bronwen Neil (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 201–14, with more focus on Jews in this period. On instability and changes in the Byzantine Empire during the seventh century more generally, see John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture*, revised ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹³³ For a helpful guide to this period, see Walter E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. 205–30 on the potent mix of anxiety and confidence in the mid-seventh century; cf. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response*. On the acute apocalypticism prevalent across a wide swath of peoples in the near east and ancient Mediterranean, see now Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2018).

around Christian-Jewish relations of the time, amplifying for Christians a long-standing obsession with the overlaps and divergences of corporeal and spiritual life.¹³⁴

The forced baptism of Jews and Samaritans seems to have stimulated particularly strong reflection and negotiation about what this meant for their status as Christians. Maximus the Confessor penned a letter not long after the Heraclius's order and expressed doubt that such forced conversions were beneficial for anyone. First, he expressed, there was the concern that “this great and truly divine mystery [*sc.* of baptism] would be insulted (καθυβρισθῆ τὸ μέγα τοῦτο καὶ θεῖον ὄντως μυστήριον [*sic*]) when it was given to those who have not beforehand demonstrated an attitude agreeable to the faith” (δοθὲν τοῖς μὴ προεπιδειξαμένοις τῇ πίστει γνώμην ἀρμόδιον). Second, it was hard to be confident about the fate of these baptizands, “lest somehow—as they persist in holding on to the bitter root of their ancestral faithlessness deep down and as they cut themselves off from the light of grace (μὴ πως—τὴν πικρὰν ῥίζαν τῆς πατρικῆς αὐτῶν ἀπιστίας κατὰ τὸ βάθος διέμειναν ἔχοντες, καὶ τὸ [μὲν] τῆς χάριτος φῶς ἑαυτοῖς ὑποτέμνουσι)—they engender even greater condemnation, increased by the darkness of faithlessness” (τὴν [δὲ] κατάκρισιν πολλαπλασίονα καταστήσωσι τῷ ζόφῳ συναυξηθεῖσαν τῆς ἀπιστίας). Moreover, the unwilling and perhaps incomplete identity of these new Christians was prone “to create the evil seed of scandals against our holy faith” (τὴν κατὰ τῆς ἀγίας ἡμῶν πίστεως πονηρὰν τῶν σκανδάλων σποράν) because of their “mixing...among the more simple” (ἐπιμιξίαν...ἐν τοῖς ἀφελεστέροις) of the faithful.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Apocalypticism had in fact contributed already in earlier centuries to the use of Mary's dormition in particular as a way to think about life and death and assuage fears about the violence and darkness of what awaited; see Brian E. Daley, “‘At the Hour of Our Death’: Mary's Dormition and Christian Dying in Late Patristic and Early Byzantine Literature,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 71–89.

¹³⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Letter 8* (text in Robert Devreesse, ed., “La fin inédite d'une lettre de saint Maxime: Un baptême forcé de juifs et samaritains à Carthage en 632,” *Revue de sciences religieuses* 17.1 [1937]: 34–35. I have followed the excellent translation of Andrew Jacobs at <http://andrewjacobs.org/translations/maximos.html> with one minor exception.

Texts like the *Teaching of Jacob the Newly Baptized* dramatized this very question.¹³⁶ This lengthy and complicated dialogue describes the meeting of a cadre of Jews forcibly baptized in Carthage in 634. Jacob is the one member who has come to believe through a combination of scriptural study and miraculous intervention that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, and he attempts to explain his findings to his compatriots. As Andrew Jacobs describes, the bulk of the text consists of long proof-texts sprinkled in with references to Jewish and Christian conflicts and the Persian wars of the previous decades. During the work's five books, purportedly the result of a certain Joseph, who took notes of the meeting, Jacob gradually convinces his male compatriots, including "Justus, the last unbaptized Jew in Carthage," who serves as the dialogue's primary voice of resistance, that the Messiah really had come long ago and the apocalypse was near.¹³⁷ As Justus admits his willingness to change his view, however, the unnamed wife of his cousin, Isaac, suddenly appears on the page—the only time women have any role in *Doctrina* whatsoever—to exclaim "now that liar, Jacob, has bewitched you too! We had hoped that you would be able to will demonstrate for us his deception!" (τάχα καὶ σὲ ἐφαρμάκευσεν ὁ πλάνος ἐκεῖνος Ἰάκωβος· ἡμεῖς ἠλπίζαμεν ὅτι σὺ εἶχες ἡμῖν ἀποδείξαι τὴν πλανὴν αὐτοῦ).¹³⁸ While this text is too complex to analyze in detail here, Jacobs has demonstrated how the women's resistance to conversion functions as "the remainder of a never-quite-accomplished transformation of Jews into Christians. They represent the stubborn foolishness of the convert; readers are left to conclude that, no matter how fulsomely their husbands and sons-in-law embrace the truth of Jesus's messiahship, that (literal) nagging Jewish voice will never leave

¹³⁶ For the text and French translation, see Vincent Déroche, "*Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*," *Travaux et mémoires* 11 (1991): 47–229; for English translation, see the generously shared, unpublished work of Andrew Jacobs at <http://andrewjacobs.org/translations/doctrina.html>.

¹³⁷ Andrew S. Jacobs, "Gender, Conversion, and the End of Empire in the *Teaching of Jacob, Newly Baptized*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 29:1 (Spring 2021): 96; see *Doctrina Jacobi* 3.12.

¹³⁸ *Doctrina Jacobi* 3.12 (Déroche, "*Doctrina Jacobi*," 173); cited in Jacobs, "Gender, Conversion, and the End of Empire, 96 (translation revised).

them.”¹³⁹ The *Doctrina Jacobi* simultaneously defends the viability of forcibly baptized Jews’ assimilation and keeps these incomplete Christians subordinated to and at a distance from their gentile brethren. As Jacobs notes, we never see the Jewish converts, fearful of excommunication and punishment for their lack of knowledge, come together with other Christians at any point in the account.¹⁴⁰

Although there is probably not enough evidence to connect the baptism of the Jews in *Imag. Beryt.* to the forced baptism of Jews and Samaritans in the 630s in any direct sense, we can nevertheless see the author of this narrative working out surprisingly similar concerns about Jewish identity and Christian baptism.¹⁴¹ Here, of course, the Jews enthusiastically confess their belief and willingly—with the aid of the providence of God—undergo baptism. At the same time, however, it is their past and their genealogy as *christoktonoi* that the author highlights.¹⁴² With the “blood of Christ upon them” (cf. Matt 27:25) how could they possibly be full Christians? In this way, the icon becomes the canvas against which these Jews of Berytus expiate their lineage and the blindness of their fathers. They cast out the Jew who could not perceive the image. They themselves who do see it engage in an act of mimetic doubling that makes them the very image of their fathers. And yet it is through this very action that the mercy of God is opened to them. Indeed, by imitating the past, they are able to repent for it. Upon seeing “this new spectacle” and, crucially, the application of this lifegiving blood and water upon their ill and marginalized, the Jews of Bertyus see their error, never denying what they and their fathers had done, but seeking and receiving inclusion in the Christian body nonetheless.

¹³⁹ Jacobs, “Gender, Conversion, and the End of Empire,” 106.

¹⁴⁰ Jacobs, “Gender, Conversion, and the End of Empire,” 98–9.

¹⁴¹ Averil Cameron, “Byzantines and Jews: Some Recent Work on Early Byzantium,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20:1 (1996): 257 n. 25, notes that there seem to have been laws dictating the forced baptism of Jews under Leo III and Basil I in the eighth and ninth centuries as well, though the literature that grapples with the ramifications of these decrees is not as well known.

¹⁴² Cf. Bugár, “Images of Jews and Christians,” 39.

It is a rather more optimistic if no less circumspect consideration of Jewish conversion than that offered in *Doctrina Jacobi* or, as we saw with a miraculously animated idol in the previous chapter, the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*. But whereas in *Acts Andr. Matth.* §12–15 the sphinx revealed the spiritual lifelessness of its unseeing Jewish interlocutors, here the author of *Imag. Beryt* uses a form of ontological argument about images to undo the epistemological and psychological/ethical deficiencies of the Jews. If Peers is right, and what makes the Jews in *Imag. Beryt*. “guilty anew is the collapse of a dividing line between Christ and his image,”¹⁴³ it is, for the author, this collapse that also redeems them. Paradoxically, it seems, by putting the image to death, the Jews themselves can also die to sin and walk in the newness of life.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have argued that despite the bloody miracle of the crucified icon, the author of *Imag. Beryt*. was at least as concerned—if not more—with the notion of the conversion and baptism of the Jews as he is with the matter of images. The work of this text to make the bleeding icon a genuine miracle of Christ was not idle. Many images in antiquity had bled—or appeared to bleed. Nearly half a millennium earlier, in response to a report of statue movement and speech he reproduced in his *Life of Coriolanus*, Plutarch had gone out of his way to question such phenomena. Following a detail in the *Life* when a statue was reported to speak, Plutarch claimed that this, like any sign of life in images, was likely just a misapprehension. “For the fact that statues have *appeared* to sweat, and shed tears, and exude something like drops of blood, is not impossible” (ιδίοντα μὲν γὰρ ἀγάλματα φανῆναι καὶ δακρυρροοῦντα καὶ τινας μεθιέντα νοτίδας αἱματώδεις οὐκ ἀδύνατόν ἐστι), he argues, but there is a natural explanation. “Wood and

¹⁴³ Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 48.

stone often contract a mold which is productive of moisture, and cover themselves with many colors, and receive tints from the atmosphere” (καὶ γὰρ ξύλα καὶ λίθοι πολλακίς μὲν εὐρώτα συνάγουσι γόνιμον ὑγρότητος, πολλάς δὲ χροιάς ἀνιᾶσιν ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, καὶ δέχονται βαφὰς ἐκ τοῦ περιέχοντος). As a result, he concludes, “there is nothing in the way of believing that the Deity uses these phenomena sometimes as signs and portents” (οἷς ἔνια σημαίνειν τὸ δαιμόνιον οὐδὲν ἄν δόξειε κωλύειν).¹⁴⁴ A bleeding image, in his view, was likely not evidence of divine or object agency, but human misunderstanding.¹⁴⁵ Perhaps because of such skepticism, the author of *Imag. Beryt.* deployed narrative strategies such as the inclusion of a strong narrator, intertextual foreshadowing by allusion to the biblical prophets and gospels, the simultaneous heightening and collapsing of temporal and spatial differences, and, most of all, mimetic characterization to portray the miracle as one that truthfully recapitulated Jesus’s salvific act on the cross. By doing so, I argue, the author both recreated and undid the trope of Jewish blindness in the face of the true God, using the second act of salvation in the icon—and the restorative effects of the blood and the water it produces—to give the Jews of Berytus a second chance.

The ontological, epistemological, and ethical/psychological arguments surrounding images were useful in this pursuit. To return for a moment to the *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, shortly after the litany of miraculous images, the author(s) pose to their reader an interesting question:

If someone spits on [the icon of christ] on the grounds that it is lifeless and without movement (εἰ δὲ ὡς ἄψυχον καὶ ἀκίνητον ταύτην διαπτύει), what then? Did Christ in the garment of his divine incarnation not also become lifeless, without breath, and without movement, shut up dead inside a tomb (τί οὖν, οὐχὶ καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κατὰ τὸ πρόσλημμα τῆς θείας ἐνανθρωπήσεως ἄψυχος καὶ ἄπνους καὶ ἀκίνητος γέγονε νεκρὸς ἐν τάφῳ κατακλειόμενος;)? Aren’t the holy relics of the apostles, martyrs, and saints [lit. just

¹⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Vita Coriolani* 38 (text and trans. in Plutarch. *Lives, Volume IV: Alcibiades and Coriolanus. Lysander and Sulla*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 80 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916], 212–13).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. the examples of modern bleeding images discussed by Vassilaki, “Bleeding Icons,” 121–24.

ones] lifeless and dead (οὐχὶ τὰ ἅγια λείψανα τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ μαρτύρων καὶ δικαίων ἄψυχα καὶ νεκρά;)? Should they therefore be spat on (Τί οὖν, ἄρα ἀποπτυστέα;)?¹⁴⁶

The author of *Imag. Beryt.* seems to think with a similar analogy. The icon of Christ at Berytus is like the body of its prototype not necessarily because it lives, but because it is lifeless. But like that body, it nevertheless teems with life. Its ontological status renders it inert, its vital signs a surprise, but no more so than for the figure it represents. This lifeless liveliness paradoxically is both clear and obscure to the Jews of Berytus, as their attack on the icon reveals both their blindness and foreshadows their new sight. Their imitation of their fathers reveals the obscured state of their souls and knowledge, but it also allows them to repent for it.

Comparison between *Imag. Beryt.* and the bloody miracles in Gregory of Tours's *Glory of the Martyrs* 21 and the Coptic *Homily on the Virgin* has strengthened this argument by showing what roles blood can play in narrative beyond indicating an intimate relationship between image and prototype. To be sure, unlike the pairing of icon and dream image the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, the miraculous eruption of blood in these accounts does at times point to the selective conflation of icon and prototype. But the blood can also reveal—both the location and impending death of the Jewish assailant, as in Gregory's text—and it can save, as Mary's tears of blood evidently do in *Hom. virg.* In *Imag. Beryt.* it does both, kill and save. Through the eruption of blood and water from the living-dead icon, the very images of their fathers die to the sin of the past and become a new spectacle, the result of a new (but also old) act of salvation. Blood in these three accounts is both a vital sign and a symbol of the assailant's necrotic spirituality, and sometimes the medium of life. If bleeding images attest to the collapse of image and prototype, the smooth cooperation of matter, or the lively agency of objects in Late Antiquity, they do not do so simply.

¹⁴⁶ Munitiz, et al, *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, 55 (my trans.).

Conclusions

In an episode from the apocryphal *Acts of John*, which likely dates to the second or early third century, we see the apostle John put forth a view which at first seems at odds with the narratives I have been analyzing in this dissertation. The episode features a certain Lykomedes, who is raised from the dead and converted to Christianity by John. Gratefully (and secretly), Lykomedes commissions a painted portrait of the apostle. John, upon finding the image hung and garlanded in the man's bedroom, questioned Lykomedes' conversion, demanding to know which god had been painted (ὁ γεγραμμένος). The convert responds that he only has one God, who had raised him and his wife from death, but that he had wanted an image of John to “crown, kiss, and revere” (στέρω καὶ φιλῶ καὶ σέβομαι) on the grounds that John was a benefactor, placing him among men who “ought to be called gods” (θεοὺς χρὴ καλεῖσθαι).¹ Surprised, having never seen his own face before, John looks in a mirror and replies, “Lord Jesus Christ alive, the image is like me” (Ζῆ κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁμοία μοι ἡ εἰκών).²

Whether or not this episode in the *Acts of John* testifies to the widespread presence of Christian icons in the second or third century, as Matthews and Muller suggest,³ the passage seems to offer a largely straightforward reflection on portrait images, as the discourse that follows suggests. John stops himself, having conceded likeness, and reverses course: “Not like *me*, child, but rather like my fleshly form” (οὐκ ἐμοί δε, τέκνον, ἀλλὰ τῷ σαρκικῷ μου εἰδώλῳ), perhaps suggesting that his body, lifeless in and of itself, is naught but an “idol.” He goes on to assert that if

¹ *Acts of John* 27 (Eric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli eds., *Acta Iohannis*, vol. 1, Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum 1 [Turnhout: Brepols, 1983], 179).

² *Acts of John* 28 (Junod/Kaestli 179).

³ For this entirely possible, if not proven, suggestion, see Thomas F. Matthews and Norman E. Muller, *The Dawn of Christian Art in Panel Paintings and Icons* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016), 133.

the painter wants truly to paint him, “he will be left wanting of the colors” (χρωμάτων ... ἀπορήσει αὐτός) as well as the “panel boards and the outline and clothing and posture and form and age and youth and everything visible” (σανίδων καὶ τύπου καὶ στολῆς καὶ σχήματος καὶ μορφῆς καὶ γήρους καὶ νεότητος καὶ πάντων τῶν ὁρωμένων). Accordingly, he instructs Lykomedes to “become a good painter for me” (γενοῦ δε μοι σὺ ἀγαθὸς ζωγράφος) and paint instead a spiritual with the colors of virtue that he has received from Jesus through John, which he will present to Jesus. John concludes his instruction by stating pointedly that the portrait was at best “childish and incomplete” (παιδιῶδες καὶ ἀτελής), telling Lykomedes that because the portrait does not and cannot capture John’s soul, where the virtues are, “you have painted a dead image of what is dead” (ἔγραψας νεκροῦ νεκρὰν εἰκόνα).⁴ Even when they can represent accurately, material images are inadequate for honoring not only God, but human figures as well. The visual likeness that the portrait captures, in the character of John’s view, is empty and idolic. Even as John affirms that there is indeed an accurate resemblance between the image and himself, he denies that such a likeness has any value. It is lifeless, just like his own flesh and external εἶδωλον are dead.

According to the iconophiles at Nicaea II, their opponents used this passage to justify the charge that icon veneration was actually idolatry, and hence at the council they sought a reason to disqualify this testimony as heresy.⁵ But surprisingly, the iconophile fathers also softened the force of John’s disappointment in Lykomedes. Rather than chastising the recent convert for making a “dead image of what is dead,” the character of John in the version read at Nicaea II becomes merely, “you brought this about in a bad way” (κακῶς δὲ τοῦτο διεπράξω).⁶ Did they have a

⁴ *Acts of John* 29 (Junod/Kaestli 181).

⁵ Lamberz, (*Acts* 4), 548–54.

⁶ Lamberz, (*Acts* 5), 550.3; cf. Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, 397–98 n. 61 (who translates as “you were wrong in what you did”).

different text than the early *Acts of John* as its best preserved today? Or did they seek this small change among other acts of excerpition in the text because they were wary of condemning a position they also wanted to uphold? Images were dead; but it was complicated. As the narratives analyzed throughout the last 300 pages have demonstrated, in different ways, ontological, epistemological, demonological, and ethical/psychological arguments about the value and ramifications of material images of divine beings were to be constantly navigated—and could be redeployed—often in surprising ways and for diverse purposes.

The seemingly small change to the *Acts of John* in the florilegium of Nicaea II also brings us back to the questions with which I began this dissertation. Throughout this project, I have shown that by reading narratives that feature images *as narratives* we can learn more about the range of expectations late ancient Christian readers had for 1) what images could and could not do; 2) who could and could not understand them; and 3) how images were perceived to mediated holiness than we do by taking for granted the signs of life they showed as evidence of indistinction between image and what it represented. The animation of material images did not necessarily entail erasure of difference; when it did, we should ask why because behind object agents and lively images in narrative is the work of human agents attempting to grapple with the paradoxical impact of inanimate objects, not to mention the perceived activities of other human and greater than human agents. By affirming, reversing, changing, and evading audience expectations regarding the character, function, and relations of living images, authors such as those whose creations I have analyzed here participated in narrative discourse on images that carved out a dynamic and flexible space and role for Christian material mediations of holiness.

Moreover, narrative often presented portrayals of material objects on more than one level at once. In the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, the author delights in misunderstanding and

reverses expectations about icons and their function in aiding recognition or memory, scripting states of confusion and forgetfulness for characters, as in *Cos. Dam.* 30 and 13, that simultaneously affirmed their role in the life of the saints' cult and undercut their authority as independent media. Images of the saints, which in *Cos. Dam.* 13 and 15 mediated distance from the cult shrine, also surprisingly emphasized the importance of its Constantinopolitan locality. The icons serve this author as a way to think through the paradoxically corporeal interventions of explicitly incorporeal beings even though the material icons themselves in these three accounts do not seem to have any animate features of their own.

Not dissimilarly, in the *Martyrdom of Mark*, one of the primary goals of the author is to establish Mark as a living image of God in such a way that his material remains persist with holy power mediated from heaven to earth. On one level, the author achieves this through a fairly straightforward opposition between saint and idol and the portrayal of Mark as the first martyr in Alexandria. At the same time, however, the characterization of Mark's martyrdom is one that plays on the multiplicity of meanings present in ancient processions. Mark, dragged around the city by the worshippers of Serapis, becomes through this treatment an epiphanic image of the deity he manifests in the world. In fact, by carefully scripting the details of the martyrdom to converge proleptically with descriptions of the destruction of famous Alexandrian cult statue of Serapis, I argued, the author brings the two material images into comparison. Though the Serapis worshippers seem to have the upper hand, the death of Mark at the "visit" of Serapis, ironically sounds the death knell for all of paganism in Egypt.

In the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, irony abounds through the use of flashbacks and characters with partial knowledge that confound the simple opposition of saint and idol as the apostle Andrew narrates a story to Jesus, whom he does not recognize,

about the time Jesus animated a stone sphinx idol for the Jews to prove his divinity. In a clever reiteration of the debate between Jesus and the Pharisees in John 8–9, the sphinx springs to life and testifies on behalf of Jesus—going so far as to prove that Jesus is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he goes and retrieves the patriarchs from their tombs. The episode presents a rather grisly evaluation of the ability of Jews to perceive the divinity of Jesus (the animation and testimony of the sphinx, needless to say, do not convince them), wresting from them the right to idolatry polemic through the ironic performance of idolatry commonplaces. Yet more surprisingly, Andrew’s testimony about the sphinx occurs while he does not recognize the divinity of Jesus, a punishment for his earlier disobedience. By portraying Andrew as gradually more obedient and clear-eyed throughout the narrative, I argued, the narrator bases the characterization of Andrew off a complex combination of traits shown by both Jesus and the sphinx in the flashback episode. The paradoxically animate idol, a stony condemnation for the stony-hearted Jews in the flashback, becomes a lively exemplar for ethical imitation.

Finally, the author the *Story of the Image of Berytus* spins a tale that trades between the completely expected and the utterly surprising by framing the events of the narrative not just in imitation of biblical events but explicitly as a second crucifixion and requiring the audience to use their spiritual senses to understand. When providence and forgetfulness converge, an icon of Jesus comes into the possession of an unperceiving Jew, which spurs the leaders of the Berytus Jews to remember the acts of their fathers in crucifying Jesus and carry out the same acts on his icon. This reenactment of biblical events produces the same flow of lifegiving liquid from the side of Jesus, which the collective figure of the Jews uses to bring life to their community in the form of healings and baptism into the death of the God they now recognize. The biblical motifs that foreshadow and characterize the action of the plot create an ironic reenactment in which the

reader knows what will happen, but the characters do not. That is, until the characters behave in a new way, creating the new spectacle that the icon both embodies and facilitates. Faced with the paradox of living images, these authors responded in kind, reaching for narrative as a canvas with which to depict the interactions between images of God—human and cultic—with paradox and irony.

The narratives I analyzed in this dissertation display a surprising degree of sophistication and cleverness for texts that modern scholars have not always expected much from, certainly not when we have taken for granted that the beliefs and practices narratives purport to describe are visible only on the surface. In each of these narratives, when characters, both human and cultic image, are moved back and forth across boundaries animate and inanimate, the signs of life they display make images themselves into signs of life, marking out for the knowing reader who was really alive and who not. But as R.L. Gordon observed now more than forty years ago, even the life of a living image was incomplete: “So far as one or two of these denotations [i.e., speech, movement, breath] may be considered ‘sufficient’ evidence of ‘life,’ the images live. But the whole inventory is never present.”⁷ By analyzing when and how and why these authors portrayed images as more than lifeless—or conversely their human interactants as less than living—I have I hope breathed new life into an old debate, contributing new readings and new evidence to scholarly understanding of the role of living images in Late Ancient Christianity and the paradoxes such images present.

In doing so, I have sought to disentangle these late ancient accounts and depictions of miraculous images from the Iconoclast Controversy through which they have been so often read, though without disregarding the ways that narrative characterizations of icons were reinterpreted

⁷ R. L. Gordon, “The Real and the Imaginary: Production and Religion in the Graeco-Roman World,” *Art History* 2:1 (1979): 10.

and redeployed in those disputes. The influence of Ernst Kitzinger has reached far and wide, including his notion, inherited at least in part from Ernst von Dobschütz and centuries of polemic, that stories of miraculous Christian images in Late Antiquity entailed the conflation of image and prototype and the uncritical popular belief that icons were alive. For these two scholars, this belief merited a negative evaluation as it too closely resembled “pagan idolatry.” Iconophile theologians could only do so much against such popular piety. But while this sort of judgment would attract fewer scholarly supporters now, the impact of the connection between image/prototype relations, idolatry, and uncritical popular beliefs has perhaps ironically led to a less-than-critical scholarly practice of treating all stories of miraculous images as effectively the same. However, dream visions and bleeding icons, useful as they both were to iconophile theologians in the eighth and ninth centuries, were not necessarily drawn up to prove the theology of images—nor even to foreshadow it.

This is not to say that the authors of the narratives I have analyzed above do not sometimes bring the lifeless image and living prototype into convergence, but rather that by focusing so exclusively on the miraculous moments that imply such conflation we have too often overlooked the other purposes to which living images were put. The lively matter is not all that matters and, in narrative, at least, it does not always speak for itself, as much as the compilers of florilegia old and new might like it to do so. These characterizations of animate matter are so embedded in claims and demonstrations of Christian superiority over “pagans” and “Jews” that valorizing them in attempts to retrieve alternate ontologies of objects for use in contemporary projects reproduces the dynamics and values of the texts that portray them. Without facing this fact and the ethical consequences that result from how lively objects were conjured up, characterized, and manipulated polemically—let alone to do so without carefully tracing how the

material/spiritual divide so thoroughly rejected by New Materialisms is at turns confirmed, overturned, and complicated in the texts we claim to salvage—is, to return to the passage from Andrew of Crete with which this dissertation began, to trip over our feet while contemplating things above.

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